

Battlefield of the mind BIBLE

RENEW YOUR MIND THROUGH THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD

AMPLIFIED VERSION



FEATURING NOTES AND COMMENTARY BY
JOYCE MEYER

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JOYCE MEYER



New York • Boston • Nashville

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Battlefield of the Mind Bible

THIS BIBLE BELONGS TO

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OCCASION





A Personal Word from Joyce Meyer

Everything in life—the decisions we make, the words we speak, and the actions we take—begins in the mind. Before we say or do anything, we think about it. The fact that our thoughts are so powerful and wield so much influence over every area of our lives is why the enemy, Satan, attacks our minds so often and so strategically.

No matter what the enemy does, he is a defeated foe. Jesus has won the victory over him, and He wants us to enjoy the victorious life He died to give us. To enforce the victory Jesus wants us to have, we need to know how to recognize and resist the enemy's attempts to use our thoughts against us.

I have developed this study Bible because I have learned from personal experience that the only way to win the battle of the mind is with the Word of God. The enemy tries to influence us by telling us lies, but we can combat his tactics and overcome him with the Truth. Throughout God's Word, from Genesis to Revelation, we find verses and passages of Scripture that offer the insights and instruction we need to think godly thoughts. I have written various types of notes and commentary on these passages to help you understand what they mean, so you can use them to win the battle Satan tries to wage against your thoughts.

Those notes include:

BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

Each book of the Bible opens with a book introduction summarizing how the book pertains to winning the battle of the mind. The introductions include “Winning Thoughts” from each book, which are important points based on specific verses in the book. The introductions also include “Verses for Victory” from each book, which call your attention to specific verses or passages that are vital to developing a triumphant mind-set.

“WINNING THE BATTLES OF THE MIND” ARTICLES

Each individually titled “Winning the Battles of the Mind” article is a full page that represents my core teachings on the battlefield of the mind, the power of thoughts and words, and the importance of aligning mind-sets with God’s Word. These inspiring articles are designed to not only help readers recognize and fight the battles of the mind, but to help them win. Each article closes with “A Prayer for Victory” that you can pray for yourself. You can use them to confirm your faith and affirm your trust in God, or ask for His help in specific ways as you move toward winning the battles of your thought life.

“KEYS TO A VICTORIOUS LIFE” ARTICLES

There are many keys to a life of victory in your mind. These Scripture-based articles are intended to help you recognize, understand, and apply those keys. They also explain the keys to overcoming mental challenges or

conflicts and will help you think and speak according to God's Word.

POWERPOINTS

PowerPoints are brief but powerful comments tied to specific Bible verses or biblical principles that provide insight into how to think, speak, or live in order to think as God would have you think and be victorious in your thoughts.

“SPEAK GOD’S WORD” ENTRIES

Scripture confessions designed to teach you how to confess God's Word for yourself—one of the most powerful things you can do as a believer! These confessions will help you train your mind to successfully recognize and resist the enemy when he comes against your mind.

“A PRAYER TO RENEW YOUR MIND” ENTRIES

Anytime you see “A Prayer To Renew Your Mind,” you can pray the specific Scripture verse or verses to which it is connected. Praying God's Word not only renews your thinking and helps establish the Word in your thoughts, it is also a highly effective way to pray.

HIGHLIGHTED SCRIPTURES ON THOUGHTS AND WORDS

Following this introduction, you will see a list of “Scriptures on Thoughts and Words.” This list serves as a reference guide to help you easily find biblical

instruction on thinking and speaking according to God's Word, which is a proven way to agree with God and stand strong against the enemy. As you go through the Bible text, more than 200 verses that pertain to thoughts and words are highlighted in light blue where they appear.

HOW TO HAVE A REAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

The most important relationship in anyone's life is a genuine, personal relationship with Jesus Christ. At the end of this Bible, you'll find a page that will lead you into this life-changing relationship with Him.

I pray that this Bible will become a valuable resource in your spiritual life, one that serves as a mighty weapon to help you win the battle of the mind.

SCRIPTURES *on* THOUGHTS *and* WORDS

The Bible is full of wisdom, insight, and examples relevant to the battlefield of the mind. This index lists those Scripture references so readers can easily locate verses or passages that will encourage them when the battles in their minds are intense. Many of these passages will have articles or commentary tied to them.

The Bible includes many verses and passages that teach us how God wants us to think and how He wants to speak. Our thoughts and words are extremely powerful, so it is important for them to be in agreement with God's Word.

Throughout this Bible, you will see that I have highlighted many of the scriptures that will help you learn to align your mind and your mouth with the teaching of God's Word. Some of the verses pertain to the idea of believing, remembering, and understanding, because all of these relate directly to the way we think.

I have not highlighted them all because there are so many, but I have called your attention to some of the ones that have been most helpful to me and that I believe will help you too as you seek to honor God and obey His Word in your thinking and with your words.

—*Joyce Meyer*

OLD TESTAMENT

Exodus 20:7

Exodus 20:16

Exodus 22:28

Exodus 23:1

Leviticus 19:12

Leviticus 19:16

Numbers 11:1

Deuteronomy 5:11

Deuteronomy 5:20

Deuteronomy 6:5

Deuteronomy 6:17

Deuteronomy 10:12–13

Deuteronomy 11:18–19

Deuteronomy 23:23

Joshua 1:8

1 Samuel 2:1

1 Chronicles 28:9

Job 15:5–6

Job 27:3–4

Psalm 1:1–2

Psalm 9:1

Psalm 12:3

Psalm 15:1–4

Psalm 17:3

Psalm 19:14

Psalm 26:2

Psalm 34:1

Psalm 34:12–13

Psalm 35:28

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Psalm 104:34

Psalm 107:2

Psalm 116:1–2

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Psalm 119:46

Psalm 119:104

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Psalm 145:10–12

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Isaiah 50:4
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Haggai 1:7

NEW TESTAMENT

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Matthew 6:7

Matthew 15:11

Matthew 15:18–19

Matthew 22:37

Mark 7:20–23

Mark 9:23

Mark 12:30

Luke 6:45

Luke 12:3

Luke 12:8–9

John 8:31–32

Acts 4:31

Romans 8:5–8

Romans 10:9–10

Romans 12:2

Romans 12:3

Romans 15:13
1 Corinthians 2:16
1 Corinthians 3:18
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2 Timothy 2:24–25

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James 1:19

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James 3:2

James 3:5–6

James 3:8

James 3:10

James 4:11

James 5:9

James 5:12

1 Peter 1:13

1 Peter 2:1

1 Peter 2:11–12

1 Peter 3:9–10

1 Peter 3:15

1 John 1:8–10

THE
Old Testament

Genesis

Author: | Moses
Date: | About 1440
BC

The book of Genesis is all about beginnings—the beginning of the world, the beginning of humanity, the beginning of family, the beginning of sin, the beginning of God’s covenant with mankind, and the beginning of God’s relationship with His people. The beginning of a situation or relationship is so important because it often sets the course for everything that follows.

As we think about the battle of the mind, one of the most important points to remember is that all our words and actions begin with a thought. In other words, a thought is the starting point of everything we say and do. I pray that you will understand the important principle of beginnings from the book of Genesis, because the first step to winning the battle of the mind is realizing that everything in your life begins with a thought. If you will align your thoughts with God’s thoughts, right words, decisions, and behaviors will

follow.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM GENESIS:

God created you, and everything He created is good (see Genesis 1:31)!

The enemy is crafty, subtle, and very deceitful. He has been trying to influence people since the beginning of humanity (see Genesis 3:1), but because you are in Christ, you do not have to let him succeed. You can overcome him.

What someone else or the enemy intends to harm you, God means for good (see Genesis 50:20).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM GENESIS:

If you do well [believing Me and doing what is acceptable and pleasing to Me], will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well [but ignore My instruction], sin crouches at your door; its desire is for you [to overpower you], but you must master it. | Genesis 4:7

Then Abram believed in (affirmed, trusted in, relied on, remained steadfast to) the LORD; and He counted (credited) it to him as righteousness (doing right in regard to God and man). | Genesis 15:6

Behold, I am with you and will keep [careful watch over you and guard] you wherever you may go. | Genesis 28:15

THE FIRST BOOK OF MOSES, COMMONLY CALLED
GENESIS

1 IN THE beginning God (*Elohim*) created [by forming from nothing] the heavens and the earth. [Heb 11:3]

²The earth was formless and void *or* a waste and emptiness, and darkness was upon the face of the deep [primeval ocean that covered the unformed earth]. The Spirit of God was moving (hovering, brooding) over the face of the waters.

³And God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.

⁴God saw that the light was good (pleasing, useful) *and* He affirmed and sustained it; and God separated the light [distinguishing it] from the darkness. [2 Cor 4:6]

⁵And God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

⁶And God said, “Let there be an expanse [of the sky] in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters [below the expanse] from the waters [above the expanse].”

⁷And God made the expanse [of sky] and separated the waters which were under the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so [just as He commanded].

⁸God called the expanse [of sky] heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

⁹Then God said, “Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place [of standing, pooling together], and let the dry land appear”; and it was so.

¹⁰God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that this was good (pleasing, useful) *and* He affirmed and sustained it.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Thoughts Lead to Words

Every word begins with a thought. When God created the world, He spoke it into being. Everything He made in the natural realm was first a thought and then a word, and His words had power. For example:

“And God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light....

“And God said, ‘Let there be an expanse [of the sky] in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters [below the expanse] from the waters [above the expanse]....

“And God said, ‘Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place [of standing, pooling together], and let the dry land appear’; and it was so” (Gen. 1:3–9).

Everything God said came to pass. You are created in God’s image, and your words also have power. Your words are a result of your thoughts and they affect you and your life, so use them wisely. Believe in and speak in agreement with God’s plan for your life, and you will see it come to pass.

¹¹So God said, “Let the earth sprout [tender] vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit according to (limited to, consistent with) their kind, whose seed is in them upon the earth”; and it was so.

¹²The earth sprouted *and* abundantly produced

vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, according to their kind; and God saw that it was good *and* He affirmed and sustained it.

¹³And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

¹⁴Then God said, “Let there be light-bearers (sun, moon, stars) in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be *useful* for signs (tokens) [of God’s provident care], and for *marking* seasons, days, and years; [Gen 8:22]

¹⁵and let them be *useful* as lights in the expanse of the heavens to provide light on the earth”; and it was so, [just as He commanded].

¹⁶God made the two great lights—the greater light (the sun) to rule the day, and the lesser light (the moon) to rule the night; *He made* the [galaxies of] stars also [that is, all the amazing wonders in the heavens].

¹⁷God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to provide light upon the earth,

¹⁸to rule over the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good *and* He affirmed and sustained it.

¹⁹And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

²⁰Then God said, “Let the waters swarm *and* abundantly produce living creatures, and let birds soar above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens.”

²¹God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed according

to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind; and God saw that it was good *and* He affirmed and sustained it.

²²And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.”

²³And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

²⁴Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to (limited to, consistent with) their kind: livestock, crawling things, and wild animals of the earth according to their kinds”; and it was so [because He had spoken them into creation].

²⁵So God made the wild animals of the earth according to their kind, and the cattle according to their kind, and everything that creeps *and* crawls on the earth according to its kind; and God saw that it was good (pleasing, useful) *and* He affirmed and sustained it.

²⁶Then God said, “Let Us (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) make man in Our image, according to Our likeness [not physical, but a spiritual personality and moral likeness]; and let them have complete authority over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the cattle, and over the entire earth, and over everything that creeps *and* crawls on the earth.” [Ps 104:30; Heb 1:2; 11:3]

²⁷So God created man in His own image, in the image *and* likeness of God He created him; male and female He created them. [Col 3:9, 10; James 3:8, 9]

²⁸And God blessed them [granting them certain authority] and said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth, and subjugate it [putting it under your power]; and rule over (dominate) the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and every

living thing that moves upon the earth.”

²⁹So God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of the entire earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;

³⁰and to all the animals on the earth and to every bird of the air and to everything that moves on the ground—to everything in which there is the breath of life—I *have given* every green plant for food”; and it was so [because He commanded it].

³¹God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good *and* He validated it completely. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day.

2 SO THE heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts (inhabitants).

²And by the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested (ceased) on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. [Heb 4:9, 10]

³So God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it [as His own, that is, set it apart as holy from other days], because in it He rested from all His work which He had created and done. [Ex 20:11]

⁴This is the history of [the origin of] the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day [that is, days of creation] that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens—

⁵no shrub *or* plant of the field was yet in the earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not

caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground,

⁶but a mist (fog, dew, vapor) used to rise from the land and water the entire surface of the ground—

⁷then the LORD God formed [that is, created the body of] man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being [an individual complete in body and spirit]. [1 Cor 15:45–49]

⁸And the LORD God planted a garden (oasis) in the east, in Eden (delight, land of happiness); and He put the man whom He had formed (created) there.

⁹And [in that garden] the LORD God caused to grow from the ground every tree that is desirable *and* pleasing to the sight and good (suitable, pleasant) for food; the tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the [experiential] knowledge (recognition) of [the difference between] good and evil. [Rev 2:7; 22:14, 19]

¹⁰Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four [branching] rivers.

¹¹The first [river] is named Pishon; it flows around the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold.

¹²The gold of that land is good; bdellium (a fragrant, valuable resin) and the onyx stone are found there.

¹³The name of the second river is Gihon; it flows around the entire land of Cush [in Mesopotamia].

¹⁴The third river is named Hiddekel (Tigris); it flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵So the LORD God took the man [He had made] and settled

him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it.

¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may freely (unconditionally) eat [the fruit] from every tree of the garden;

¹⁷but [only] from the tree of the knowledge (recognition) of good and evil you shall not eat, otherwise on the day that you eat from it, you shall most certainly die [because of your disobedience].”

¹⁸Now the LORD God said, “It is not good (beneficial) for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper [one who balances him—a counterpart who is] suitable *and* complementary for him.”

¹⁹So the LORD God formed out of the ground every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.

²⁰And the man gave names to all the livestock, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for Adam there was not found a helper [that was] suitable (a companion) for him.

²¹So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam; and while he slept, He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place.

²²And the rib which the LORD God had taken from the man He made (fashioned, formed) into a woman, and He brought her *and* presented her to the man.

²³Then Adam said,

“This is now bone of my bones,

And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man.”

²⁴For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. [Matt 19:5; 1 Cor 6:16; Eph 5:31–33]

²⁵And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed *or* embarrassed.

3 NOW THE serpent was more crafty (subtle, skilled in deceit) than any living creature of the field which the LORD God had made. And the serpent (Satan) said to the woman, “Can it really be that God has said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’” [Rev 12:9–11]

²And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees of the garden,

³except the fruit from the tree which is in the middle of the garden. God said, ‘You shall not eat from it nor touch it, otherwise you will die.’”

⁴But the serpent said to the woman, “You certainly will not die! [2 Cor 11:3]

⁵“For God knows that on the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened [that is, you will have greater awareness], and you will be like God, knowing [the difference between] good and evil.”

⁶And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was delightful to look at, and a tree to be desired in

order to make one wise *and* insightful, she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband with her, and he ate.

⁷Then the eyes of the two of them were opened [that is, their awareness increased], and they knew that they were naked; and they fastened fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

⁸And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool [afternoon breeze] of the day, so the man and his wife hid *and* kept themselves hidden from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

⁹But the LORD God called to Adam, and said to him, “Where are you?”

¹⁰He said, “I heard the sound of You [walking] in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.”

¹¹God said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten [fruit] from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”

¹²And the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me—she gave me [fruit] from the tree, and I ate it.”

¹³Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” And the woman said, “The serpent beguiled *and* deceived me, and I ate [from the forbidden tree].” [2 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim 2:14]

POWERPOINT

An unwillingness to take responsibility for one's own actions, blaming everything that goes wrong on someone else, is a major cause of an unhappy and unsuccessful life.

We see this problem manifesting from the beginning of time. When confronted with their sin, Adam and Eve blamed each other, and the devil, thus trying to avoid personal responsibility for their actions.



¹⁴The LORD God said to the serpent,
“Because you have done this,
You are cursed more than all the cattle,
And more than any animal of the field;
On your belly you shall go,
And dust you shall eat
All the days of your life.

¹⁵“And I will put enmity (open hostility)
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed (offspring) and her Seed;
He shall [fatally] bruise your head,
And you shall [only] bruise His heel.” [Gal 4:4]

¹⁶To the woman He said,
“I will greatly multiply
Your pain in childbirth;
In pain you will give birth to children;
Yet your desire *and* longing will be for your husband,
And he will rule [with authority] over you *and* be
responsible for you.”

¹⁷Then to Adam the LORD God said, “Because you have
listened [attentively] to the voice of your wife, and have eaten
[fruit] from the tree about which I commanded you, saying,
‘You shall not eat of it’;

The ground is [now] under a curse because of you;

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

The First Battle of the Mind

In the very first attack on the human mind, the serpent asked the woman, “Can it really be that God has said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’” (Gen. 3:1). Eve could have rebuked the tempter; instead, she told him God would let them eat from the trees, but not from one particular tree. They couldn’t even touch that tree, because if they did, they would die.

The serpent countered that Eve would not die. He tricked her by lying and telling her what would appeal to her. He promised, “You will be like God, knowing [the difference between] good and evil.” He phrased it in such a way that it sounded good, not bad. That’s always the appeal of sin or satanic enticement. The temptation is not to do evil, cause harm, or bring injustice. The lure is that we will gain something from giving in to temptation.

This first attack on the human mind resulted in Satan’s first victory. What we often miss about the temptations of the enemy is that they come to us deceptively. Suppose the

serpent had said to the woman, “Eat of the fruit. You’ll bring misery, anger, hatred, bloodshed, poverty, and injustice into the world.” Surely Eve would have resisted him.

Yet many of us choose such misery and injustice—not blatantly, but we sometimes surrender, even temporarily, to Satan’s invitation. Our enemy relentlessly bombards our minds with the weapons at his disposal every day of our lives. We are engaged in a spiritual war that rages and never stops. We can put on the whole armor of God, halt the evil one’s advances, and stand on God’s Word, but we won’t put a complete end to the war. As long as we live, our minds are Satan’s battlefield.

Most of our problems are rooted in thought patterns that produce the problems we experience. This is where Satan triumphs at times. He offers wrong thinking to all of us; it’s not a new trick devised for our generation. Eve lost the first battle for the mind, and we have continued to fight for it since that time. But because we have the power of the Holy Spirit to help us think according to God’s Word, we can win—and keep winning.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Victorious God, help me resist the onslaughts of Satan, who attacks my mind and makes evil seem good. I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

In sorrow *and* toil you shall eat [the fruit] of it
All the days of your life.

¹⁸“Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;
And you shall eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹“By the sweat of your face
You will eat bread
Until you return to the ground,
For from it you were taken;
For you are dust,
And to dust you shall return.”

²⁰The man named his wife Eve (life spring, life giver),
because she was the mother of all the living.

²¹The LORD God made tunics of [animal] skins for Adam
and his wife and clothed them.

²²And the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become
like one of Us (Father, Son, Holy Spirit), knowing [how to
distinguish between] good and evil; and now, he might stretch
out his hand, and take from the tree of life as well, and eat [its
fruit], and live [in this fallen, sinful condition] forever”—

²³therefore the LORD God sent Adam away from the Garden
of Eden, to till *and* cultivate the ground from which he was
taken.

²⁴So God drove the man out; and at the east of the Garden
of Eden He [permanently] stationed the cherubim and the
sword with the flashing blade which turned round and round
[in every direction] to protect *and* guard the way (entrance,
access) to the tree of life. [Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19]

4 NOW THE man Adam knew Eve as his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, “I have obtained a man (baby boy, son) with *the help of* the LORD.”

²And [later] she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept the flocks [of sheep and goats], but Cain cultivated the ground.

³And in the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground.

⁴But Abel brought [an offering of] the [finest] firstborn of his flock and the fat portions. And the LORD had respect (regard) for Abel and for his offering; [Heb 11:4]

⁵but for Cain and his offering He had no respect. So Cain became extremely angry (indignant), and he looked annoyed and hostile.

⁶And the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you so angry? And why do you look annoyed?

⁷“If you do well [believing Me and doing what is acceptable and pleasing to Me], will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well [but ignore My instruction], sin crouches at your door; its desire is for you [to overpower you], but you must master it.”

⁸Cain talked with Abel his brother [about what God had said]. And when they were [alone, working] in the field, Cain attacked Abel his brother and killed him. [1 John 3:12]

⁹Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” And he [lied and] said, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?”

¹⁰The LORD said, “What have you done? The voice of your

brother's [innocent] blood is crying out to Me from the ground [for justice]. [Num 35:33; Deut 21:1-9]

¹¹“And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's [shed] blood from your hand. [Deut 28:15-20]

¹²“When you cultivate the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength [it will resist producing good crops] for you; you shall be a fugitive and a vagabond [roaming aimlessly] on the earth [in perpetual exile without a home, a degraded outcast].”

¹³Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is greater than I can bear.

¹⁴“Behold, You have driven me out this day from the face of the land; and from Your face (presence) I will be hidden, and I will be a fugitive and an [aimless] vagabond on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.”

¹⁵And the LORD said to him, “Therefore, whoever kills Cain, a sevenfold vengeance [that is, punishment seven times worse] shall be taken on him [by Me].” And the LORD set a [protective] mark (sign) on Cain, so that no one who found (met) him would kill him. [Gen 4:24]

¹⁶So Cain went away from the [manifested] presence of the LORD, and lived in the land of Nod [wandering in exile], east of Eden.

¹⁷Cain knew his wife [one of Adam's descendants] and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch; and Cain built a city and named it Enoch, after the name of his son.

¹⁸Now to Enoch was born Irad, and Irad became the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael became the father of Methushael, and Methushael became the father of Lamech.

¹⁹And Lamech took for himself two wives; the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other, Zillah.

²⁰Adah gave birth to Jabal; he became the father of those [nomadic herdsman] who live in tents and have cattle *and* raise livestock.

²¹His brother's name was Jubal; he became the father of all those [musicians] who play the lyre and flute.

²²Zillah gave birth to Tubal-cain, the smith (craftsman) *and* teacher of every artisan in instruments of bronze and iron. The sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.

²³Lamech said to his wives,

“Adah and Zillah,

Hear my voice;

You wives of Lamech,

Listen to what I say;

For I have killed a man [merely] for wounding me,

And a boy [only] for striking (bruising) me.

²⁴“If Cain is avenged sevenfold [as the LORD said he would be],

Then Lamech [will be avenged] seventy-sevenfold.”

²⁵Adam knew [Eve as] his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and named him Seth, for [she said], “God has granted another child for me in place of Abel, because Cain killed him.”

²⁶To Seth, also, a son was born, whom he named Enosh (mortal man, mankind). At that [same] time men began to call on the name of the LORD [in worship through prayer, praise, and thanksgiving]. [Joel 2:32; Luke 3:38; Acts 2:21]

5 THIS IS the book (the written record, the history) of the generations of [the descendants of] Adam. When God created man, He made him in the likeness of God [not physical, but a spiritual personality and moral likeness].

²He created them male and female, and blessed them and named them ^{*}Mankind at the time they were created.

³When Adam had lived a hundred and thirty years, he ^{*}became the father of *a son* in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.

⁴After he became the father of Seth, Adam lived eight hundred years and had *other* sons and daughters.

⁵So Adam lived nine hundred and thirty years in all, and he died.

⁶When Seth was a hundred and five years old, he became the father of Enosh.

⁷Seth lived eight hundred and seven years after the birth of Enosh, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

⁸So Seth lived nine hundred and twelve years, and he died.

⁹When Enosh was ninety years old, he became the father of Kenan.

¹⁰Enosh lived eight hundred and fifteen years after the birth of Kenan and had *other* sons and daughters.

¹¹So Enosh lived nine hundred and five years, and he died.

¹²When Kenan was seventy years old, he became the father of Mahalalel.

¹³Kenan lived eight hundred and forty years after the birth of Mahalalel and had *other* sons and daughters.

¹⁴So Kenan lived nine hundred and ten years, and he died.

¹⁵When Mahalalel was sixty-five years old, he became the father of Jared.

¹⁶Mahalalel lived eight hundred and thirty years after the birth of Jared and had *other* sons and daughters.

¹⁷So Mahalalel lived eight hundred and ninety-five years, and he died.

¹⁸When Jared was a hundred and sixty-two years old, he became the father of Enoch.

¹⁹Jared lived eight hundred years after the birth of Enoch and had *other* sons and daughters.

²⁰So Jared lived nine hundred and sixty-two years, and he died.

²¹When Enoch was sixty-five years old, he became the father of Methuselah.

²²Enoch walked [in habitual fellowship] with God three hundred years after the birth of Methuselah and had *other* sons and daughters.

²³So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years.

²⁴And [in reverent fear and obedience] Enoch walked with God; and he was not [found among men], because God took him [away to be home with Him]. [Heb 11:5]

²⁵When Methuselah was a hundred and eighty-seven years old, he became the father of Lamech.

²⁶Methuselah lived seven hundred and eighty-two years after the birth of Lamech and had *other* sons and daughters.

²⁷So Methuselah lived nine hundred and sixty-nine years,

and he died.

²⁸When Lamech was a hundred and eighty-two years old, he became the father of a son.

²⁹He named him Noah, saying, “This one shall bring us rest *and* comfort from our work and from the [dreadful] toil of our hands because of the ground which the LORD cursed.”

³⁰Lamech lived five hundred and ninety-five years after the birth of Noah and had *other* sons and daughters.

³¹So all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years, and he died.

³²After Noah was five hundred years old, he became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

6 NOW IT happened, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them,

²that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful *and* desirable; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose *and* desired.

³Then the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not strive *and* remain with man forever, because he is indeed flesh [sinful, corrupt—given over to sensual appetites]; nevertheless his days shall yet be a hundred and twenty years.”

⁴There were Nephilim (men of stature, notorious men) on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God lived with the daughters of men, and they gave birth to their *children*. These were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown (great reputation, fame). [Num 13:33]

⁵The LORD saw that the wickedness (depravity) of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination *or* intent of the thoughts of his heart were only evil continually.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Develop a “God Habit”

Jesus frequently went to the Mount of Olives to pray. Notice that it was His habit to go there, His automatic response not only in times of tribulation, but at all times, to spend time with His heavenly Father. You will find throughout Scripture that all of the great men and women of God had a similar habit. They all knew the vital importance of spending time with God.

The Bible says Enoch habitually walked with God: “Enoch walked [in habitual fellowship] with God;... and he was not [found among men], because God took him [away to be home with Him]” (Gen. 5:22, 24). Instead of letting Enoch die, God transferred him directly to heaven because God was pleased with him. Here is a man who developed such an intimate relationship with God that the world could no longer hold him. Enoch developed a “God habit.” Making a habit of seeking and spending time with God is your most vital need.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Watch over Your Heart

The story of Noah tells us that many people today are being destroyed for the simple reason that their hearts are not right. The people of Noah's day had three heart issues that displeased God: wickedness, an evil imagination, and evil thinking. But Noah had a right heart and found favor in the eyes of the Lord.

Many of our problems can be solved and many confusing things in our lives can be straightened out when we simply get our hearts right with God. Our hearts may not be filled with the exact same evil thoughts and imaginations of the people in Noah's day, but a bad attitude or wrong thinking can also be labeled "evil imaginations" and "evil thinking." If we have a bad attitude and "stinking thinking," we will struggle unnecessarily as we go through life.

This is why we must watch over our hearts with all diligence—because out of them flow the springs of our life (see Prov. 4:23). Allowing negative, evil thinking in our hearts cannot produce a life that glorifies God. We should be careful not only about our actions but also about our imaginations, our intentions, our motivations, and our attitudes. Falling short in these areas may ultimately lead to an evil heart.

We need a tender, right heart that deals immediately with bad attitudes about anything or anyone.

⁶The LORD regretted that He had made mankind on the earth, and He was [deeply] grieved in His heart.

⁷So the LORD said, “I will destroy (annihilate) mankind whom I have created from the surface of the earth—not only man, but the animals and the crawling things and the birds of the air—because it [deeply] grieves Me [to see mankind’s sin] *and* I regret that I have made them.”

⁸But Noah found favor *and* grace in the eyes of the LORD.

⁹These are *the records* of the generations (family history) of Noah. Noah was a righteous man [one who was just and had right standing with God], blameless in his [evil] generation; Noah walked (lived) [in habitual fellowship] with God.

¹⁰Now Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹The [population of the] earth was corrupt [absolutely depraved—spiritually and morally putrid] in God’s sight, and the land was filled with violence [desecration, infringement, outrage, assault, and lust for power].

¹²God looked on the earth and saw how debased *and* degenerate it was, for all humanity had corrupted their way on the earth *and* lost their true direction.

¹³God said to Noah, “I intend to make an end of all that lives, for through men the land is filled with violence; and behold, I am about to destroy them together with the land.

Speak God's Word

*I have found grace and favor
in the eyes of the Lord.*

| adapted from GENESIS 6:8 |

¹⁴“Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; make in it rooms (stalls, pens, coops, nests, cages, compartments) and coat it inside and out with pitch (bitumen).

¹⁵“This is the way you are to make it: the length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits (450' x 75' x 45').

¹⁶“You shall make a window [for light and ventilation] for the ark, and finish it to at least a cubit (eighteen inches) from the top—and set the [entry] door of the ark in its side; and you shall make it with lower, second and third decks.

¹⁷“For behold, I, even I, will bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy all life under the heavens in which there is the breath *and* spirit of life; everything that is on the land shall die.

¹⁸“But I will establish My covenant (solemn promise, formal agreement) with you; and you shall come into the ark—you and your [three] sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you.

¹⁹“And of every living thing [found on land], you shall

bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female.

²⁰“Of fowls *and* birds according to their kind, of animals according to their kind, of every crawling thing of the ground according to its kind—two of every kind shall come to you to keep them alive.

²¹“Also take with you every kind of food that is edible, and you shall collect *and* store it; and it shall be food for you and for them.”

²²So Noah did this; according to all that God commanded him, that is what he did.

7 THEN THE LORD said to Noah, “Come into the ark, you with all your household, for you [alone] I have seen as righteous (doing what is right) before Me in this generation. [Ps 27:5; 33:18, 19; 2 Pet 2:9]

²“Of every clean animal you shall take with you seven pair, the male and his female, and of animals that are not clean, two each the male and his female; [Lev 11:1–13]

³also of the birds of the air, seven pair, the male and the female, to keep the offspring alive on the surface of the earth.

⁴“For in seven days I am going to cause it to rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights; and I will destroy (blot out, wipe away) every living thing that I have made from the surface of the earth.”

⁵So Noah did all that the LORD commanded him. [Heb 11:7]

⁶Noah was six hundred years old when the flood (deluge) of water came on the earth [covering all of the land].

⁷Then Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him entered the ark to escape the flood waters. [Matt 24:38; Luke 17:27]

⁸Of clean animals and animals that are not clean and birds *and* fowls and everything that crawls on the ground,

⁹they came [motivated by God] into the ark with Noah two by two, the male and the female, just as God had commanded Noah.

¹⁰And after the seven days [God released the rain and] the floodwaters came on the earth.

¹¹In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month, on that same day all the fountains of the great deep [subterranean waters] burst open, and the windows *and* floodgates of the heavens were opened.

¹²It rained on the earth for forty days and forty nights.

¹³On the very same day Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark,

¹⁴they and every animal according to its kind, all the livestock according to their kinds, every moving thing that crawls on the earth according to its kind, and every bird according to its kind, every winged thing of every sort.

¹⁵So they went into the ark with Noah, two by two of all living beings in which there was the breath *and* spirit of life.

¹⁶Those which entered, male and female of all flesh (creatures), entered as God had commanded Noah; and the LORD closed *the door* behind him.

¹⁷The flood [the great downpour of rain] was forty days

and nights on the earth; and the waters increased and lifted up the ark, and it floated [high] above the land.

¹⁸The waters became mighty and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the waters.

¹⁹The waters prevailed so greatly *and* were so mighty *and* overwhelming on the earth, so that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered.

²⁰[In fact] the waters became fifteen cubits higher [than the highest ground], and the mountains were covered.

²¹All living beings that moved on the earth perished—birds and cattle (domestic animals), [wild] animals, all things that swarm *and* crawl on the earth, and all mankind.

²²Everything on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath *and* spirit of life, died.

²³God destroyed (blotted out, wiped away) every living thing that was on the surface of the earth; man and animals and the crawling things and the birds of the heavens were destroyed from the land. Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained alive. [Matt 24:37–44]

²⁴The waters covered [all of] the earth for a hundred and fifty days (five months).

8 AND GOD remembered *and* thought kindly of Noah and every living thing and all the animals that were with him in the ark; and God made a wind blow over the land, and the waters receded.

²Also the fountains of the deep [subterranean waters] and the windows of the heavens were closed, the [pouring] rain

from the sky was restrained,

³and the waters receded steadily from the earth. At the end of a hundred and fifty days the waters had diminished.

⁴On the seventeenth day of the seventh month [five months after the rain began], the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat [in Turkey].

⁵The waters continued to decrease until the tenth month; on the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains were seen.

⁶At the end of [another] forty days Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made;

⁷and he sent out a raven, which flew here and there until the waters were dried up from the earth.

⁸Then Noah sent out a dove to see if the water level had fallen below the surface of the land.

⁹But the dove found no place on which to rest the sole of her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were [still] on the face of the entire earth. So he reached out his hand and took the dove, and brought her into the ark.

¹⁰He waited another seven days and again sent the dove out from the ark.

¹¹The dove came back to him in the evening, and there, in her beak, was a fresh olive leaf. So Noah knew that the water level had subsided from the earth.

¹²Then he waited another seven days and sent out the dove, but she did not return to him again.

¹³Now in the six hundred and first year [of Noah's life], on the first day of the first month, the waters were drying up from the earth. Then Noah removed the covering of the ark and

looked, and the surface of the ground was drying.

¹⁴On the twenty-seventh day of the second month the land was [entirely] dry.

¹⁵And God spoke to Noah, saying,

¹⁶“Go out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives with you.

¹⁷“Bring out with you every living thing from all flesh—birds and animals and every crawling thing that crawls on the earth—that they may breed abundantly on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.”

¹⁸So Noah went out, and his wife and his sons and their wives with him [after being in the ark one year and ten days].

¹⁹Every animal, every crawling thing, every bird—and whatever moves on the land—went out by families (types, groupings) from the ark.

²⁰And Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every [ceremonially] clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

²¹The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma [a soothing, satisfying scent] and the LORD said to Himself, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intent (strong inclination, desire) of man’s heart is wicked from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.

²²“While the earth remains,
Seedtime and harvest,
Cold and heat,
Winter and summer,
And day and night

Shall not cease.”

9 AND GOD blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.

²“The fear and the terror of you shall be [instinctive] in every animal of the land and in every bird of the air; and together with everything that moves on the ground, and with all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hand.

³“Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; I give you everything, as *I gave* you the green plants *and* vegetables.

⁴“But you shall not eat meat along with its life, *that is*, its blood. [Lev 7:26; Acts 15:20; 21:25]

⁵“For your lifeblood I will most certainly require an accounting; from every animal [that kills a person] I will require it. And from man, from every man’s brother [that is, anyone who murders] I will require the life of man. [Ex 21:28, 29]

⁶“Whoever sheds man’s blood [unlawfully],
By man (judicial government) shall his blood be shed,
For in the image of God
He made man. [Rom 13:4]

⁷“As for you, be fruitful and multiply;
Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it.”

⁸Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying,

⁹“Now behold, I am establishing My covenant (binding agreement, solemn promise) with you and with your

descendants after you

¹⁰and with every living creature that is with you—the birds, the livestock, and the wild animals of the earth along with you, of everything that comes out of the ark—every living creature of the earth.

¹¹“I will establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the water of a flood, nor shall there ever again be a flood to destroy *and* ruin the earth.”

¹²And God said, “This is the token (visible symbol, memorial) of the [solemn] covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations;

¹³I set My rainbow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth.

¹⁴“It shall come about, when I bring clouds over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the clouds,

¹⁵and I will [compassionately] remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again will the water become a flood to destroy all flesh.

¹⁶“When the rainbow is in the clouds and I look at it, I will [solemnly] remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.”

¹⁷And God said to Noah, “This [rainbow] is the sign of the covenant (solemn pledge, binding agreement) which I have established between Me and all living things on the earth.”

¹⁸The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem and Ham and Japheth. Ham would become the father of Canaan.

¹⁹These are the three sons of Noah, and from these [men] the whole earth was populated *and* scattered with inhabitants.

²⁰And Noah began to farm *and* cultivate the ground and he planted a vineyard.

²¹He drank some of the wine and became drunk, and he was uncovered *and* lay exposed inside his tent.

²²Ham, the father of Canaan, saw [by accident] the nakedness of his father, and [to his father's shame] told his two brothers outside.

²³So Shem and Japheth took a robe and put it on both their shoulders, and walked backwards and covered the nakedness of their father; their faces were turned away so that they did not see their father's nakedness.

²⁴When Noah awoke from his wine [induced stupor], he knew what his younger son [Ham] had done to him.

²⁵So he said,

“Cursed be Canaan [the son of Ham];
A servant of servants
He shall be to his brothers.” [Deut 27:16]

²⁶He also said,

“Blessed be the LORD,
The God of Shem;
And let Canaan be his servant.

²⁷“May God enlarge [the land of] Japheth,
And let him dwell in the tents of Shem;
And let Canaan be his servant.”

²⁸Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood.

²⁹So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died.

10 THESE ARE *the records of* the generations (descendants) of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah; and the sons born to them after the flood:

²the sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras;

³the sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah;

⁴the sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim.

⁵From these, [the people of] the coastlands of the nations were separated *and* spread into their lands, every one according to his own language, according to their constituent groups (families), *and* into their nations:

⁶the sons of Ham: Cush, Mizraim [from whom descended the Egyptians], Put, and Canaan;

⁷the sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca; and the sons of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan.

⁸Cush became the father of Nimrod; he became a mighty one on the earth.

⁹He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD."

¹⁰The beginning of his kingdom was ^{*}Babel and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar [in Babylonia].

¹¹From that land Nimrod went to Assyria, and built Nineveh, and Rehoboth-Ir, and Calah,

¹²and [Nimrod built] Resen, which is between Nineveh and Calah; all these [combined to form] the great city [Nineveh]. [Jon 1:2; 3:2]

¹³Mizraim [the ancestor of the Egyptians] became the father of Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim

¹⁴and Pathrusim and Casluhim—from whom came the Philistines—and Caphtorim.

¹⁵Canaan became the father of Sidon, his firstborn, and Heth

¹⁶and the Jebusite and the Amorite and the Girgashite

¹⁷and the Hivite and the Arkite and the Sinite

¹⁸and the Arvadite and the Zemarite and the Hamathite. Afterward the families of the Canaanite were spread abroad.

¹⁹The territory of the Canaanite extended from Sidon as one goes to Gerar, as far as Gaza; and as one goes to Sodom and Gomorrah and Admah and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha.

²⁰These are the descendants of Ham according to their constituent groups, according to their languages, by their lands, and by their nations.

²¹Also to Shem, the father of all the children of Eber [including the Hebrews], the older brother of Japheth, children were born.

²²The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud and Aram;

²³the sons of Aram [ancestor of the Syrians]: Uz, Hul, Gether and Mash.

²⁴Arpachshad became the father of Shelah; and Shelah became the father of Eber.

²⁵Two sons were born to Eber; the name of one was Peleg (division), for [the inhabitants of] the earth were divided in his days; and his brother's name was Joktan.

²⁶Joktan became the father of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah,

²⁷and Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah,

²⁸and Obal, Abimael, Sheba,

²⁹and Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab; all these were the sons of Joktan.

³⁰Now their territory extended from Mesha as one goes toward Sephar, to the hill country of the east.

³¹These are Shem's descendants according to their constituent groups (families), according to their languages, by their lands, according to their nations.

³²These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their descendants, by their nations; and from these [people] the nations were separated *and* spread abroad on the earth after the flood. [Acts 17:26]

11 NOW THE whole earth spoke one language and used the same words (vocabulary).

²And as people journeyed eastward, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and they settled there. [Gen 10:10]

³They said one to another, "Come, let us make bricks and fire them thoroughly [in a kiln, to harden and strengthen them]." So they used brick for stone [as building material], and they used tar (bitumen, asphalt) for mortar.

⁴They said, “Come, let us build a city for ourselves, and a tower whose top *will reach* into the heavens, and let us make a [famous] name for ourselves, so that we will not be scattered [into separate groups] *and* be dispersed over the surface of the entire earth [as the LORD instructed].” [Gen 9:1]

⁵Now the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.

⁶And the LORD said, “Behold, they are one [unified] people, and they all have the same language. This is only the beginning of what they will do [in rebellion against Me], and now no evil thing they imagine they can do will be impossible for them.

⁷“Come, let Us (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) go down and there confuse *and* mix up their language, so that they will not understand one another’s speech.”

⁸So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the surface of the entire earth; and they stopped building the city.

⁹Therefore the name of the city was Babel—because there the LORD confused the language of the entire earth; and from that place the LORD scattered *and* dispersed them over the surface of all the earth.

¹⁰These are *the records of* the generations of Shem [from whom Abraham descended]. Shem was a hundred years old when he became the father of Arpachshad, two years after the flood.

¹¹And Shem lived five hundred years after Arpachshad was born, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

¹²When Arpachshad had lived thirty-five years, he became

the father of Shelah.

¹³Arpachshad lived four hundred and three years after Shelah was born, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

¹⁴When Shelah had lived thirty years, he became the father of Eber.

¹⁵Shelah lived four hundred and three years after Eber was born, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

¹⁶When Eber had lived thirty-four years, he became the father of Peleg.

¹⁷And Eber lived four hundred and thirty years after Peleg was born, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

¹⁸When Peleg had lived thirty years, he became the father of Reu.

¹⁹And Peleg lived two hundred and nine years after Reu was born, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

²⁰When Reu had lived thirty-two years, he became the father of Serug.

²¹And Reu lived two hundred and seven years after Serug was born, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

²²When Serug had lived thirty years, he became the father of Nahor.

²³And Serug lived two hundred years after Nahor was born, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

²⁴When Nahor had lived twenty-nine years, he became the father of Terah.

²⁵And Nahor lived a hundred and nineteen years after Terah was born, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

²⁶After Terah had lived seventy years, he became the

father of Abram and Nahor and Haran [his firstborn].

²⁷Now these are *the records of* the descendants of Terah. Terah was the father of Abram (Abraham), Nahor, and Haran; and Haran was the father of Lot.

²⁸Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans.

²⁹Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai (later called Sarah), and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Iscah.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Boldness

How would you feel if God told you to leave your home, your family, and everything familiar and comfortable to you and head out to who knows where? Would you be full of fear, or would you be able to take steps of faith and obey God?

Elisabeth Elliot, whose husband was killed along with four other missionaries in Ecuador, said that her life was once controlled completely by fear. Every time she started to step out, fear stopped her. A friend told her something that set her free. She said, "Why don't you do it afraid?" Remarkably, Elisabeth Elliot and Rachel Saint, sister of one of the murdered missionaries, went on to evangelize the Indian tribes, including the people who had killed their husband and brother.

If we wait to do something until we are not afraid, we may accomplish very little for God, for others, or even for ourselves. Abram had to step out in faith and obedience to God and do what He had commanded, and we should do the same!

Let your life be ruled by God's Word, not by fear.

³⁰But Sarai was barren; she did not have a child.

³¹Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his

grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went out together to go from Ur of the Chaldeans into the land of Canaan; but when they came to Haran [about five hundred and fifty miles northwest of Ur], they settled there.

³²Terah lived two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran.

12 NOW [in Haran] the LORD had said to Abram,

“Go away from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father's house,
To the land which I will show you; [Heb 11:8–10]

²And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you [abundantly],
And make your name great (exalted, distinguished);
And you shall be a blessing [a source of great good to others];

³And I will bless (do good for, benefit) those who bless you,
And I will curse [that is, subject to My wrath and judgment]
the one who curses (despises, dishonors, has contempt for) you.
And in you all the families (nations) of the earth will be
blessed.” [Gal 3:8]

⁴So Abram departed [in faithful obedience] as the LORD had directed him; and Lot [his nephew] left with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran.

⁵Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their

possessions which they had acquired, and the people (servants) which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan,

⁶Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the [great] terebinth (oak) tree of Moreh. Now the Canaanites were in the land at that time.

POWERPOINT

God promised to bless Abraham and to make him a blessing to others. That promise is also true for you. The best ways I know to win the battles of the mind are to continually remind yourself that you are blessed and to intentionally be a blessing to others.



⁷Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “I will give this land to your descendants.” So Abram built an altar there to [honor] the LORD who had appeared to him.

⁸Then he moved on from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD [in worship through prayer, praise, and thanksgiving].

⁹Then Abram journeyed on, continuing toward the Negev (the South country of Judah).

¹⁰Now there was a famine in the land; and Abram went down into Egypt to live temporarily, for the famine in the land was oppressive *and* severe.

¹¹And when he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, "Listen: I know that you are a beautiful woman;

¹²so when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me [to acquire you], but they will let you live.

¹³"Please tell them that you are my sister so that things will go well for me for your sake, and my life will be spared because of you."

¹⁴And when Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that Sarai was very beautiful.

¹⁵Pharaoh's princes (officials) also saw her and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken [for the purpose of marriage] into Pharaoh's house (harem).

¹⁶Therefore Pharaoh treated Abram well for her sake; he acquired sheep, oxen, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

¹⁷But the LORD punished Pharaoh and his household with severe plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

¹⁸Then Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this that you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife?

¹⁹"Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her as my wife? Now then, here is your wife; take her and go!"

²⁰So Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they escorted him on his way, with his wife and all that he had.

13 SO ABRAM went up out of Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot [his nephew] with him, into the Negev (the South country of Judah).

²Now Abram was extremely rich in livestock and in silver and in gold.

³He journeyed on from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai,

⁴where he had first built an altar; and there Abram called on the name of the LORD [in prayer]. [Gal 3:6–9]

⁵But Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents.

⁶Now the land was not able to support them [that is, sustain all their grazing and water needs] while they lived near one another, for their possessions were too great for them to stay together.

⁷And there was strife *and* quarreling between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle. Now the Canaanite and the Perizzite were living in the land at that same time [making grazing of the livestock difficult].

⁸So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife *and* disagreement between you and me, nor between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, because we are relatives.

⁹"Is not the entire land before you? Please separate [yourself] from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or if you choose the right, then I will go to the left."

¹⁰So Lot looked and saw that the valley of the Jordan was well watered everywhere—this was before the LORD destroyed

Sodom and Gomorrah; [it was all] like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as you go to Zoar [at the south end of the Dead Sea].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Believe God Has Good for You

In Genesis 13, we see that Abram (whom God later renamed Abraham) had a good attitude—a generous and giving attitude—toward his nephew, Lot. Abram had a right to the land, but he told Lot to choose his portion, and Lot chose the best land for himself. God then told Abram to look from the place where he was (v. 14). God didn't say to look at where he was; He said to look from it—beyond it—to all God had in store for him. God had a plan for Abram, even though he had just experienced great loss.

Anytime you need encouragement, as Abraham did, you can find it in Jeremiah 29:11: “‘For I know the plans and thoughts that I have for you,’ says the LORD, ‘plans for peace and well-being and not for disaster to give you a future and a hope.’” God wants you to have hope. He's got a good plan for your life!

¹¹Then Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan, and he traveled east. So they separated from each other.

¹²Abram settled in the land of Canaan, and Lot settled in the cities of the valley and camped as far as Sodom *and* lived there.

¹³But the men of Sodom were extremely wicked and sinful against the LORD [unashamed in their open sin before Him].

¹⁴The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had left him, “Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are *standing*, northward and southward and eastward and westward;

¹⁵for all the land which you see I will give to you and to your descendants forever. [Acts 7:5]

¹⁶“I will make your descendants [as numerous] as the dust of the earth, so that if a man could count the [grains of] dust of the earth, then your descendants could also be counted. [Gen 28:14]

¹⁷“Arise, walk (make a thorough reconnaissance) around in the land, through its length and its width, for I will give it to you.”

¹⁸Then Abram broke camp *and* moved his tent, and came and settled by the [grove of the great] terebinths (oak trees) of Mamre [the Amorite], which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to [honor] the LORD.

14 IN THE days of the [Eastern] kings Amraphel of Shinar, Arioch of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer of Elam, and Tidal of Goiim,

²they [invaded the Jordan Valley near the Dead Sea, and] made war with Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar).

³All of these [kings] joined together [as allies] in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Sea of Salt).

⁴Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer [the most powerful king in the invading confederacy], but in the thirteenth year they rebelled.

⁵In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the [three] kings who were with him attacked and subdued the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, and the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim,

⁶and the Horites in their mountainous country of Seir, as far as El-paran, which is on the border of the wilderness.

⁷Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and subdued all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who lived in Hazazon-tamar.

⁸Then the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela (that is, Zoar) came out; and they joined together for battle with the invading kings in the Valley of Siddim,

⁹against Chedorlaomer king of Elam and Tidal king of Goiim and Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Ellasar—four kings against five.

¹⁰Now the Valley of Siddim was full of tar (bitumen) pits; and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, they fell into them. But the remainder [of the kings] who survived fled to the hill country.

¹¹Then the victors took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food supply *and* provisions and left.

¹²And they also took [captive] Lot, Abram's nephew, and his possessions and left, for he was living in Sodom.

¹³Then a survivor who had escaped [from the invading forces on the other side of the Jordan] came and told Abram the Hebrew. Now he was living by the terebinths (oaks) of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner—they were allies of Abram.

¹⁴When Abram heard that his nephew [Lot] had been

captured, he armed *and* led out his trained men, born in his own house, [numbering] three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far [north] as Dan.

¹⁵He divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and attacked *and* defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus.

¹⁶And he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his nephew Lot and his possessions, and also the women, and the people.

¹⁷Then after Abram's return from the defeat (slaughter) of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).

¹⁸Melchizedek king of Salem (ancient Jerusalem) brought out bread and wine [for them]; he was the priest of God Most High.

¹⁹And Melchizedek blessed Abram and said,

“Blessed (joyful, favored) be Abram by God Most High,
Creator *and* Possessor of heaven and earth;

²⁰And blessed, praised, *and* glorified be God Most High,
Who has given your enemies into your hand.”

And Abram gave him a tenth of all [the treasure he had taken in battle]. [Heb 7:1–10]

²¹The king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the people and keep the goods (spoils of battle) for yourself.”

²²But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have raised my hand *and* sworn an oath to the LORD God Most High, the Creator *and* Possessor of heaven and earth,

²³that I would not take anything that is yours, from a thread to a sandal strap, so you could not say, ‘I [the King of Sodom] have made Abram rich.’

²⁴“I will take nothing except what my young men have eaten, and the share of the spoils belonging to the men [my allies] who went with me—Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their share of the spoils.”

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, I will not be afraid
because You are my shield.*

• adapted from Genesis 15:1

15 AFTER THESE things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying,

“Do not be afraid, Abram,
I am your shield;
Your reward [for obedience] shall be very great.”

²Abram said, “Lord GOD, what *reward* will You give me, since I am [leaving this world] childless, and he who will be the owner *and* heir of my house is this [servant] Eliezer from Damascus?”

³And Abram continued, “Since You have given no child to me, one (a servant) born in my house is my heir.”

⁴Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “This man [Eliezer] will not be your heir but he who shall come from your own body shall be your heir.”

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Keep Believing

In Genesis 15, Abram (later called Abraham) struggled to believe God's promise to him. Doubt raises questions. It makes us ask, "Did God really say...?" "Does the Word really mean...?" Doubt is often the enemy's entry point into our minds. Simple questions about God's promises to us can enable Satan to influence us.

Unbelief is far worse than doubt. Doubt raises the question, but unbelief is the result. The enemy launches his attacks by first posing questions and then subtly causing those questions to bring doubt into our minds.

When a question comes so simply, the obvious answer must be, "Well, He didn't really mean..." With that opening, Satan establishes a stronghold in your mind, and it takes little for him to move you from there to a total lack of belief.

I am familiar with this battle. Because I have been in ministry for so long, some people think I never have to battle for my faith. But the moment any of us let our guard down, Satan starts whispering his lies to us.

When I struggle to take God totally at His Word, I often read Romans 4. Naturally speaking, everything appeared to be against God's promises to Abraham, but Abraham stood firm. The Bible says, "But he did not doubt *or* waver in unbelief concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong *and* empowered by faith, giving glory to God" (v. 20).

After the Holy Spirit called me into ministry, I thought, *Who am I that God should call me?* But I believed in His call, and I had no doubt—not then. However, when things moved slower than we wanted or when we faced the various challenges that come with growth, I often found myself meditating on Abraham and God's promises to him. If Abraham could believe and not stagger with unbelief, why couldn't Joyce Meyer?

I can now say that I fought the battles and I continue to fight them. With God's grace, I am winning. God does not show partiality, and what He has done for me, He will do for others. When you are tempted to doubt His promises, recognize the doubt as the enemy's attack against your mind, and resist by the power of God's Word and with the help of the Holy Spirit.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God and Father of Abraham, I thank You for Abraham's example. Help me to push aside the devil's advances by totally trusting You and standing on Your promises for my life—even if no one else stands with me. In Jesus' name, I ask it. Amen.

⁵And the LORD brought Abram outside [his tent into the night] and said, “Look now toward the heavens and count the stars—if you are able to count them.” Then He said to him, “So [numerous] shall your descendants be.” [Heb 11:12]

⁶Then Abram believed in (affirmed, trusted in, relied on, remained steadfast to) the LORD; and He counted (credited) it to him as righteousness (doing right in regard to God and man). [Rom 4:3, 18–22; Gal 3:6; James 2:23]

⁷And He said to him, “I am the [same] LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land as an inheritance.”

⁸But Abram said, “Lord GOD, by what [proof] will I know that I will inherit it?”

⁹So God said to him, “Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.”

¹⁰So Abram brought all these to Him and cut them down the middle, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds.

¹¹The birds of prey swooped down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

¹²When the sun was setting, a deep sleep overcame Abram; and a horror (terror, shuddering fear, nightmare) of great darkness overcame him.

POWERPOINT

God gave Abraham a definite promise about his future, but He gave no clear statement about when the promise would be fulfilled. The same is often true for us. While you are waiting for the fulfillment of a promise to come forth, waiting for a breakthrough, God is working behind the scenes bringing good things to pass for you. Just be patient and continue expecting good things, and you will see them.



¹³*God* said to Abram, “Know for sure that your descendants will be strangers [living temporarily] in a land (Egypt) that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years. [Ex 12:40]

¹⁴“But on that nation whom your descendants will serve I will bring judgment, and afterward they will come out [of that

land] with great possessions. [Ex 12:35, 36; Acts 7:6, 7]

¹⁵“As for you, you shall [die and] go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age.

¹⁶“Then in the fourth generation your descendants shall return here [to Canaan, the land of promise], for the wickedness *and* guilt of the Amorites is not yet complete (finished).” [Josh 24:15]

¹⁷When the sun had gone down and a [deep] darkness had come, *there appeared* a smoking brazier and a flaming torch which passed between the [divided] pieces [of the animals]. [Jer 34:18, 19]

¹⁸On the same day the LORD made a covenant (promise, pledge) with Abram, saying,

“To your descendants I have given this land,
From the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates—

¹⁹[the land of] the Kenites and the Kenizzites and the Kadmonites

²⁰and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Rephaim,

²¹the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Girgashites and the Jebusites.”

16 NOW SARAI, Abram’s wife, had not borne him any *children*, and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar.

²So Sarai said to Abram, “See here, the LORD has prevented me from bearing *children*. I am asking you to go in to [the bed of] my maid [so that she may bear you a child]; perhaps I will

obtain children by her.” And Abram listened to Sarai *and* did as she said.

³After Abram had lived in the land of Canaan ten years, Abram’s wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian [maid], and gave her to her husband Abram to be his [secondary] wife.

⁴He went in to [the bed of] Hagar, and she conceived; and when she realized that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress [regarding Sarai as insignificant because of her infertility].

⁵Then Sarai said to Abram, “May [the responsibility for] the wrong done to me [by the arrogant behavior of Hagar] be upon you. I gave my maid into your arms, and when she realized that she had conceived, I was despised *and* looked on with disrespect. May the LORD judge [who has done right] between you and me.”

⁶But Abram said to Sarai, “Look, your maid is *entirely* in your hands *and* subject to your authority; do as you please with her.” So Sarai treated her harshly *and* humiliated her, and Hagar fled from her.

⁷But the Angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, on the road to [Egypt by way of] Shur.

⁸And He said, “Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where did you come from and where are you going?” And she said, “I am running away from my mistress Sarai.”

⁹The Angel of the LORD said to her, “Go back to your mistress, and submit humbly to her authority.”

¹⁰Then the Angel of the LORD said to her, “I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count.”

¹¹The Angel of the LORD continued,

“Behold, you are with child,

And you will bear a son;

And you shall name him Ishmael (God hears),

Because the LORD has heard *and* paid attention to your persecution (suffering).

¹²“He (Ishmael) will be a wild donkey of a man;

His hand *will be* against every man [continually fighting]

And every man’s hand against him;

And he will dwell in defiance of all his brothers.”

¹³Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, “You are God Who Sees”; for she said, “Have I not even here [in the wilderness] remained alive after seeing Him [who sees me with understanding and compassion]?”

POWERPOINT

In Genesis 16:9, God's angel told Hagar to go back to Sarai and "submit humbly to her authority." That probably was not easy to do, since Sarah had treated Hagar badly after Hagar became pregnant with Abram's child. Think about this from Hagar's perspective. Would you be able to stay in a place or with a person that was difficult for you in order to be obedient to God?



¹⁴Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi (Well of the Living One Who Sees Me); it is between Kadesh and Bered.

¹⁵So Hagar gave birth to Abram's son; and Abram named his son, to whom Hagar gave birth, Ishmael (God hears).

¹⁶Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar gave birth to Ishmael.

17 WHEN ABRAM was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said,

“I am God Almighty;
Walk [habitually] before Me [with integrity, knowing that you are always in My presence], and be blameless *and* complete [in obedience to Me].

²“I will establish My covenant (everlasting promise) between Me and you,
And I will multiply you exceedingly [through your descendants].”

³Then Abram fell on his face [in worship], and God spoke with him, saying,

⁴“As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you,
And [as a result] you shall be the father of many nations.

⁵“No longer shall your name be Abram (exalted father),
But your name shall be Abraham (father of a multitude);
For I will make you the father of many nations.

⁶“I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.

⁷“I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. [Gal 3:16]

⁸“I will give to you and to your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger [moving from place to place], all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession [of

property]; and I will be their God.” [Acts 7:5]

⁹Further, God said to Abraham, “As for you [your part of the agreement], you shall keep *and* faithfully obey [the terms of] My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.

¹⁰“This is [the sign of] My covenant, which you shall keep *and* faithfully obey, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised.

¹¹“And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be the sign (symbol, memorial) of the covenant between Me and you.

¹²“Every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, [including] a *servant* whether born in the house or one who is purchased with [your] money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants.

¹³“A *servant* who is born in your house or one who is purchased with your money must be circumcised; and [the sign of] My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

¹⁴“And the male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”

¹⁵Then God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai (my princess), but her name will be Sarah (Princess).

¹⁶“I will bless her, and indeed I will also give you a son by her. Yes, I will bless her, and she shall be a *mother of nations*; kings of peoples will come from her.”

¹⁷Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, “Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear *a child*?”

¹⁸And Abraham said to God, “Oh, that Ishmael [my firstborn] might live before You!”

¹⁹But God said, “No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son indeed, and you shall name him Isaac (laughter); and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant and with his descendants after him.

²⁰“As for Ishmael, I have heard *and* listened to you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful and will greatly multiply him [through his descendants]. He will be the father of twelve princes (chieftains, sheiks), and I will make him a great nation. [Gen 25:12–18]

²¹“But My covenant [My promise, My solemn pledge], I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this time next year.”

²²And God finished speaking with him and went up from Abraham.

²³Then Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all *the servants* who were born in his house and all who were purchased with his money, every male among the men of Abraham’s household, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin the very same day, as God had said to him.

²⁴So Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised.

²⁵And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised.

²⁶On the very same day Abraham was circumcised, as well as Ishmael his son.

²⁷All the men [servants] of his household, both those born in the house and those purchased with money from a foreigner, were circumcised along with him [as the sign of God's covenant with Abraham].

18 NOW THE LORD appeared to Abraham by the terebinth *trees* of Mamre [in Hebron], while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day.

²When he raised his eyes and looked up, behold, three men were standing [a little distance] from him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed down [with his face] to the ground,

³and Abraham said, "My lord, if now I have found favor in your sight, please do not pass by your servant [without stopping to visit].

⁴"Please let a little water be brought [by one of my servants] and [you may] wash your feet, and recline *and* rest comfortably under the tree.

⁵And I will bring a piece of bread to refresh *and* sustain you; after that you may go on, since you have come to your servant." And they replied, "Do as you have said."

⁶So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Quickly, get ready three measures of fine meal, knead it and bake cakes."

⁷Abraham also ran to the herd and brought a calf, tender and choice, and he gave it to the servant [to butcher], and he

hurried to prepare it.

⁸Then he took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before the men; and he stood beside them under the tree while they ate.

⁹Then they said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” And he said, “There, in the tent.”

¹⁰He said, “I will surely return to you at this ^{*}time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him. [Rom 9:9–12]

¹¹Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in years; she was past [the age of] childbearing.

¹²So Sarah laughed to herself [when she heard the LORD’s words], saying, “After I have become old, shall I have pleasure *and* delight, my lord (husband) being also old?” [1 Pet 3:6]

¹³And the LORD asked Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh [to herself], saying, ‘Shall I really give birth [to a child] when I am so old?’

¹⁴“Is anything too difficult *or* too wonderful for the LORD? At the appointed time, when the season [for her delivery] comes, I will return to you and Sarah will have a son.” [Matt 19:26]

¹⁵Then Sarah denied it, saying, “I did not laugh”; because she was afraid. And He (the LORD) said, “No, but you did laugh.”

¹⁶Then the men got up from there, and looked toward Sodom; and Abraham walked with them to send them on the way.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Trusting God's Timing

When God came to Abraham and said He would bless him, Abraham told God that he wanted a son (see Gen. 15:2). What he had asked for was impossible under natural circumstances due to his wife's old age because she was past the age of childbearing. But all things are possible with God. God delights in us when we come to Him in faith with our requests, and nothing is too "difficult or too wonderful for the LORD." He had "the appointed time" for Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 18:14).

Sometimes when we ask God for something He doesn't provide it right away, and in Abraham's case, twenty years passed before he saw the fulfillment of God's promise to him. God often waits on things and we don't understand why, but we can and should continue to trust Him and His timing in our lives.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Interceding for Others

To intercede means to stand in the gap for someone else, to plead a person's case before the throne of God as Abraham did for Lot and his family. If there is a breach in people's relationships with God due to a particular sin in their lives, we have the privilege of placing ourselves in that breach and praying for them. We can intercede for them and expect to see them comforted and encouraged while they wait. We can also expect a timely breakthrough for them as God meets their needs.

I don't know what I would do if people did not intercede for me. I petition God to give me people to intercede for me and for the fulfillment of the ministry to which He has called me. We all need one another's prayers of intercession.

Praying for others is equivalent to sowing seed. We must sow seed if we are to reap a harvest (see Ps. 126:5; Gal. 6:8–9). Sowing seed into the lives of other people through intercession is one sure way to reap a harvest in our own lives. Each time we pray for someone else, we are inviting God to not only work in that person's life but also in ours.

Intercession is one of the most important ways we carry on the ministry of Jesus Christ, which He began on earth. We can release God's power in the lives of others by praying for them.

¹⁷The LORD said, “Shall I keep secret from Abraham [My friend and servant] what I am going to do, [Gal 3:8]

¹⁸since Abraham is destined to become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him? [Gen 12:2, 3]

¹⁹“For I have known (chosen, acknowledged) him [as My own], so that he may teach *and* command his children and [the sons of] his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is righteous and just, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has promised him.”

²⁰And the LORD said, “The outcry [of the sin] of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave.

²¹“I will go down now, and see whether they have acted [as vilely and wickedly] as the outcry which has come to Me [indicates]; and if not, I will know.”

²²Now the [two] men (angelic beings) turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD.

²³Abraham approached [the LORD] and said, “Will You really sweep away the righteous (those who do right) with the wicked (those who do evil)?

²⁴“Suppose there are fifty righteous [people] within the city; will You really sweep it away and not spare it for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it?

²⁵“Far be it from You to do such a thing—to strike the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are *treated* alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right [by executing just and righteous judgment]?”

²⁶So the LORD said, “If I find within the city of Sodom fifty righteous [people], then I will spare the entire place for their sake.”

²⁷Abraham answered, “Now behold, I who am but dust [in origin] and ashes have decided to speak to the Lord. [Gen 3:19; Job 30:19]

²⁸“If five of the fifty righteous are lacking, will You destroy the entire city for lack of five?” And He said, “If I find [at least] forty-five [righteous people] there, I will not destroy it.”

²⁹Abraham spoke to Him yet again and said, “Suppose [only] forty are found there.” And He said, “I will not do it for the sake of the forty [who are righteous].”

³⁰Then Abraham said [to Him], “Oh, may the Lord not be angry, and I will speak; suppose thirty [righteous people] are found there?” And He said, “I will not do it if I find thirty there.”

³¹And he said, “Now behold, I have decided to speak to the Lord [again]. Suppose [only] twenty [righteous people] are found there?” And the Lord said, “I will not destroy it for the sake of the twenty.”

³²Then Abraham said, “Oh may the Lord not be angry [with me], and I will speak only this once; suppose ten [righteous people] are found there?” And He said, “I will not destroy it for the sake of the ten.”

³³As soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham the LORD departed, and Abraham returned to his own place.

19 IT WAS evening when the two angels came to Sodom.

Lot was sitting at Sodom's [city] gate. Seeing them, Lot got up to meet them and bowed down *with his* face to the ground.

²And he said, "See here, my lords, please turn aside *and* come into your servant's house, and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may get up early and go on your way." But they said, "No, we shall spend the night in the open plaza [of the city]."

³However, Lot strongly urged them, so they turned aside and entered his house; and he prepared a feast for them [with wine], and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

⁴But before they lay down [to sleep], the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, surrounded the house, all the men from every quarter;

⁵and they called out to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we may know them [intimately]."

⁶But Lot went out of the doorway to the men, and shut the door after him,

⁷and said, "Please, my brothers, do not do something so wicked.

⁸"See here, I have two daughters who have not known a man [intimately]; please let me bring them out to you [instead], and you can do as you please with them; only do nothing to these men, because they have in fact come under the shelter of my roof [for protection]."

⁹But they said, "Get out of the way!" And they said, "This man (Lot) came [as an outsider] to live here temporarily, and now he is acting like a judge. Now we will treat you worse than your visitors!" So they rushed forward *and* pressed violently

against Lot and came close to breaking down the door [of his house].

¹⁰But the men (angels) reached out with their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door [after him].

¹¹They struck (punished) the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, from the young men to the old men, so that they exhausted *themselves trying* to find the doorway.

¹²And the [two] men (angels) asked Lot, “Have you any others here [in Sodom]—a son-in-law, and your sons, and your daughters? Whomever you have in the city, take them out of here;

¹³for we are destroying this place, because the outcry [for judgment] against them has grown so great before the LORD that the LORD has sent us to destroy *and* ruin it.”

¹⁴So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were [betrothed, and legally promised] to marry his daughters, and said, “Get up, get out of this place, for the LORD is about to destroy this city!” But to his sons-in-law he appeared to be joking.

¹⁵When morning dawned, the angels urged Lot [to hurry], saying, “Get up! Take your wife and two daughters who are here [and go], or you will be swept away in the punishment of the city.”

¹⁶But Lot hesitated *and* lingered. The men took hold of his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his two daughters, because the LORD was merciful to him [for Abraham’s sake]; and they brought him out, and left him

outside the city [with his family].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Looking Forward

Lot and his family lived in a city consumed by wickedness. God was angry at the degradation in the city and decided to destroy it. He sent two angels to Lot's house to tell him to take his family and flee and not look back (see Gen. 19:17). Lot's wife made the mistake of disobeying the command, and she looked back. Right then and there, she turned into a pillar of salt.

Jesus doesn't want us to forget what happened to this woman, so in Luke 17:32, He spoke these three words: "Remember Lot's wife!" In other words, "Stop looking back. The past is finished. Look to the future ahead!" Begin to see, think on, and talk about the future God has planned for you (see Jer. 29:11), and you will soon make progress in the right direction. If there is anything you need to let go of in order to move forward, there is no better time than now!

¹⁷When they had brought them outside, one [of the angels] said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you, or stop anywhere in the entire valley; escape to the mountains [of Moab], or you will be consumed *and* swept away."

¹⁸But Lot said to them, "Oh no, [not that place] my lords!

¹⁹"Please listen, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have magnified your lovingkindness (mercy) to

me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, because the disaster will overtake me and I will be killed.

²⁰“Now look, this town [in the distance] is near *enough for us* to flee to, and it is small [with only a few people]. Please, let me escape there (is it not small?) so that my life will be saved.”

²¹And the angel said to him, “Behold, I grant you this request also; I will not destroy this town of which you have spoken.

²²“Hurry and take refuge there, for I cannot do anything [to punish Sodom] until you arrive there.” For this reason the town was named Zoar (few, small).

²³The sun had risen over the earth when Lot came to Zoar.

²⁴Then the LORD rained down brimstone (flaming sulfur) and fire on Sodom and on Gomorrah from the LORD out of heaven,

²⁵and He overthrew (demolished, ended) those cities, and the entire valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and whatever grew on the ground.

²⁶But Lot’s wife, from behind him, [foolishly, longingly] looked [back toward Sodom in an act of disobedience], and she became a pillar of salt. [Luke 17:32]

²⁷Abraham started out early the next morning to the place where he [only the day before] had stood before the LORD;

²⁸and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the valley [of the Dead Sea]; and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a kiln (pottery furnace).

²⁹Now when God ravaged *and* destroyed the cities of the plain [of Siddim], He remembered Abraham [and for that

reason], and He sent [Abraham's nephew] Lot out of the midst of the destruction, when He destroyed the cities in which Lot had lived.

³⁰Now Lot went up from Zoar, and lived in the mountain together with his two daughters, for he was afraid to stay [any longer] in Zoar; and he lived in a cave with his two daughters.

³¹The firstborn said to the younger, "Our father is aging, and there is not a man on earth [available] to be intimate with us in the customary way [so that we may have children].

³²"Come, let us make our father drunk with wine, and we will lie with him so that we may preserve our family through our father."

³³So they gave their father wine that night, and the firstborn went in and lay with her father; and he did not know when she lay down or when she got up [because he was completely intoxicated].

³⁴Then the next day, the firstborn said to the younger, "Behold, I lay with my father last night; let us make him drunk with wine tonight also, and then you go in and lie with him, so that we may preserve our family through our father."

³⁵So they gave their father wine that night also, and the younger got up and lay with him; and *again* he did not know when she lay down or when she got up.

³⁶Thus both the daughters of Lot conceived by their father.

³⁷The firstborn gave birth to a son, and named him Moab (from father); he is the father of the Moabites to this day.

³⁸The younger also gave birth to a son and named him Ben-ammi (son of my people); he is the father of the Ammonites to this day.

20 NOW ABRAHAM journeyed from there toward the Negev (the South country), and settled between Kadesh and Shur; then he lived temporarily in Gerar.

²Abraham said [again] of Sarah his wife, “She is my sister.” So Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah [into his harem].

³But God came to Abimelech in a dream during the night, and said, “Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken [as your wife], for she is another man’s wife.”

⁴Now Abimelech had not yet come near her; so he said, “Lord, will you kill a people who are righteous *and* innocent *and* blameless [regarding Sarah]?”

⁵“Did Abraham not tell me, ‘She is my sister?’ And she herself said, ‘He is my brother.’ In the integrity of my heart and innocence of my hands I have done this.”

⁶Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know you did this in the integrity of your heart, for it was I who kept you back *and* spared you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not give you an opportunity to touch her.

⁷“So now return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return *her* [to him], know that you shall die, you and all who are yours (your household).”

⁸So Abimelech got up early in the morning and called all his servants and told them all these things; and the men were terrified.

⁹Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, “What

have you done to us? And how have I offended you that you have brought on me and my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me what ought not to be done [to anyone].”

¹⁰And Abimelech said to Abraham, “What have you encountered *or* seen [in us or our customs], that you have done this [unjust] thing?”

¹¹Abraham said, “Because I thought, ‘Surely there is no fear *or* reverence of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.’

¹²“Besides, she actually is my [half] sister; she is the daughter of my father [Terah], but not of my mother; and she became my wife.

¹³“When God caused me to wander from my father’s house, I said to her, ‘This kindness *and* loyalty you can show me: at every place we stop, say of me, “He is my brother.”’”

¹⁴Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen and male and female slaves, and gave them to Abraham, and returned Sarah his wife to him [as God commanded].

¹⁵So Abimelech said, “Behold, my land is before you; settle wherever you please.”

¹⁶Then to Sarah he said, “Look, I have given this brother of yours a thousand pieces of silver; it is to compensate you [for all that has happened] *and* to vindicate your honor before all who are with you; before all men you are cleared *and* compensated.”

¹⁷So Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his maids, and they *again* gave birth to *children*,

¹⁸for the LORD had securely closed the wombs of all [the

women] in Abimelech's household because of Sarah, Abraham's wife. [1 Pet 3:1–6]

21 THE LORD graciously remembered *and* visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for her as He had promised.

²So Sarah conceived and gave birth to a son for Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him.

³Abraham named his son Isaac (laughter), *the son* to whom Sarah gave birth.

⁴So Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, just as God had commanded him.

⁵Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born.

⁶Sarah said, “God has made me laugh; all who hear [about our good news] will laugh with me.”

⁷And she said, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have given birth to a son by him in his old age.” [Heb 11:12]

⁸The child [Isaac] grew and was weaned, and Abraham held a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.

⁹Now [as time went on] Sarah saw [Ishmael] the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking [Isaac]. [Gal 4:29]

POWERPOINT

When Abraham was seventy-five years old, God promised that he would become the father of many nations, but for many long years Abraham had no children. With no human reason for hope, Abraham continued to hope in faith that he would have an heir, and he finally did. Let me encourage you today to wait for God's promises with a heart full of faith.



¹⁰Therefore she said to Abraham, “Drive out this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac.” [Gal 4:28–31]

¹¹The situation distressed Abraham greatly because of his son [Ishmael].

¹²God said to Abraham, “Do not let it distress you because of Ishmael and your maid; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to

her *and* do what she asks, for your descendants will be named through Isaac. [Rom 9:7]

¹³“And I will also make a nation of [Ishmael] the son of the maid, because he is your descendant.”

¹⁴So Abraham got up early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar, putting them on her shoulder, and *gave her* the boy, and sent her away. And she left [but lost her way] and wandered [aimlessly] in the Wilderness of Beersheba.

¹⁵When the water in the skin was all gone, Hagar abandoned the boy under one of the bushes.

¹⁶Then she went and sat down opposite him, about a bowshot away, for she said, “Do not let me see the boy die.” And as she sat down opposite him, she raised her voice and wept.

¹⁷God heard the voice of the boy, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid, for God has heard the voice of the boy from where he is [resting].

¹⁸“Get up, help the boy up, and hold him by the hand, for I will make him a great nation.”

¹⁹Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the [empty] skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

²⁰God was with Ishmael, and he grew *and* developed; and he lived in the wilderness and became an [expert] archer.

²¹He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

²²Now at that time Abimelech and Phicol, the commander

of his army, said to Abraham, "God is with you in everything you do;

²³so now, swear to me here by God that you will not deal unfairly with me [by breaking any agreements we have] or with my son or with my descendants, but as I have treated you with kindness, you shall do the same to me and to the land in which you have sojourned (temporarily lived)."

²⁴And Abraham said, "I will swear."

²⁵Then Abraham complained to Abimelech about a well of water which the servants of Abimelech had [violently] seized [from him],

²⁶Abimelech said, "I do not know who did this thing. Indeed, you did not tell me, and I did not hear of it until today."

²⁷So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two men made a covenant (binding agreement).

²⁸Then Abraham set apart seven ewe lambs of the flock,

²⁹and Abimelech said to Abraham, "What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs which you have set apart?"

³⁰Abraham said, "You are to accept these seven ewe lambs from me as a witness for me, that I dug this well."

³¹Therefore that place was called Beersheba (Well of the Oath or Well of the Seven), because there the two of them swore an oath.

³²So they made a covenant at Beersheba; then Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, got up and returned to the land of the Philistines.

³³Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD [in prayer], the Eternal God.

³⁴And Abraham lived [as a resident alien] in the land of the Philistines for many days.

22 NOW AFTER these things, God tested [the faith and commitment of] Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he answered, “Here I am.”

²God said, “Take now your son, your only son [of promise], whom you love, Isaac, and go to the region of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

³So Abraham got up early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and his son Isaac; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and then he got up and went to the place of which God had told him.

⁴On the third day [of travel] Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance.

⁵Abraham said to his servants, “Settle down *and* stay here with the donkey; the young man and I will go over there and worship [God], and we will come back to you.” [Heb 11:17–19]

⁶Then Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it on [the shoulders of] Isaac his son, and he took the fire (firepot) in his own hand and the [sacrificial] knife; and the two of them walked on together.

⁷And Isaac said to Abraham, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” Isaac said, “Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

⁸Abraham said, “My son, God will provide for Himself a lamb for the burnt offering.” So the two walked on together.

⁹When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood, and bound Isaac his son and placed him on the altar, on top of the wood. [Matt 10:37]

¹⁰Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son. [Heb 11:17–19]

¹¹But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” He answered, “Here I am.”

¹²The LORD said, “Do not reach out [with the knife in] your hand against the boy, and do nothing to [harm] him; for now I know that you fear God [with reverence and profound respect], since you have not withheld from Me your son, your only son [of promise].”

¹³Then Abraham looked up and glanced around, and behold, behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up for a burnt offering (ascending sacrifice) instead of his son.

¹⁴So Abraham named that place The LORD Will Provide. And it is said to this day, “On the mountain of the LORD it will be seen *and* provided.”

¹⁵The Angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time

¹⁶and said, “By Myself (on the basis of Who I Am) I have sworn [an oath], declares the LORD, that since you have done this thing and have not withheld [from Me] your son, your only son [of promise],

¹⁷indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your descendants like the stars of the heavens and like the sand on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of

their enemies [as conquerors]. [Heb 6:13, 14; 11:12]

¹⁸“Through your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have heard *and* obeyed My voice.” [Gen 12:2, 3; 13:16; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; Acts 3:25, 26; Gal 3:16]

¹⁹So Abraham returned to his servants, and they got up and went with him to Beersheba; and Abraham settled in Beersheba.

²⁰Now after these things Abraham was told, “Milcah has borne children to your brother Nahor:

²¹Uz the firstborn and Buz his brother and Kemuel the father of Aram,

²²Chesed and Hazo and Pildash and Jidlaph and Bethuel.”

²³Bethuel became the father of Rebekah. These eight [children] Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham’s brother.

²⁴Nahor’s concubine, whose name was Reumah, gave birth to Tebah and Gaham and Tahash and Maacah.

23 SARAH LIVED a hundred and twenty-seven years; this was the length of the life of Sarah.

²Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.

³Then Abraham stood up before his dead [wife’s body], and spoke to the sons of Heth (Hittites), saying,

⁴“I am a stranger and a sojourner (resident alien) among you; give (sell) me property for a burial place among you so that I may bury my dead [in the proper manner].”

⁵The Hittites replied to Abraham,

⁶“Listen to us, my lord; you are a prince of God [a mighty prince] among us; bury your dead in the choicest of our graves; none of us will refuse you his grave *or* hinder you from burying your dead [wife].”

⁷So Abraham stood up and bowed to the people of the land, the Hittites.

⁸And Abraham said to them, “If you are willing to grant my dead a [proper] burial, listen to me, and plead with Ephron the son of Zohar for me,

⁹so that he may give (sell) me the cave of Machpelah which he owns—it is at the end of his field; let him give it to me here in your presence for the full price as a burial site [which I may keep forever among you].”

¹⁰Now Ephron was present there among the sons of Heth; so within the hearing of all the sons of Heth and all who were entering the gate of his city, Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham, saying,

¹¹“No, my lord, hear me; I give you the [entire] field, and I also give you the cave that is in it. In the presence of the men of my people I give (sell) it to you; bury your dead [there].”

¹²Then Abraham bowed down before the people of the land.

¹³He said to Ephron in the presence of the people of the land, “If you will only please listen to me *and* accept my offer. I will give you the price of the field; accept it from me and I will bury my dead there.”

¹⁴Ephron replied to Abraham,

¹⁵“My lord, listen to me. The land [you seek] is worth four

hundred shekels of silver; what is that between you and me? So bury your dead.”

¹⁶So Abraham listened to Ephron [and agreed to his terms]; and he weighed out for Ephron the [amount of] silver which he had named in the hearing of the Hittites: four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weights current among the merchants.

¹⁷So the field of Ephron in Machpelah, which was to the east of Mamre (Hebron)—the field and the cave which was in it, and all the trees that were in the field and in all its borders around it—were deeded over [legally]

¹⁸to Abraham as his possession in the presence of the Hittites, before all who were entering at the gate of his city.

¹⁹After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah to the east of Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan.

²⁰The field and the cave in it were deeded over to Abraham by the Hittites as a [permanent] possession *and* burial place.

24 NOW ABRAHAM was old, [well] advanced in age; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things.

²Abraham said to his servant [Eliezer of Damascus], the oldest of his household, who had charge over all that Abraham owned, “Please, put your hand under my thigh [as is customary for affirming a solemn oath], [Gen 15:2]

³and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live,

⁴but you will [instead] go to my [former] country (Mesopotamia) and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac [the heir of the covenant promise].”

⁵The servant said to him, “Suppose the woman will not be willing to follow me back to this country; should I take your son back to the country from which you came?”

⁶Abraham said to him, “See to it that you do not take my son back there!

⁷“The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father’s house, from the land of my family *and* my birth, who spoke to me and swore to me, saying, ‘To your descendants I will give this land’—He will send His angel before you [to guide you], and you will take a wife from there for my son [and bring her here].

⁸“If the woman is not willing to follow you [to this land], then you will be free from this my oath *and* blameless; only you must never take my son back there.”

⁹So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.

¹⁰Then the servant took ten of his master’s camels, and set out, taking some of his master’s good things with him; so he got up and journeyed to Mesopotamia [between the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers], to the city of Nahor [the home of Abraham’s brother].

¹¹He made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at the time of the evening when women go out to draw water.

¹²And he said, “O LORD, God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today, and show lovingkindness

(faithfulness) to my master Abraham.

¹³“Behold, I stand here at the spring of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water;

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*I pray, God, that You would
grant me success today and
help me show lovingkindness
to the people around me.*

• adapted from Genesis 24:12

¹⁴now let it be that the girl to whom I say, ‘Please, let down your jar so that I may [have a] drink,’ and she replies, ‘Drink, and I will also give your camels water to drink’—may she *be the one* whom You have selected [as a wife] for Your servant Isaac; and by this I will know that You have shown lovingkindness (faithfulness) to my master.”

¹⁵Before Eliezer had finished speaking (praying), Rebekah came out with her [water] jar on her shoulder. Rebekah was the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, who was the wife of

Abraham's brother Nahor.

¹⁶The girl was very beautiful, a virgin and unmarried; and she went down to the spring and filled her jar and came up.

¹⁷Then the servant ran to meet her, and said, "Please let me drink a little water from your jar."

¹⁸And she said, "Drink, my lord"; and she quickly lowered her jar to her hand, and gave him a drink.

¹⁹When she had given Eliezer a drink, she said, "I will also draw water for your camels until they have finished drinking."

²⁰So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, and ran again to the well and drew water for all his camels.

²¹Meanwhile, the man stood gazing at Rebekah in [reverent] silence, [waiting] to know if the LORD had made his trip successful or not.

²²When the camels had finished drinking, Eliezer took a gold ring weighing a half-shekel and two bracelets for her hands weighing ten shekels in gold,

²³and said, "Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room in your father's house for us to lodge?"

²⁴And she said to him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, Milcah's son, whom she bore to [her husband] Nahor."

²⁵Again she said to him, "We have plenty of both straw and feed, and also room to lodge."

²⁶The man bowed his head and worshiped the LORD.

²⁷He said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not denied His lovingkindness and His truth to my master. As for me, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brothers."

²⁸Then the girl ran and told her mother's household what had happened.

²⁹Now Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban; and Laban ran out to the man at the well.

³⁰When he saw the ring and the bracelets on his sister's arms, and when he heard Rebekah his sister, saying, "The man said this to me," he went to Eliezer and found him standing by the camels at the spring.

³¹And Laban said, "Come in, blessed of the LORD! Why do you stand outside since I have made the house ready and have prepared a place for the camels?"

³²So the man came into the house, and Laban unloaded his camels and gave them straw and feed, and [he gave] water to [Eliezer to] wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him.

³³But when food was set before him, he said, "I will not eat until I have stated my business." And Laban said, "Speak on."

³⁴So he said, "I am Abraham's servant.

³⁵"The LORD has greatly blessed my master, and he has become great (wealthy, powerful); He has given him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and servants and maids, and camels and donkeys.

³⁶"Now Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master when she was in her old age, and he has given everything that he has to him.

³⁷"My master made me swear [an oath], saying, 'You must not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live;

³⁸but you shall [instead] go to my father's house and to my family and take a wife for my son [Isaac].'

³⁹"Then I said to my master, 'But suppose the woman will not follow me [back to this land].'

⁴⁰"He said to me, 'The LORD, before whom I walk [habitually and obediently], will send His angel with you to make your journey successful, and you will take a wife for my son from my relatives and from my father's house;

⁴¹then you will be free of my oath, when you come to my relatives; and if they do not give her to you, you will [also] be free of my oath.'

⁴²"I came today to the spring, and said, 'O LORD, God of my master Abraham, if now You will make my journey on which I go successful;

⁴³please look, I am standing by the spring of water; now let it be that when the maiden [whom You have chosen for Isaac] comes out to draw [water], and to whom I say, "Please, give me a little water to drink from your jar";

⁴⁴and if she says to me, "You drink, and I will also draw [water] for your camels"; let that woman be the one whom the LORD has selected *and* chosen [as a wife] for my master's son.'

⁴⁵"Before I had finished praying in my heart, behold, Rebekah came out with her [water] jar on her shoulder, and she went down to the spring and drew water. And I said to her, 'Please, let me have a drink.'

⁴⁶"And she quickly let down her jar from her *shoulder*, and said, 'Drink, and I will also water your camels'; so I drank, and she also watered the camels.

47“Then I asked her, ‘Whose daughter are you?’ She said, ‘The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor’s son, whom Milcah bore to him’; and I put the ring in her nose, and the bracelets on her arms.

48“And I bowed down my head and worshiped the LORD, and blessed the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me in the right way to take the daughter of my master’s brother to his son [as a wife].

49“‘So now if you are going to show kindness and truth to my master [being faithful to him], tell me; and if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right or to the left [and go on my way].’”

50Then Laban and Bethuel answered, “The matter has come from the LORD; so we dare not speak bad or good [to you about it—we cannot interfere].

51“Rebekah is before you; take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master’s son, as the LORD has spoken.”

52When Abraham’s servant heard their words, he bowed himself to the ground [in worship] before the LORD.

53Then the servant brought out jewelry of silver, jewelry of gold, and articles of clothing, and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave precious things to her brother and her mother.

54Then he and the men who were with him ate and drank and spent the night [there]. In the morning when they got up, he said, “Now send me back to my master.”

55But Rebekah’s brother and mother said, “Let the girl stay with us a few days—at least ten; then she may go.”

56But Eliezer said to them, “Do not delay me, since the LORD has prospered my way. Send me away, so that I may go

back to my master.”

⁵⁷And they said, “We will call the girl and ask her what she prefers.”

⁵⁸So they called Rebekah and said, “Will you go with this man?” And she answered, “I will go.”

⁵⁹So they sent off their sister Rebekah and her nurse [Deborah, as her attendant] and Abraham’s servant [Eliezer] and his men.

⁶⁰They blessed Rebekah and said to her,

“May you, our sister,
Become [the mother of] thousands of ten thousands,
And may your descendants possess (conquer)
The [city] gate of those who hate them.”

⁶¹Then Rebekah and her attendants stood, and they mounted camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and went on his way.

⁶²Now Isaac had returned from going to Beer-lahai-roi (Well of the Living One Who Sees Me), for he was living in the Negev. [Gen 16:14]

⁶³Isaac went out to bow down [in prayer] in the field in the [early] evening; he raised his eyes and looked, and camels were coming.

⁶⁴Rebekah also raised her eyes *and* looked, and when she saw Isaac, she dismounted from her camel.

⁶⁵She said to the servant, “Who is that man there walking across the field to meet us?” And the servant said, “He is my master [Isaac].” So she took a veil and covered herself [as was customary].

⁶⁶The servant told Isaac everything that he had done.

⁶⁷Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and he took Rebekah [in marriage], and she became his wife, and he loved her; therefore Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

25 ABRAHAM TOOK another wife, whose name was Keturah.

²She gave birth to Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.

³Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan. The sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim.

⁴The sons of Midian were Ephah, Ephher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the sons of Keturah.

⁵Now Abraham gave everything that he had to Isaac;

⁶but to the sons of his concubines [Hagar and Keturah], Abraham gave gifts while he was still living and he sent them to the east country, away from Isaac his son [of promise].

⁷The days of Abraham's life were a hundred and seventy-five years.

⁸Then Abraham breathed his last and he died at a good old age, an old man who was satisfied [with life]; and he was gathered to his people [who had preceded him in death]. [Gen 15:15; Heb 11:13–16]

⁹So his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is east of Mamre,

¹⁰the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth; there Abraham was buried with Sarah his wife.

¹¹Now after the death of Abraham, God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac lived at Beer-lahai-roi.

¹²Now these are *the records of* the descendants of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's maid, bore to Abraham;

¹³and these are the names of the [twelve] sons of Ishmael, named in the order of their births: Nebaioth, the firstborn of Ishmael, and Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam,

POWERPOINT

Esau was undisciplined and impulsive. It seems he spent years allowing his mind to wander because he never applied principles of discipline to his thought life. An inability to concentrate, such as he demonstrated in exchanging his valuable birthright for a bowl of stew, can be the result of years of letting the mind do whatever it wants to do. Extreme fatigue can also affect concentration. When we are exhausted, Satan will attack our mind because it is difficult to resist him during these times.



¹⁴Mishma, Dumah, Massa,

¹⁵Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah.

¹⁶These are the sons of Ishmael and these are their names,

by their settlements, and by their encampments (sheepfolds); twelve princes (sheiks) according to their tribes. [Foretold in Gen 17:20]

¹⁷Ishmael lived a hundred and thirty-seven years; then he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people [who had preceded him in death].

¹⁸Ishmael's sons (descendants) settled from Havilah to Shur which is east of Egypt as one goes toward Assyria; he settled opposite (east) of all his relatives.

¹⁹Now these are *the records of* the descendants of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham was the father of Isaac.

²⁰Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean (Syrian) of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean.

²¹Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was unable to conceive children; and the LORD granted his prayer and Rebekah his wife conceived [twins].

²²But the children struggled together within her [kicking and shoving one another]; and she said, "If it is so [that the LORD has heard our prayer], why then am I *this way*?" So she went to inquire of the LORD [praying for an answer].

²³The LORD said to her,

"[The founders of] two nations are in your womb;
And the separation of two nations has begun in your body;
The one people shall be stronger than the other;
And the older shall serve the younger."

²⁴When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb.

²⁵The first came out reddish all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau (hairy).

²⁶Afterward his brother came out, and his hand grasped Esau's heel, so he was named Jacob (one who grabs by the heel, supplanter). Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them.

²⁷When the boys grew up, Esau was an able *and* skilled hunter, a man of the outdoors, but Jacob was a quiet *and* peaceful man, living in tents.

²⁸Now Isaac loved [and favored] Esau, because he enjoyed eating his game, but Rebekah loved [and favored] Jacob.

²⁹Jacob had cooked [reddish-brown lentil] stew [one day], when Esau came from the field and was famished;

³⁰and Esau said to Jacob, "Please, let me have a quick swallow of that red stuff there, because I am exhausted *and* famished." For that reason Esau was [also] called Edom (Red).

³¹Jacob answered, "First sell me your birthright (the rights of a firstborn)."

³²Esau said, "Look, I am about to die [if I do not eat soon]; so of what use is this birthright to me?"

³³Jacob said, "Swear [an oath] to me today [that you are selling it to me for this food]"; so he swore [an oath] to him, and sold him his birthright.

³⁴Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; and he ate and drank, and got up and went on his way. In this way Esau scorned his birthright. [Heb 12:15-17]

26 NOW THERE was a famine in the land [of Canaan], besides the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham. So Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech king of the Philistines.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Developing a Mind-set of Abundance

It is important to develop what I call an “abundant mind-set”—one that believes God will always provide what we need in every situation. This is God’s promise throughout Scripture, and part of His nature is to provide for His children. In fact, in the Old Testament, one of the Hebrew names of God is Jehovah-Jireh, which means the “Lord Our Provider.”

In a time of famine, Isaac reaped a harvest a hundred times as much as he had planted and became very wealthy and extremely distinguished (see Gen. 26:12–17). There is nothing we need that God is not able and willing to provide. He loves us and wants to take care of us. When we love Him and do our best to progressively learn and obey His ways, He will make sure our needs are met. In fact, there is no one He would rather share His blessings with than His children.

²The LORD appeared to him and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land of which I will tell you.

³“Live temporarily [as a resident] in this land and I will be with you and will bless *and* favor you, for I will give all these lands to you and to your descendants, and I will establish *and* carry out the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. [Gen 22:16–18; Ps 105:9]

⁴“I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of the

heavens, and will give to your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, [Gen 22:18; Acts 3:25, 26; Gal 3:16]

⁵because Abraham listened to *and* obeyed My voice and [consistently] kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.”

⁶So Isaac stayed in Gerar.

⁷The men of the place asked him about his wife, and he said, “She is my sister,” for he was afraid to say, “my wife”—thinking, “the men of the place might kill me on account of Rebekah, since she is very beautiful.”

⁸It happened when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out of a window and saw Isaac caressing Rebekah his wife.

⁹Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, “See here, Rebekah is in fact your wife! How did you [dare to] say to me, ‘She is my sister’?” And Isaac said to him, “Because I thought I might be killed because of her [desirability].”

¹⁰Abimelech said, “What is this that you have done to us? One of the men [among our people] might easily have been intimate with your wife, and you would have brought guilt on us [before God].”

¹¹Then Abimelech commanded all his people, “Whoever touches this man [Isaac] or his wife [Rebekah] shall without exception be put to death.”

¹²Then Isaac planted [seed] in that land [as a farmer] and reaped in the same year a hundred times [as much as he had planted], and the LORD blessed *and* favored him.

¹³And the man [Isaac] became great and gained more and

more until he became very wealthy *and* extremely distinguished;

¹⁴he owned flocks and herds and a great household [with a number of servants], and the Philistines envied him.

¹⁵Now all the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines stopped up by filling them with dirt.

¹⁶Then Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go away from here, because you are far too powerful for us."

¹⁷So Isaac left that region and camped in the Valley of Gerar, and settled there.

¹⁸Now Isaac again dug [and reopened] the wells of water which had been dug in the days of Abraham his father, because the Philistines had filled them up [with dirt] after the death of Abraham; and he gave the wells the same names that his father had given them.

¹⁹But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of flowing [spring] water,

²⁰the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, "The water is ours!" So Isaac named the well Esek (quarreling), because they quarreled with him.

²¹Then his servants dug another well, and they quarreled over that also, so Isaac named it Sitnah (enmity).

²²He moved away from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over that one; so he named it Rehoboth (broad places), saying, "For now the LORD has made room for us, and we shall be prosperous in the land."

²³Then he went up from there to Beersheba.

²⁴The LORD appeared to him the same night and said,
“I am the God of Abraham your father;
Do not be afraid, for I am with you.
I will bless *and* favor you, and multiply your descendants,
For the sake of My servant Abraham.”

²⁵So Isaac built an altar there and called on the name of the LORD [in prayer]. He pitched his tent there; and there Isaac’s servants dug a well.

²⁶Then Abimelech came to him from Gerar with Ahuzzath, his [close friend and confidential] adviser, and Phicol, the commander of his army.

²⁷Isaac said to them, “Why have you [people] come to me, since you hate me and have sent me away from you?”

²⁸They said, “We see clearly that the LORD has been with you; so we said, ‘There should now be an oath between us [with a curse for the one who breaks it], that is, between you and us, and let us make a covenant (binding agreement, solemn promise) with you,

²⁹that you will not harm us, just as we have not touched you and have done nothing but good to you and have sent you away in peace. You are now the blessed *and* favored of the LORD!’”

³⁰Then Isaac held a [formal] banquet (covenant feast) for them, and they ate and drank.

³¹They got up early in the morning and swore oaths [pledging to do nothing but good to each other]; and Isaac sent them on their way and they left him in peace.

³²Now on the same day, Isaac’s servants came and told him

about the well they had dug, saying, “We have found water.”

³³So he named the well Shibah; therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day. [Gen 21:31]

³⁴When Esau was forty years old he married Judith the daughter of Beerī the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite as his wives;

³⁵and they were a source of grief to [Esau’s parents] Isaac and Rebekah.

27 NOW WHEN Isaac was old and his eyes were too dim to see, he called his elder [and favorite] son Esau and said to him, “My son.” And Esau answered him, “Here I am.”

²Isaac said, “See here, I am old; I do not know when I may die.

³“So now, please take your [hunting] gear, your quiver [of arrows] and your bow, and go out into the open country and hunt game for me;

⁴and make me a savory *and* delicious dish [of meat], the kind I love, and bring it to me to eat, so that my soul may bless you [as my firstborn son] before I die.”

⁵But Rebekah overheard what Isaac said to Esau his son; and when Esau had gone to the open country to hunt for game that he might bring back,

⁶Rebekah said to Jacob her [younger and favorite] son, “Listen carefully: I heard your father saying to Esau your brother,

⁷“Bring me some game and make me a savory *and* delicious dish [of meat], so that I may eat it, and declare my blessing on

you in the presence of the LORD before my death.’

⁸“So now, my son, listen [carefully] to me [and do exactly] as I command you.

⁹“Go now to the flock and bring me two good *and* suitable young goats, and I will make them into a savory dish [of meat] for your father, the kind he loves [to eat].

¹⁰“Then you shall bring it to your father to eat, so that he may bless you before his death.”

¹¹Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, “Listen, Esau my brother is a hairy man and I am a smooth [skinned] man.

¹²“Suppose my father touches me *and* feels my skin; then I will be seen by him as a cheat (imposter), and I will bring his curse on me and not a blessing.”

¹³But his mother said to him, “May your curse be on me, my son; only listen *and* obey me, and go, bring the young goats to me.”

¹⁴So Jacob went and got the two young goats, and brought them to his mother; and his mother prepared a delicious *dish of* food [with a delightful aroma], the kind his father loved [to eat].

¹⁵Then Rebekah took her elder son Esau’s best clothes, which were with her in her house, and put them on Jacob her younger son.

¹⁶And she put the skins of the young goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck.

¹⁷Then she gave her son Jacob the delicious meat and the bread which she had prepared.

¹⁸So he went to his father and said, “My father.” And Isaac said, “Here I am. Who are you, my son?”

¹⁹Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau your firstborn; I have done what you told me to do. Now please, sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may bless me.”

²⁰Isaac said to his son, “How is it that you have found the game so quickly, my son?” And he said, “Because the LORD your God caused it to come to me.”

²¹But Isaac [wondered and] said to Jacob, “Please come close [to me] so that I may touch you, my son, *and* determine if you are really my son Esau or not.”

²²So Jacob approached Isaac, and his father touched him and said, “The voice is Jacob’s voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.”

²³He could not recognize him [as Jacob], because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau’s hands; so he blessed him.

²⁴But he said, “Are you really my son Esau?” Jacob answered, “I am.”

²⁵Then Isaac said, “Bring the food to me, and I will eat some of my son’s game, so that I may bless you.” He brought it to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine and he drank.

²⁶Then his father Isaac said to him, “Please come, my son, and kiss me.”

²⁷So he came and kissed him; and Isaac smelled his clothing and blessed him and said,

“The scent of my son [Esau]

Is like the aroma of a field which the LORD has blessed;

²⁸Now may God give you of the dew of heaven [to water your land],

And of the fatness (fertility) of the earth,
And an abundance of grain and new wine; [Gen 27:39; Deut
33:13, 28]

²⁹May peoples serve you,
And nations bow down to you;
Be lord *and* master over your brothers,
And may your mother's sons bow down to you.
May those who curse you be cursed,
And may those who bless you be blessed."

³⁰Now as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had scarcely left the presence of Isaac his father, Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

³¹Esau also made a delicious dish [of meat] and brought it to his father and said to him, "Let my father get up and eat some of his son's game, so that you may bless me."

³²Isaac his father said to him, "Who are you?" And he replied, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau."

³³Then Isaac trembled violently, and he said, "Then who was the one [who was just here] who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate all of it before you came, and I blessed him. Yes, and he [in fact] shall be (shall remain) blessed."

³⁴When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with a great and extremely bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" [Heb 12:16, 17]

³⁵Isaac said, "Your brother came deceitfully and has [fraudulently] taken away your blessing [for himself]."

³⁶Esau replied, "Is he not rightly named Jacob (the supplanter)? For he has supplanted me these two times: he

took away my birthright, and now he has taken away my blessing. Have you not reserved a blessing for me?"

³⁷But Isaac replied to Esau, "Listen carefully: I have made Jacob your lord *and* master; I have given him all his brothers *and* relatives as servants; and I have sustained him with grain and new wine. What then, can I do for you, my son?"

³⁸Esau said to his father, "Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father." Then Esau [no longer able to restrain himself] raised his voice and wept [loudly].

³⁹Then Isaac his father answered and [prophesied and] said to him,

"Your dwelling shall be away from the fertility of the earth
And away from the dew of heaven above;

⁴⁰But you shall live by your sword,
And serve your brother;
However it shall come to pass when you break loose [from
your anger and hatred],
That you will tear his yoke off your neck [and you will be
free of him]."

⁴¹So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him; and Esau said in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are very near; then I will kill my brother Jacob."

⁴²When these words of her elder son Esau were repeated to Rebekah, she sent for Jacob her younger son, and said to him, "Listen carefully, your brother Esau is comforting himself concerning you *by planning* to kill you.

⁴³“So now, my son, listen *and* do what I say; go, escape to my brother Laban in Haran!

⁴⁴“Stay with him for a while, until your brother’s anger subsides.

⁴⁵“When your brother’s anger toward you subsides and he forgets what you did to him, then I will send and bring you back from there. Why should I be deprived of you both in a single day?”

⁴⁶Then Rebekah said to Isaac, “I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth [these insolent wives of Esau]. If Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth, like these daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?” [Gen 26:34]

28 SO ISAAC called Jacob and blessed him and charged him, and said to him, “You shall not marry one of the women of Canaan.

²“Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother’s father; and take from there as a wife for yourself one of the daughters of Laban your mother’s brother.

³“May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, so that you may become a [great] company of peoples.

⁴“May He also give the blessing of Abraham to you and your descendants with you, that you may inherit the [promised] land of your sojournings, which He gave to Abraham.”

⁵Then Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Paddan-aram,

to Laban, son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.

⁶Now Esau noticed that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him to Paddan-aram to take a wife for himself from there, and that as he blessed him he gave him a prohibition, saying, “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan,”

⁷and that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Paddan-aram.

⁸So Esau realized that [his two wives] the daughters of Canaan displeased Isaac his father;

⁹and [to appease his parents] Esau went to [the family of] Ishmael and took as his wife, in addition to the wives he [already] had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, the sister of Nebaioth [Ishmael’s firstborn son].

¹⁰Now Jacob left Beersheba [never to see his mother again] and traveled toward Haran.

¹¹And he came to a certain place and stayed overnight there because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down there [to sleep].

¹²He dreamed that there was a ladder (stairway) placed on the earth, and the top of it reached [out of sight] toward heaven; and [he saw] the angels of God ascending and descending on it [going to and from heaven]. [John 1:51]

¹³And behold, the LORD stood above *and* around him and said, “I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your [father’s] father and the God of Isaac; I will give to you and to your descendants the land [of promise] on which you are lying.

¹⁴“Your descendants shall be as [countless as] the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and the east

and the north and the south; and all the families (nations) of the earth shall be blessed through you and your descendants. [Gen 12:2, 3; 13:16; 22:18; 26:4; Acts 3:25, 26; Gal 3:8, 16]

¹⁵“Behold, I am with you and will keep [careful watch over you and guard] you wherever you may go, and I will bring you back to this [promised] land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

¹⁶Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and he said, “Without any doubt the LORD is in this place, and I did not realize it.”

¹⁷So he was afraid and said, “How fearful *and* awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gateway to heaven.”

¹⁸So Jacob got up early in the morning, and took the stone he had put under his head and he set it up as a pillar [that is, a monument to the vision in his dream], and he poured [olive] oil on the top of it [to consecrate it].

¹⁹He named that place Bethel (the house of God); the previous name of that city was Luz (Almond Tree).

²⁰Then Jacob made a vow (promise), saying, “If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and clothing to wear,

²¹and if [He grants that] I return to my father’s house in safety, then the LORD will be my God.

**A Prayer To
Renew Your
Mind**



*Thank You, God, that You are
with me and will keep careful
watch over me and guard me
wherever I may go.*

• adapted from Genesis 28:15

²²“This stone which I have set up as a pillar (monument, memorial) will be God’s house [a sacred place to me], and of everything that You give me I will give the tenth to You [as an offering to signify my gratitude and dependence on You].” [Deut 12:8–11; 14:22–26; 26:1–11]

29 THEN JACOB went on his way and came to the land of the people of the East [near Haran].

²As he looked, he saw a well in the field, and three flocks of sheep lying there [resting] beside it because the flocks were watered from that well. Now the stone on the mouth of the well [that covered and protected it] was large,

³and when all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone from the mouth of the well, water the sheep, and [afterward] replace the stone on the mouth of the well.

⁴Jacob said to them, “My brothers, where are you from?” And they said, “We are from Haran.”

⁵So he said to them, “Do you know Laban the grandson of Nahor [Abraham’s brother]?” And they replied, “We know him.”

⁶And he asked them, “Is it well with him?” And they said, “He is doing well; look, here comes his daughter Rachel with the sheep!”

⁷Jacob said, “Look, the sun is still high [overhead]; it is a long time before the flocks need to be gathered [in their folds for the night]. Water the sheep, and go, and return them to their pasture.”

⁸But they said, “We cannot [leave] until all the flocks are gathered together, and the shepherds roll the stone from the mouth of the well; then we will water the sheep.”

⁹While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father’s sheep, for she was a shepherdess.

¹⁰When Jacob saw [his cousin] Rachel, the daughter of Laban, his mother’s brother, and Laban’s sheep, he came up and rolled the stone away from the mouth of the well and watered the flock of Laban, his uncle.

¹¹Then Jacob kissed Rachel [in greeting], and he raised his voice and wept.

¹²Jacob told Rachel he was her father’s relative, Rebekah’s son; and she ran and told her father.

¹³When Laban heard of the arrival of Jacob, his sister’s son, he ran to meet him, and embraced and kissed him and brought him to his house. Then he told Laban all these things.

¹⁴Then Laban said to him, “You are my bone and my flesh.” And Jacob stayed with him a month.

¹⁵Then Laban said to Jacob, “Just because you are my relative, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me, what should your wages be?”

¹⁶Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.

¹⁷Leah’s eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful in form and appearance.

¹⁸Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, “I will serve you [as a hired workman] for seven years [in return] for [the privilege of marrying] Rachel your younger daughter.”

¹⁹Laban said, “It is better that I give her [in marriage] to you than give her to another man. Stay *and* work with me.”

²⁰So Jacob served [Laban] for seven years for [the right to marry] Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.

²¹Finally, Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife, for my time [of service] is completed, so that I may take her to me [as my wife].”

²²So Laban gathered together all the men of the place and prepared a [wedding] feast [with wine].

²³But in the evening he took Leah his daughter and brought her to Jacob, and Jacob went in to [consummate the marriage with] her.

²⁴Laban also gave Zilpah his maid to his daughter Leah as a maid.

²⁵But in the morning [when Jacob awoke], it was Leah [who was with him]! And he said to Laban, “What is this that you have done to me? Did I not work for you [for seven years] for Rachel? Why have you deceived *and* betrayed me [like this]?”

²⁶But Laban only said, “It is not the tradition here to give the younger [daughter in marriage] before the older.

²⁷“Finish the week [of the wedding feast] for Leah; then we will give you Rachel also, and in return you shall work for me for seven more years.”

²⁸So Jacob complied and fulfilled Leah’s week [of celebration]; then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as his [second] wife.

²⁹Laban also gave Bilhah his maid to his daughter Rachel as a maid.

³⁰So Jacob consummated his marriage *and* lived with Rachel [as his wife], and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and he served with Laban for another seven years.

³¹Now when the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, He made her able to bear children, but Rachel was barren.

³²Leah conceived and gave birth to a son and named him Reuben (See, a son!), for she said, “Because the LORD has seen my humiliation *and* suffering; now my husband will love me [since I have given him a son].”

³³Then she conceived again and gave birth to a son and said, “Because the LORD heard that I am unloved, He has given me this son also.” So she named him Simeon (God hears).

³⁴She conceived again and gave birth to a son and said, “Now this time my husband will become attached to me [as a companion], for I have given him three sons.” Therefore he was named Levi.

³⁵Again she conceived and gave birth to a [fourth] son, and she said, “Now I will praise the LORD.” So she named him

Judah; then [for a time] she stopped bearing [children].

30 WHEN RACHEL saw that she conceived no children for Jacob, she envied her sister, and said to Jacob, “Give me children, or else I will die.”

²Then Jacob became furious with Rachel, and he said, “Am I in the place of God, who has denied you children?”

³She said, “Here, take my maid Bilhah and go in to her; and [when the baby comes] she shall deliver it [while sitting] on my knees, so that by her I may also have children [to count as my own].”

POWERPOINT

One way to have an effective prayer life is to develop a good personal relationship with the Father. Know that He loves you, that He is full of mercy, that He will help you. Get to know Jesus. He is your Friend. He died for you. Get to know the Holy Spirit. He is with you all the time as your Helper, so let Him help you. Learn to fill your prayers with the Word of God.



⁴So she gave him Bilhah her maid as a [secondary] wife, and Jacob went in to her.

⁵Bilhah conceived and gave birth to a son for Jacob.

⁶Then Rachel said, “God has judged *and* vindicated me, and has heard my plea and has given me a son [through my maid].” So she named him Dan (He judged).

⁷Bilhah, Rachel’s maid, conceived again and gave birth to a

second son for Jacob.

⁸So Rachel said, “With mighty wrestlings [in prayer to God] I have struggled with my sister and have prevailed.” So she named him Naphtali (my wrestlings).

⁹When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing [children], she took Zilpah her maid and gave her to Jacob as a [secondary] wife.

¹⁰Zilpah, Leah’s maid, gave birth to a son for Jacob.

¹¹Then Leah said, “How fortunate!” So she named him Gad (good fortune).

¹²Zilpah, Leah’s maid, gave birth to a second son for Jacob.

¹³Then Leah said, “I am happy! For women will call me happy.” So she named him Asher (happy).

¹⁴Now at the time of wheat harvest Reuben [the eldest child] went and found some mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, “Please give me some of your son’s mandrakes.”

¹⁵But Leah answered, “Is it a small thing that you have taken my husband? Would you take away my son’s mandrakes also?” So Rachel said, “Jacob shall sleep with you tonight in exchange for your son’s mandrakes.”

¹⁶When Jacob came in from the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, “You must sleep with me [tonight], for I have in fact hired you with my son’s mandrakes.” So he slept with her that night.

¹⁷God listened *and* answered [the prayer of] Leah, and she conceived and gave birth to a fifth son for Jacob.

¹⁸Then Leah said, “God has given me my reward because I have given my maid to my husband.” So she named him

Issachar.

¹⁹Leah conceived again and gave birth to a sixth son for Jacob.

²⁰Then Leah said, “God has endowed me with a good [marriage] gift [for my husband]; now he will live with me [regarding me with honor as his wife], because I have given birth to six sons.” So she named him Zebulun.

²¹Afterward she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah.

²²Then God remembered [the prayers of] Rachel, and God thought of her and opened her womb [so that she would conceive].

²³So she conceived and gave birth to a son; and she said, “God has taken away my disgrace *and* humiliation.”

²⁴She named him Joseph (may He add) and said, “May the LORD add to me another son.”

²⁵Now when Rachel had given birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, “Send me away, that I may go back to my own place and to my own country.

²⁶“Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you know the work which I have done for you.”

²⁷But Laban said to him, “If I have found favor in your sight, *stay with me*; for I have learned [from the omens in divination and by experience] that the LORD has blessed me because of you.”

²⁸He said, “Name your wages, and I will give it [to you].”

²⁹Jacob answered him, “You know how I have served you

and how your possessions, your cattle *and* sheep *and* goats,
have fared with me.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Just Be Patient

Instant gratification takes too long,” my friend said and laughed, standing in front of the microwave as she waited ninety seconds to heat her coffee. I smiled as I watched, but then I realized that *instant* defines our lives today. We have instant credit approval, instant communication, and we want instant answers to our prayers.

However, God can’t be hurried. He does things in His time. Moses fled into the wilderness after killing a man, and he waited forty years for God to tap him on the shoulder. After the call of Paul to preach the gospel, years passed before God fulfilled that promise (see Acts 9:15). No instant gratification there.

Rachel prayed for years to have a child before God answered her (see Gen. 30:8, 22). Many people grow impatient in waiting, as she did, and of course, the devil uses that to say, “If God was going to do what He promised, He would have done it by now.”

I want to point out two things about patience from James 5:7: “So wait patiently.... The farmer waits [expectantly] for the precious harvest from the land, being patient about it.” First, God doesn’t say, “Be patient *if* you wait,” but “Be patient *as* you wait.” Farmers prepare the soil and plant the crops—then comes the waiting. They know that in God’s time, the crops will

produce.

Second, we need to enjoy our lives right now while we wait. Instead of pacing and grumbling about how long we have to wait in the grocery line, what if you said, “Thanks, God. I can slow down now and enjoy this moment. Every second of my life doesn’t have to be productive or bring results”? The psalmist said it this way: “My times are in Your hands” (Ps. 31:15).

That’s the way God wants you to live—and to enjoy the waiting time. Your life and your times are in God’s hands. If you’re facing delays, God knows. He controls the clock of life. “My times are in Your hands.” Don’t focus just on receiving or moving on. Focus on relishing the moments that God has given you to relax, and enjoy them as a gift from God Himself.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God, I get impatient, and I want instant answers to prayers and solutions to my problems. But that’s not Your way. My times are in Your hands. In the name of Jesus Christ, help me to enjoy the waiting time and remind myself that I’m waiting for You. Amen.

³⁰“For you had little before I came and it has increased *and* multiplied abundantly, and the LORD has favored you with blessings wherever I turned. But now, when shall I provide for my own household?”

³¹Laban asked, “What shall I give you?” Jacob replied, “You shall not give me anything. But if you will do this one thing for me [which I now propose], I will again pasture and keep your flock:

³²Let me pass through your entire flock today, removing from it every speckled and spotted sheep and every dark *or* black one among the lambs and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and those shall be my wages.

³³“So my honesty will be evident for me later, when you come [for an accounting] concerning my wages. Every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats and dark among the young lambs, *if found* with me, shall be considered stolen.”

³⁴And Laban said, “Good! Let it be done as you say.”

³⁵So on that same day Laban [secretly] removed the male goats that were streaked and spotted and all the female goats that were speckled and spotted, every one with white on it, and all the dark ones among the sheep, and put them in the care of his sons.

³⁶And he put [a distance of] three days’ journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob was then left in care of the rest of Laban’s flock.

³⁷Then Jacob took branches of fresh poplar and almond and plane trees, and peeled white stripes in them, exposing the white in the branches.

³⁸Then he set the branches which he had peeled in front of the flocks in the watering troughs, where the flocks came to drink; and they mated *and* conceived when they came to drink.

³⁹So the flocks mated *and* conceived by the branches, and the flocks gave birth to streaked, speckled, and spotted offspring.

⁴⁰Jacob separated the lambs, and [as he had done with the peeled branches] he made the flocks face toward the streaked and all the dark *or* black in the [new] flock of Laban; and he put his own herds apart by themselves and did not put them [where they could breed] with Laban's flock.

⁴¹Furthermore, whenever the stronger [animals] of the flocks were breeding, Jacob would place the branches in the sight of the flock in the watering troughs, so that they would mate *and* conceive among the branches;

⁴²but when the flock was sickly, he did not put *the branches* there; so the sicker [animals] were Laban's and the stronger Jacob's.

⁴³So Jacob became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks [of sheep and goats], and female and male servants, and camels and donkeys.

31 JACOB HEARD that Laban's sons were saying: "Jacob has taken away everything that was our father's, and from what belonged to our father he has acquired all this wealth *and* honor."

²Jacob noticed [a change in] the attitude of Laban, and saw that it was not *friendly* toward him as before.

³Then the LORD said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your fathers and to your people, and I will be with you.”

⁴So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to his flock in the field,

⁵and he said to them, “I see [a change in] your father’s attitude, that he is not *friendly* toward me as [he was] before; but the God of my father [Isaac] has been with me.

⁶“You know that I have served your father with all my strength.

⁷“Yet your father has cheated me [as often as possible] and changed my wages ten times; but God did not allow him to hurt me.

⁸“If he said, ‘The speckled shall be your wages,’ then the entire flock gave birth to speckled [young]; and if he said, ‘The streaked shall be your wages,’ then the entire flock gave birth to streaked [young].

⁹“Thus God has taken away the flocks of your father and given them to me.

¹⁰“And it happened at the time when the flock conceived that I looked up and saw in a dream that the rams which mated [with the female goats] were streaked, speckled, and spotted.

¹¹“And the Angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob.’ And I said, ‘Here I am.’

¹²“He said, ‘Look up and see, all the rams which are mating [with the flock] are streaked, speckled, and spotted; for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you.

¹³“I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar, and where you made a vow to Me; now stand up, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth.”

¹⁴Rachel and Leah answered him, “Is there still any portion or inheritance for us in our father’s house?”

¹⁵“Are we not counted by him as foreigners? For he sold us [to you in marriage], and has also entirely used up our purchase price.

¹⁶“Surely all the riches which God has taken from our father are ours and our children’s. Now then, whatever God has told you to do, do it.”

¹⁷Then Jacob stood [and took action] and put his children and his wives on camels;

¹⁸and he drove away all his livestock and [took along] all his property which he had acquired, the livestock he had obtained and accumulated in Paddan-aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.

¹⁹When Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel [went inside the house and] stole her father’s household gods.

²⁰And Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean (Syrian) by not telling him that he intended to leave *and* he slipped away secretly.

²¹So he fled with everything that he had, and got up and crossed the river [Euphrates], and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead [east of the Jordan River].

²²On the third day [after his departure] Laban was told that Jacob had fled.

²³So he took his relatives with him and pursued him for seven days, and they overtook him in the hill country of Gilead.

²⁴God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream at night and said to him, “Be careful that you do not speak to Jacob, either

good or bad.”

²⁵Then Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent on the hill, and Laban with his relatives camped on the same hill of Gilead.

²⁶Then Laban said to Jacob, “What do you mean by deceiving me *and* leaving without my knowledge, and carrying off my daughters as if [they were] captives of the sword?

²⁷“Why did you run away secretly and deceive me and not tell me, so that [otherwise] I might have sent you away with joy and with songs, with [music on the] tambourine and lyre?

²⁸“And why did you not allow me to kiss my grandchildren and my daughters [goodbye]? Now you have done a foolish thing [in behaving like this].

²⁹“It is in my power to harm you, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, ‘Be careful not to speak to Jacob, either good or bad.’

³⁰“Now [I suppose] you felt you must go because you were homesick for your father’s house *and* family; but why did you steal my [household] gods?”

³¹Jacob answered Laban, “[I left secretly] because I was afraid, for I thought you would take your daughters away from me by force.

³²“The one with whom you find your gods shall not live; in the presence of our relatives [search my possessions and] point out whatever you find that belongs to you and take it.” For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the idols.

³³So Laban went into Jacob’s tent and into Leah’s tent and the tent of the two maids, but he did not find them. Then he came out of Leah’s tent and entered Rachel’s tent.

³⁴Now Rachel had taken the household idols and put them in the camel's saddlebag and sat on them. Laban searched through all her tent, but did not find them.

³⁵So Rachel said to her father, "Do not be displeased, my lord, that I cannot rise before you, for the manner of women is on me *and* I am unwell." He searched [further] but did not find the household idols.

³⁶Then Jacob became angry and argued with Laban. And he said to Laban, "What is my fault? What is my sin that you pursued me like this?

³⁷"Although you have searched through all my possessions, what have you found of your household goods? Put it here before my relatives and your relatives, so that they may decide [who has done right] between the two of us.

³⁸"These twenty years I *have been* with you; your ewes and your female goats have not lost their young, nor have I eaten the rams of your flocks.

³⁹"I did not bring you the torn carcasses [of the animals attacked by predators]; I [personally] took the loss. You required of me [to make good] everything that was stolen, whether it occurred by day or night.

⁴⁰"This was my situation: by day the heat consumed me and by night the cold, and I could not sleep.

⁴¹"These twenty years I have been in your house; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for [my share of] your flocks, and you have changed my wages ten times.

⁴²"If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and [the Feared One] of Isaac, had not been with me, most certainly you

would have sent me away now empty-handed. God has seen my affliction *and* humiliation and the [exhausting] labor of my hands, so He rendered judgment *and* rebuked you last night.”

⁴³Laban answered Jacob, “These women [that you married] are my daughters, these children are my grandchildren, these flocks are [from] my flocks, and all that you see [here] is mine. But what can I do today to these my daughters or to their children to whom they have given birth?

⁴⁴“So come now, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it serve as a witness between you and me.”

⁴⁵So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a [memorial] pillar.

⁴⁶Jacob said to his relatives, “Gather stones.” And they took stones and made a mound [of stones], and they ate [a ceremonial meal together] there on the mound [of stones]. [Prov 16:7]

⁴⁷Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha (stone monument of testimony in Aramaic), but Jacob called it Galeed.

⁴⁸Laban said, “This mound [of stones] is a witness [a reminder of the oath taken] today between you and me.” Therefore he [also] called the name Galeed,

⁴⁹and Mizpah (watchtower), for Laban said, “May the LORD watch between you and me when we are absent from one another.

⁵⁰“If you should mistreat (humiliate, oppress) my daughters, or if you should take other wives besides my daughters, although no one is with us [as a witness], see *and* remember, God is witness between you and me.”

⁵¹Laban said to Jacob, “Look at this mound [of stones] and look at this pillar which I have set up between you and me.

⁵²“This mound is a witness, and this pillar is a witness, that I will not pass by this mound to harm you, and that you will not pass by this mound and this pillar to harm me.

⁵³“The God of Abraham [your father] and the God of Nahor [my father], and the god [the image of worship] of their father [Terah, an idolater], judge between us.” But Jacob swore [only] by [the one true God] the Fear of his father Isaac. [Josh 24:2]

⁵⁴Then Jacob offered a sacrifice [to the LORD] on the mountain, and called his relatives to the meal; and they ate food and spent the night on the mountain.

⁵⁵Early in the morning Laban got up and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters [goodbye] and pronounced a blessing [asking God’s favor] on them. Then Laban left and returned home.

32 THEN AS Jacob went on his way, the angels of God met him [to reassure and protect him].

²When Jacob saw them, he said, “This is God’s camp.” So he named that place Mahanaim (double camps). [Gen 32:7, 10]

³Then Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom.

⁴He commanded them, saying, “This is what to say to my lord Esau: ‘Your servant Jacob says this, “I have been living temporarily with Laban, and have stayed there until now;

⁵I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, male servants, and female servants; and I have sent [this message] to tell my lord, so that I may find grace *and* kindness in your sight.””

⁶The messengers returned to Jacob, saying, “We went to your brother Esau, and now he is coming to meet you, and there are four hundred men with him.”

⁷Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people who were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two camps;

⁸and he said, “If Esau comes to the one camp and attacks it, then the other camp which is left will escape.”

POWERPOINT

In Genesis 32:7 we read that Jacob was afraid of his brother, Esau. We can all be tempted by what is often called “the fear of man.” We may be afraid other people will hurt us with their words or actions or that they will damage our reputation. Sometimes, we fear what they will think of a certain opinion, decision, or course of action we choose to take. Let me ask you: Do you ever struggle with the fear of other people? If you could break free from that fear today, how would you live your life differently?



⁹Jacob said, “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the LORD, who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your people, and I will make you prosper,’

¹⁰I am unworthy of all the lovingkindness *and* compassion and of all the faithfulness which You have shown to Your servant. With only my staff [long ago] I crossed over this Jordan, and now I have become [blessed and increased into these] two groups [of people].

¹¹“Save me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, that he will come and attack me and the mothers with the children.

¹²“And You [LORD] said, ‘I will certainly make you prosper and make your descendants as [numerous as] the sand of the sea, which is too great to be counted.’”

¹³So Jacob spent the night there. Then he selected a present for his brother Esau from the livestock he had acquired:

¹⁴two hundred female goats, twenty male goats, two hundred ewes, twenty rams,

¹⁵thirty milking camels with their colts, forty cows, ten bulls, twenty female donkeys, and ten [donkey] colts.

¹⁶He put them into the care of his servants, every herd by itself, and said to his servants, “Go on ahead of me, and put an interval [of space] between the *individual* herds.”

¹⁷Then he commanded the one in front, saying, “When Esau my brother meets you and asks to whom you belong, and where you are going, and whose are the *animals* in front of you?

¹⁸then you shall say, ‘They are your servant Jacob’s; they are a gift sent to my lord Esau. And he also is behind us.’”

¹⁹And so Jacob commanded the second and the third as well, and all that followed the herds, saying, “This is what you shall say to Esau when you meet him;

²⁰and you shall say, ‘Look, your servant Jacob is behind us.’” For he said [to himself], “I will try to appease him with the gift that is going ahead of me. Then afterward I will see him; perhaps he will accept *and* forgive me.”

²¹So the gift [of the herds of livestock] went on ahead of him, and he himself spent that night back in the camp.

²²But he got up that same night and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven children, and waded over the ford of the Jabbok.

²³Then he took them and sent them across the brook. And he also sent across whatever he had.

²⁴So Jacob was left alone, and a Man [came and] wrestled with him until daybreak.

²⁵When the Man saw that He had not prevailed against Jacob, He touched his hip joint; and Jacob’s hip was dislocated as he wrestled with Him.

POWERPOINT

Although we all have weaknesses, God still wants to bless us. Jacob was a man who had many weaknesses, and yet he pressed on with God and was determined that God would bless him (see Gen. 32:26). God likes that kind of determination.

He is glorified through those who will not let their personal weaknesses stop Him from working through them. Our imperfections are not going to stop God unless we let them do so. You may have weaknesses in yourself, but you can be strong in Jesus (see 2 Cor. 13:4).



WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Our Thinking *Impacts Our* Relationships

U ntil the night when Jacob wrestled with God, his life was marked by deception and trickery. Jacob actually means, “he supplants.” But his divine encounter, when he finally surrendered himself to God after a mighty struggle, left him a changed man; so much so that God changed his name to Israel, meaning “he strives with God” (see Gen. 32:28).

We all come across Jacobs, people we’re not sure we can continue in a relationship with because it is so difficult. But we need to avoid thinking, *I am giving up on this person; they will never change.* The “never” lie that Satan offers frequently is just that: *a lie!*

Since all things are possible with God (see Matt. 19:26), no one is beyond change. Of course, people need to be open to changing in order for God to work in their lives, but if they are not, we can even trust God to lead them to be open and willing.

This certainly doesn’t mean God wants us to stay in

abusive or painful relationships, but since God never gives up on us, we should not give up on others. When they hurt us, we need to set appropriate boundaries and perhaps not spend as much time with them, but we do not need to stop loving them or praying for them.

My father was abusive to me, but I never gave up hope that he could be saved. When he was about eighty years old, he did repent of his sins and receive Christ as his Savior. I saw a genuine change in him. Many of the years that I was praying for my father, I didn't see him very often, but prayer is not hindered by distance.

We can easily think of ways we believe someone should change and what they should do to make the relationship better, but we can also think about what we might do to make it better. We often want the other person to adjust, but we should also be open to letting God show us how we might change. Let me encourage you to be the peacemaker. Don't just think about everything that is wrong with another person, but also think about their good points. How we think in relationships is very important. Right thinking can help make any relationship better.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord God of Israel, I thank You that nobody is beyond changing, and You've proven it over and over. Help me to keep praying and believing for the people in my life, and help me to be a peacemaker. In Jesus' name. Amen.

²⁶Then He said, “Let Me go, for day is breaking.” But Jacob said, “I will not let You go unless You declare a blessing on me.”

²⁷So He asked him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Jacob.”

²⁸And He said, “Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed.” [Hos 12:3, 4]

²⁹Then Jacob asked Him, “Please tell me Your name.” But He said, “Why is it that you ask My name?” And He declared a blessing [of the covenant promises] on Jacob there.

³⁰So Jacob named the place Peniel (the face of God), *saying*, “For I have seen God face to face, yet my life has not been snatched away.”

³¹Now the sun rose on him as he passed Penuel (Peniel), and he was limping because of his hip.

³²Therefore, to this day the Israelites do not eat the tendon of the hip which is on the socket of the thigh, because He touched the socket of Jacob’s thigh by the tendon of the hip.

33 THEN JACOB looked up, and saw Esau coming with four hundred men. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two maids.

²He put the maids and their children in front, Leah and her children after them, and Rachel and Joseph last of all.

³Then Jacob crossed over [the stream] ahead of them and

bowed himself to the ground seven times [bowing and moving forward each time], until he approached his brother.

⁴But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and hugged his neck and kissed him, and they wept [for joy]. [Luke 15:20]

⁵Esau looked up and saw the women and the children, and said, “Who are these with you?” So Jacob replied, “They are the children whom God has graciously given your servant.”

⁶Then the maids approached with their children, and they bowed down.

⁷Leah also approached with her children, and they bowed down. Afterward Joseph and Rachel approached, and they bowed down.

⁸Esau asked, “What do you mean by all this company which I have met?” And he answered, “[These are] to find favor in the sight of my lord.”

⁹But Esau said, “I have plenty, my brother; keep what you have for yourself.”

¹⁰Jacob replied, “No, please, if now I have found favor in your sight, then accept my gift [as a blessing] from my hand, for I see your face as if I had seen the face of God, and you have received me favorably.

¹¹“Please accept my blessing (gift) which has been brought to you, for God has dealt graciously with me and I have everything [that I could possibly want].” So Jacob kept urging him and Esau accepted it.

¹²Then Esau said, “Let us get started on our journey and I will go in front of you [to lead the way].”

¹³But Jacob replied, “You know, my lord, that the children are frail *and* need gentle care, and the nursing flocks and herds

[with young] are of concern to me; for if the men should drive them hard for a single day, all the flocks will die.

¹⁴“Please let my lord go on ahead of his servant, and I will move on slowly, governed by the pace of the livestock that are in front of me and according to the endurance of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir [in Edom].”

¹⁵Then Esau said, “Please let me leave with you some of the people who are with me.” But Jacob said, “What need is there [for it]? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord.”

¹⁶So Esau turned back [toward the south] that day on his way to Seir.

¹⁷But Jacob journeyed [north] to Succoth, and built himself a house and made shelters for his livestock; so the name of the place is Succoth (huts, shelters).

¹⁸When Jacob came from Paddan-aram, he arrived safely *and* in peace at the city of Shechem, in the land of Canaan, and camped in front of the [walled] city.

¹⁹Then he bought the piece of land on which he had pitched his tents from the sons of Hamor, Shechem’s father, for a hundred pieces of money.

²⁰There he erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel.

34 NOW DINAH the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out [unescorted] to visit the girls of the land.

²When Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince (sheik) of the land, saw her, he kidnapped her and lay [intimately] with her by force [humbling and offending her].

³But his soul longed for and clung to Dinah daughter of

Jacob, and he loved the girl and spoke comfortingly to her young heart's wishes.

⁴So Shechem said to his father Hamor, "Get me this young woman as a wife."

⁵Now Jacob heard that Shechem had defiled (violated) Dinah his daughter; but his sons were in the field with his livestock, so Jacob said nothing until they came in.

⁶But Shechem's father Hamor went to Jacob to talk with him.

⁷Now when Jacob's sons heard of it they came in from the field; they were deeply grieved, and they were very angry, for Shechem had done a disgraceful thing to Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing is not to be done.

⁸But Hamor conferred with them, saying, "The soul of my son Shechem [deeply] longs for your daughter [and sister]. Please give her to him as his wife.

⁹"And [beyond that] intermarry with us; give your daughters to us [as wives] and take our daughters for yourselves. [Ex 34:15, 16; Deut 7:3; Josh 23:12, 13]

¹⁰"In this way you shall live with us; the country will be open to you; live and do business in it and acquire property *and* possessions in it."

¹¹Shechem also said to Dinah's father and to her brothers, "Let me find favor in your sight, and I will give you whatever you ask of me.

¹²"Demand of me a very large bridal payment and gift [as compensation for giving up your daughter and sister], and I will give you whatever you tell me; only give me the girl to be my wife."

¹³Jacob's sons answered Shechem and Hamor his father deceitfully, because Shechem had defiled *and* disgraced their sister Dinah.

¹⁴They said to them, "We cannot do this thing and give our sister [in marriage] to one who is not circumcised, because that would be a disgrace to us.

¹⁵"But we will consent to you only on this *condition*: if you will become like us, in that every male among you *consents* to be circumcised,

¹⁶then we will give our daughters to you [in marriage], and we will take your daughters for ourselves, and we will live with you and become one people.

¹⁷"But if you do not listen to us *and* refuse to be circumcised, then we will take our daughter [Dinah] and go."

¹⁸Their words seemed reasonable to Hamor and his son Shechem,

¹⁹and the young man did not hesitate to do the [required] thing, for he was delighted with Jacob's daughter. Now he was more respected *and* honored than all [others] in the household of his father.

²⁰Then Hamor and Shechem his son came to the gate of their [walled] city [where the leading men would meet] and spoke with the men of the city, saying,

²¹"These men are peaceful *and* friendly with us; so let them live in the land and do business in it, for the land is large enough [for us and] for them; let us take their daughters for wives and let us give them our daughters [in marriage].

²²"But only on this *condition* will the men consent to our request that they live among us and become one people: that

every male among us become circumcised just as they are circumcised.

²³“Will not their cattle and their possessions and all their animals be ours [if we do this]? Let us consent [to do as they ask], and they will live here with us.”

²⁴And every [Canaanite] man who went out of the city gate listened *and* considered what Hamor and Shechem said; and every male who was a resident of that city was circumcised.

²⁵Now on the third day [after the circumcision], when all the men were [terribly] sore *and* in pain, two of Jacob’s sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s [full] brothers, took their swords, boldly entered the city [without anyone suspecting them of evil intent], and they killed every male.

²⁶They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem’s house [where she was staying], and left.

²⁷Then Jacob’s [other] sons came upon those who were killed and looted the town, because their sister had been defiled *and* disgraced.

²⁸They took the Canaanites’ flocks and their herds and their donkeys, and whatever was in the city and in the field;

²⁹they looted all their wealth, and [took captive] all their children and their wives, even everything that was in the houses.

³⁰Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, “You have ruined me, making me a stench to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites! My men are few in number, and the men of the land will band together against me and attack me; I shall be destroyed, I and my household.”

³¹But they said, “Should he [be permitted to] treat our sister as a prostitute?”

35 THEN GOD said to Jacob, “Go up to Bethel and live there, and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you [in a distinct manifestation] when you fled [years ago] from Esau your brother.” [Gen 28:11–22]

²Then Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Get rid of the [idols and images of] foreign gods that are among you, and ceremonially purify yourselves and change [into fresh] clothes;

³then let us get up and go up to Bethel, and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone.”

⁴So they gave Jacob all the [idols and images of the] foreign gods they had and the rings which were in their ears [worn as charms against evil], and Jacob buried them under the oak tree near Shechem.

⁵As they journeyed, there was a great [supernatural] terror [sent from God] on the cities around them, and [for that reason] the Canaanites did not pursue the sons of Jacob.

⁶So Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him.

⁷There he built an altar [to worship the LORD], and called the place El-bethel (God of the House of God), because there God had revealed Himself to him when he escaped from his brother.

⁸Now Deborah, [who once was] Rebekah’s nurse, died and

was buried below Bethel under the oak; and the name of it was called Allon-bacuth (Oak of Weeping).

⁹Then God [in a visible manifestation] appeared to Jacob again when he came out of Paddan-aram, and declared a blessing on him. [Gen 32:28]

¹⁰Again God said to him,

“Your name is Jacob;
You shall no longer be called Jacob,
But Israel shall be your name.”

So he was called Israel.

¹¹And God said to him,

“I am God Almighty.
Be fruitful and multiply;
A nation and a company of nations shall come from you,
And kings shall be born of your loins.

¹²“The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac

I will give to you,
and to your descendants after you I will give the land.”

¹³Then God ascended from Jacob in the place where He had spoken with him.

¹⁴Jacob set up a pillar (memorial, monument) in the place where he had talked with God, a pillar of stone, and he poured a drink offering [of wine] on it; he also poured oil on it [to declare it sacred for God’s purpose].

¹⁵So Jacob named the place where God had spoken with him, Bethel (the House of God).

¹⁶Then they journeyed from Bethel; and when there was

still some distance to go to Ephrath (Bethlehem), Rachel began to give birth and had difficulty *and* suffered severely.

¹⁷When she was in hard labor the midwife said to her, “Do not be afraid; you now have another son.”

¹⁸And as her soul was departing, (for she died), she named him Ben-oni (son of my sorrow); but his father called him Benjamin (son of the right hand).

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Confidence in God

Jacob was a cheater; a liar; and a swindler. But he wanted to make things right with God and his brother, Esau, whose birthright he had stolen—and he obviously had the confidence in God to wrestle with Him until he received a blessing (see Gen. 32:26). This is shocking to those of us who have difficulty being bold in prayer or in our approach to God. But here it is written in God's Word—Jacob's boldness won him power with God, and God liked his confident attitude. Not only did God change Jacob's name to Israel, but God confirmed to Jacob the covenant that He had made with Abraham (see Gen. 35:9–15)!

Ephesians 3:12 says, "In [Christ Jesus our Lord] we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him [that is, our faith gives us sufficient courage to freely and openly approach God through Christ]." Remember, your confidence isn't in yourself—it is in Christ.

¹⁹So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).

²⁰Jacob set a pillar (memorial, monument) on her grave; that is the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day.

²¹Then Israel (Jacob) journeyed on and pitched his tent on the other side of the tower of Eder [the lookout point used by

shepherds].

²²While Israel was living in that land, Reuben [his eldest son] went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine, and Israel heard about it.

Now Jacob had twelve sons—

²³The sons of Leah: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, then Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun;

²⁴and the sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin;

²⁵and the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maid: Dan and Naphtali;

²⁶and the sons of Zilpah, Leah's maid: Gad and Asher. These are the sons of Jacob born to him in Paddan-aram.

²⁷Jacob came to Isaac his father at Mamre of Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had lived temporarily.

²⁸Now the days of Isaac were a hundred and eighty years.

²⁹Isaac's spirit departed and he died and was gathered to his people [who had preceded him in death], an old man full of days (satisfied, fulfilled); his sons Esau and Jacob buried him [in the cave of Machpelah with his parents Abraham and Sarah].

36 NOW THESE are *the records of* the descendants of Esau, (that is, Edom).

²Esau took his [three] wives from the daughters of Canaan: Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Oholibamah the daughter of Anah, the son of Zibeon the Hivite,

³and Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebaioth.

⁴Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau, and Basemath bore Reuel,

⁵and Oholibamah bore Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. These are the sons of Esau born to him in Canaan.

⁶Now Esau took his wives and his sons and his daughters and all the members of his household, and his livestock and all his cattle and all his possessions which he had acquired in the land of Canaan, and he went to a land away from his brother Jacob.

⁷For their [great flocks and herds and] possessions made it impossible for them to live together [in the same region]; the land in which they lived temporarily could not support them because of their livestock.

⁸So Esau lived in the hill country of Seir; Esau is Edom.

⁹These are *the records* of the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir.

¹⁰These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz, the son of Adah, Esau's wife, and Reuel, the son of Basemath, Esau's wife.

¹¹And the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz.

¹²And Timna was a concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son; and she bore Amalek to Eliphaz. These are the sons of Adah, Esau's wife.

¹³These are the sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These are the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife.

¹⁴And these are the sons of Oholibamah, Esau's wife, the daughter of Anah, the son of Zibeon. She bore to Esau: Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.

¹⁵These are the *tribal* chiefs of the sons of Esau: The sons of Eliphaz, the firstborn of Esau: Chiefs Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz,

¹⁶Korah, Gatam, and Amalek. These are the chiefs of Eliphaz in the land of Edom; they are the sons of Adah.

¹⁷These are the sons of Reuel, Esau's son: Chiefs Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, Mizzah. These are the chiefs of Reuel in the land of Edom; they are the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife.

¹⁸These are the sons of Oholibamah, Esau's wife: Chiefs Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. These are the chiefs born of Oholibamah, daughter of Anah, Esau's wife.

¹⁹These are the sons of Esau, (that is, Edom), and these are their chiefs.

²⁰These are the sons of Seir the Horite, the inhabitants of the land: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah,

²¹Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. These are the chiefs of the Horites, the sons of Seir in the land of Edom.

²²The sons of Lotan are Hori and Hemam; and Lotan's sister is Timna.

²³The sons of Shobal are these: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam.

²⁴These are the sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah. This is the Anah who found the hot springs in the wilderness as he pastured the donkeys of Zibeon his father.

²⁵The children of Anah are these: Dishon and Oholibamah [Esau's wife], the daughter of Anah.

²⁶These are the sons of Dishon: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran.

²⁷Ezer's sons are these: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan.

²⁸The sons of Dishan are these: Uz and Aran.

²⁹The Horite chiefs are these: Chiefs Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah,

³⁰Dishon, Ezer, Dishan. These are the Horite chiefs, according to their various clans in the land of Seir.

³¹And these are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the Israelites:

³²Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom, and the name of his city was Dinhabah.

³³Now Bela died, and Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned as his successor.

³⁴Then Jobab died, and Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned as his successor.

³⁵And Husham died, and Hadad the son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the country of Moab, reigned as his successor. The name of his [walled] city was Avith.

³⁶Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah succeeded him.

³⁷Then Samlah died, and Shaul of Rehoboth on the river [Euphrates] reigned as his successor.

³⁸And Shaul died, and Baal-hanan son of Achbor reigned as his successor.

³⁹Baal-hanan the son of Achbor died, and then Hadar reigned [as his successor]. His [walled] city was Pau; his wife's name was Mehetabel the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab.

⁴⁰And these are the names of the *tribal* chiefs of Esau, according to their families and places of residence, by their

names: Chiefs Timna, Alvah, Jetheth,

⁴¹Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon,

⁴²Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar,

⁴³Magdiel, and Iram. These are the *tribal* chiefs of Edom (that is, of Esau the father of the Edomites), according to their dwelling places in the land of their possession.

37 SO JACOB (Israel) lived in the land where his father [Isaac] had been a stranger (sojourner, resident alien), in the land of Canaan.

²These are the generations of Jacob.

Joseph, when he was seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock with his brothers [Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher]; the boy was with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's [secondary] wives; and Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father.

³Now Israel (Jacob) loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a [distinctive] multicolored tunic.

⁴His brothers saw that their father loved Joseph more than all of his brothers; so they hated him and could not [find it within themselves to] speak to him on friendly terms.

⁵Now Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brothers, and they hated him even more.

⁶He said to them, "Please listen to [the details of] this dream which I have dreamed;

⁷we [brothers] were binding sheaves [of grain stalks] in the field, and lo, my sheaf [suddenly] got up and stood upright

and remained standing; and behold, your sheaves stood all around my sheaf and bowed down [in respect].”

⁸His brothers said to him, “Are you actually going to reign over us? Are you really going to rule *and* govern us as your subjects?” So they hated him even more for [telling them about] his dreams and for his [arrogant] words.

⁹But Joseph dreamed still another dream, and told it to his brothers [as well]. He said, “See here, I have again dreamed a dream, and lo, [this time I saw] eleven stars and the sun and the moon bowed down [in respect] to me!”

¹⁰He told it to his father as well as to his brothers; but his father rebuked him and said to him [in disbelief], “What is [the meaning of] this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow down to the ground [in respect] before you?”

¹¹Joseph’s brothers were envious *and* jealous of him, but his father kept the words [of Joseph] *in mind* [wondering about their meaning].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Focus on Your Blessings

Because Joseph's brothers were jealous of him, they hated him and sold him into slavery (see Gen. 37:11). The apostle James says we are discontent because we try to get what we want by our own means rather than asking God for it and trusting Him completely (James 4:2). We see what others have and become jealous, which creates discontentment in our hearts. We should want only what God wants us to have and believe that if we ask for something and don't get it, it is because He has something better for us in mind.

Even if you don't have what you want or need right now, be content with what you do have, refuse to focus on what you don't have, spend a lot of time being a blessing to others, and stay hopeful concerning what you want and need. Remember, God is faithful and His timing is perfect! I suggest spending some time everyday thinking about the blessings God has given you.

¹²Then his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem.

¹³Israel (Jacob) said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing [the flock] at Shechem? Come, and I will send you to them." And he said, "Here I am [ready to obey you]."

¹⁴Then Jacob said to him, "Please go and see whether

everything is all right with your brothers and all right with the flock; then bring word [back] to me.” So he sent him from the Hebron Valley, and he went to Shechem.

¹⁵Now a certain man found Joseph, and saw that he was wandering around *and* had lost his way in the field; so the man asked him, “What are you looking for?”

¹⁶He said, “I am looking for my brothers. Please tell me where they are pasturing *our flocks*.”

¹⁷Then the man said, “[They were here, but] they have moved on from this place. I heard them say, ‘Let us go to Dothan.’” So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.

¹⁸And when they saw him from a distance, even before he came close to them, they plotted to kill him.

¹⁹They said to one another, “Look, here comes this dreamer.

²⁰“Now then, come and let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits (cisterns, underground water storage); then we will say [to our father], ‘A wild animal killed *and* devoured him’; and we shall see what will become of his dreams!”

²¹Now Reuben [the eldest] heard this and rescued him from their hands and said, “Let us not take his life.”

²²Reuben said to them, “Do not shed his blood, but [instead] throw him [alive] into the pit that is here in the wilderness, and do not lay a hand on him [to kill him]”—[he said this so] that he could rescue him from them and return him [safely] to his father.

²³Now when Joseph reached his brothers, they stripped him of his tunic, the [distinctive] multicolored tunic which he

was wearing;

²⁴then they took him and threw him into the pit. Now the pit was empty; there was no water in it.

²⁵Then they sat down to eat their meal. When they looked up, they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead [east of the Jordan], with their camels bearing *ladanum* resin [for perfume] and balm and myrrh, going on their way to carry *the cargo* down to Egypt.

²⁶Judah said to his brothers, “What do we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood (murder)?

²⁷“Come, let us [instead] sell him to these Ishmaelites [and Midianites] and not lay our hands on him, because he is our brother and our flesh.” So his brothers listened to him *and* agreed. [Gen 22:24; 25:2]

²⁸Then as the Midianite [and Ishmaelite] traders were passing by, the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and they sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty *shekels* of silver. And so they took Joseph [as a captive] into Egypt.

²⁹Now Reuben [unaware of what had happened] returned to the pit, and [to his great alarm found that] Joseph was not in the pit; so he tore his clothes [in deep sorrow].

³⁰He rejoined his brothers and said, “The boy is not there; as for me, where shall I go [to hide from my father]?”

³¹Then they took Joseph’s tunic, slaughtered a male goat and dipped the tunic in the blood;

³²and they brought the multicolored tunic to their father, saying, “We have found this; please examine it *and* decide whether or not it is your son’s tunic.”

³³He recognized it and said, “It is my son’s tunic. A wild

animal has devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces!”

³⁴So Jacob tore his clothes [in grief], put on sackcloth and mourned many days for his son.

³⁵Then all his sons and daughters attempted to console him, but he refused to be comforted and said, “I will go down to Sheol (the place of the dead) in mourning for my son.” And his father wept for him.

³⁶Meanwhile, in Egypt the Midianites sold Joseph [as a slave] to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and the captain of the [royal] guard.

38 NOW AT that time, Judah left his brothers and went down to [stay with] a certain Adullamite named Hirah.

²There Judah saw a daughter of Shua, a Canaanite, and he took her [as his wife] and lived with her.

³So she conceived and gave birth to a son and Judah named him Er.

⁴Then she conceived again and gave birth to a son and named him Onan.

⁵Again she conceived and gave birth to still another son and named him Shelah. It was at Chezib that she gave birth to him.

⁶Now Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn; her name was Tamar.

⁷But Er, Judah’s firstborn, was evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD killed him [in judgment].

⁸Then Judah told Onan, “Go in to your brother’s widow, and perform your duty as a brother-in-law [under the levirate marriage custom]; [be her husband and] raise children for [the name of] your brother.” [Deut 25:5–10]

⁹Onan knew that the child (heir) would not be his [but his dead brother’s]; so whenever he lay with his brother’s widow, he spilled his seed on the ground [to prevent conception], so that he would not give a child to his brother.

¹⁰But what he did was displeasing in the sight of the LORD; therefore He killed him also [in judgment].

¹¹Then Judah said to Tamar, his daughter-in-law, “Remain a widow at your father’s house until Shelah my [youngest] son is grown”; [but he was deceiving her] for he thought that [if Shelah should marry her] he too might die like his brothers did. So Tamar went and lived in her father’s house.

¹²But quite a while later, Judah’s wife, the daughter of Shua, died; and when the time of mourning was ended, he went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah with his friend Hirah the Adullamite.

¹³Tamar was told, “Listen, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep.”

¹⁴So she removed her widow’s clothes and covered herself with a veil, and wrapped herself up [in disguise], and sat in the gateway of Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah had grown up, and she had not been given to him as a wife [as Judah had promised].

¹⁵When Judah saw her, he thought she was a [temple] prostitute, for she had covered her face [as such women did].

¹⁶He turned to her by the road, and said, “Please come, let

me lie with you”; for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. And she said, “What will you give me, that you may lie with me?”

¹⁷He answered, “I will send you a young goat from the flock.” And she said, “Will you give me a pledge [as a deposit] until you send it?”

¹⁸He said, “What pledge shall I give you?” She said, “Your seal and your cord, and the staff that is in your hand.” So he gave them to her and was intimate with her, and she conceived by him.

¹⁹Then she got up and left, and removed her veil and put on her widow’s clothing.

²⁰When Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite, to get his pledge [back] from the woman, he was unable to find her.

²¹He asked the men of that place, “Where is the temple prostitute who was by the roadside at Enaim?” They said, “There was no prostitute here.”

²²So he returned to Judah, and said, “I cannot find her; also the local men said, ‘There was no prostitute around here.’”

²³Then Judah said, “Let her keep the things (pledge articles) for herself, otherwise we will be a laughingstock [searching everywhere for her]. After all, I sent this young goat, but you did not find her.”

²⁴About three months later Judah was told, “Tamar your daughter-in-law has played the [role of a] prostitute, and she is with child because of her immorality.” So Judah said, “Bring her out and let her be burned [to death as punishment]!”

²⁵While she was being brought out, she [took the things

Judah had given her and] sent [them along with a message] to her father-in-law, saying, “I am with child by the man to whom these articles belong.” And she added, “Please examine [them carefully] and see [clearly] to whom these things belong, the seal and the cord and staff.”

²⁶Judah recognized the articles, and said, “She has been more righteous [in this matter] than I, because I did not give her to my son Shelah [as I had promised].” And Judah did not have [intimate] relations with her again.

²⁷Now when the time came for her to give birth, there were twins in her womb.

²⁸And when she was in labor, one [baby] put out his hand, and the midwife took his hand and tied a scarlet thread on it, saying, “This one was born first.”

²⁹But he pulled back his hand, and his brother was born first. And she said, “What a breach you have made for yourself [to be the firstborn]!” So he was named Perez (breach, break forth). [Matt 1:3]

³⁰Afterward his brother who had the scarlet [thread] on his hand was born and was named Zerah (brightness).

39 NOW JOSEPH had been taken down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the [royal] guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites, who had taken him down there.

²The LORD was with Joseph, and he [even though a slave] became a successful *and* prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian.

³Now his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to prosper (succeed) in his hand. [Gen 21:22; 26:27, 28; 41:38, 39]

⁴So Joseph pleased Potiphar *and* found favor in his sight and he served him as his personal servant. He made Joseph overseer over his house, and he put all that he owned in Joseph's charge.

⁵It happened that from the time that he made Joseph overseer in his house and [put him in charge] over all that he owned, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house because of Joseph; so the LORD's blessing was on everything that Potiphar owned, in the house and in the field.

⁶So Potiphar left all that he owned in Joseph's charge; and with Joseph there he did not [need to] pay attention to anything except the food he ate.

Now Joseph was handsome *and* attractive in form and appearance. [Gen 43:32]

POWERPOINT

Genesis 39:10 says that Potiphar's wife pled persistently with Joseph to become physically intimate with her. In order to resist repeatedly, he must have had to prepare himself mentally every day for her advances and to discipline his thoughts ahead of time to be determined to resist them. If anyone in your life is a consistently bad influence or makes a habit of tempting you to sin, you can do what Joseph must have done. When you know you will be around that person, make up your mind ahead of time that you will stay strong.



⁷Then after a time his master's wife looked at Joseph with desire, and she said, "Lie with me."

⁸But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Look, with me in the house, my master does not concern himself with anything; he has put everything that he owns in my charge.

⁹"He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God [and your husband]?"

¹⁰And so it was that she spoke to Joseph [persistently] day after day, but he did not listen to her [plea] to lie beside her or be with her.

¹¹Then it happened one day that Joseph went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the men of the household was there in the house.

¹²She caught Joseph by his [outer] robe, saying, "Lie with me!" But he left his robe in her hand and ran, and got outside [the house].

¹³When she saw that he had left his robe in her hand and had run outside,

¹⁴she called to the men of her household and said to them, "Look at this, your master has brought a Hebrew [into the household] to mock *and* insult us; he came to me to lie with me, and I screamed.

¹⁵"When he heard me screaming, he left his robe with me and ran outside [the house]."

¹⁶So she left Joseph's [outer] robe beside her until his master came home.

¹⁷Then she told her husband the same story, saying, "The Hebrew servant, whom you brought among us, came to me to mock *and* insult me;

¹⁸then as soon as I raised my voice and screamed, he left his robe with me and ran outside [the house].”

¹⁹And when Joseph’s master heard the words of his wife, saying, “This is the way your servant treated me,” his anger burned.

²⁰So Joseph’s master took him and put him in the prison, a place where the king’s prisoners were confined; so he was there in the prison.

²¹But the LORD was with Joseph and extended lovingkindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the warden.

²²The warden committed to Joseph’s care (management) all the prisoners who were in the prison; so that whatever was done there, he was in charge of it.

²³The warden paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph’s care because the LORD was with him; whatever Joseph did, the LORD made to prosper.

40 NOW SOME time later, the cupbearer (butler) and the baker for the king of Egypt offended their lord, Egypt’s king.

²Pharaoh (Sesostris II) was extremely angry with his two officials, the chief of the cupbearers and the chief of the bakers.

³He put them in confinement in the house of the captain of the guard, in the same prison where Joseph was confined.

⁴The captain of the guard put Joseph in charge of them, and he served them; and they continued to be in custody for some time.

⁵Then the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison, both dreamed a dream in the same night, each man with his [own significant] dream and each dream with its [personal] interpretation.

⁶When Joseph came to them in the morning and looked at them, [he saw that] they were sad *and* depressed.

⁷So he asked Pharaoh's officials who were in confinement with him in his master's house, "Why do you look so down-hearted today?"

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Actions Follow Thoughts

Our thoughts are very powerful, even when they're based on a lie, as demonstrated in Potiphar's anger and mistreatment of Joseph (see Gen. 39:19). I believe and say, "Where the mind goes, the man follows" (see Prov. 23:7). If we think of something unjust that someone has done to us over and over, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to treat that person with God's kindness the next time we see them.

Your thoughts will become your actions; therefore, think about forgiving people who hurt you, and you will be able to forgive. Think about being a blessing to others, and you won't end up being selfish. Yes, our thoughts are powerful—and with God's help, we can think on things that will benefit us rather than hurt us.

⁸And they said to him, "We have [each] dreamed [distinct] dreams and there is no one to interpret them." So Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell me [your dreams]."

⁹So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, "In my dream there was a grapevine in front of me;

¹⁰and on the vine were three branches. Then as soon as it budded, its blossoms burst open, and its clusters produced ripe grapes [in rapid succession].

¹¹“Now Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and squeezed them into Pharaoh’s cup; then I placed the cup into Pharaoh’s hand.”

¹²Then Joseph said to him, “This is the interpretation of it: the three branches represent three days;

¹³within three more days Pharaoh will lift up your head (present you in public) and restore you to your position; and you will [again] put Pharaoh’s cup into his hand just as [you did] when you were his cupbearer.

¹⁴“Only think of me when it goes well with you, and please show me kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh and get me out of this house.

¹⁵“For in fact I was taken (stolen) from the land of the Hebrews by [unlawful] force, and even here I have done nothing for which they should put me in the dungeon.”

¹⁶When the chief baker saw that the interpretation [of the dream] was good, he said to Joseph, “I also dreamed, and [in my dream] there were three cake baskets on my head;

¹⁷and in the top basket there were some of all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh, but the birds [of prey] were eating [these foods] out of the basket on my head.”

¹⁸Joseph answered, “This is the interpretation of it: the three baskets represent three days;

¹⁹within three more days Pharaoh will lift up your head and will hang you on a tree (gallows, pole), and [you will not so much as be given a burial, but] the birds will eat your flesh.”

²⁰Now on the third day, [which was] the Pharaoh’s birthday, he [released the two men from prison and] made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief

cupbearer and the head of the chief baker [that is, presented them in public] among his servants.

²¹He restored the chief cupbearer to his office, and the cupbearer [once again] put the cup into Pharaoh's hand;

²²but Pharaoh hanged the chief baker, just as Joseph had interpreted [the meaning of the dreams] to them.

²³Yet [even after all that] the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot [all about] him.

41 NOW IT happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile.

²And lo, there came up out of the Nile seven [healthy] cows, sleek *and* handsome and fat; and they grazed in the reed grass [in a marshy pasture].

³Then behold, seven other cows came up after them out of the Nile, ugly and gaunt *and* raw-boned, and stood by the *fat* cows on the bank of the Nile.

⁴Then the ugly and gaunt *and* raw-boned cows ate up the seven sleek and fat cows. Then Pharaoh awoke.

⁵Then he fell asleep and dreamed a second time; and behold, seven ears of grain came up on a single stalk, plump and good.

⁶Then behold, seven ears [of grain], thin and dried up by the east wind, sprouted after them.

⁷Then the thin ears swallowed the seven plump and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and it was a dream.

⁸So when morning came his spirit was troubled *and*

disturbed and he sent and called for all the magicians and all the wise men of Egypt. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them to him.

⁹Then the chief cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh, saying, “I would mention my faults today.

¹⁰“[Two years ago] Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and he put me in confinement in the house of the captain of the guard, both me and the chief baker.

¹¹“We dreamed a dream on the same night, he and I; each of us dreamed according to [the significance of] the interpretation of his own dream.

¹²“Now there was with us [in the prison] a young man, a Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted our dreams for us, to each man according to the significance of his own dream.

¹³“And just as he interpreted [the dreams] for us, so it happened; I was restored to my office [as chief cupbearer], and the baker was hanged.”

¹⁴Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph, and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon; and when Joseph shaved himself and changed his clothes [making himself presentable], he came to Pharaoh.

¹⁵Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have dreamed a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you that you can understand a dream and interpret it.”

¹⁶Joseph answered Pharaoh, “It is not in me [to interpret the dream]; God [not I] will give Pharaoh a favorable answer [through me].”

¹⁷So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “In my dream, I was standing

on the bank of the Nile;

¹⁸and seven fat, sleek *and* handsome cows came up out of the river, and they grazed in the reed grass [of a marshy pasture].

¹⁹“Lo, seven other cows came up after them, very ugly and gaunt [just skin and bones]; such emaciated animals as I have never seen in all the land of Egypt.

²⁰“And the lean and ugly cows ate up the first seven fat cows.

²¹“Yet when they had devoured them, it could not be detected that they had eaten them, because they were still as thin *and* emaciated as before. Then I awoke [but again I fell asleep and dreamed].

²²“I saw in my [second] dream, seven ears [of grain], plump and good, growing on a single stalk;

²³and lo, seven [other] ears, withered, thin, and scorched by the east wind, sprouted after them;

²⁴and the thin ears devoured the seven good ears. Now I told this to the magicians *and* soothsayers, but there was no one who could explain it [to me].”

²⁵Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “The [two] dreams are one [and the same and have one interpretation]; God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do.

²⁶“The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years; the [two] dreams are one [and the same].

²⁷“The seven thin and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years; and also the seven thin ears, dried up *and* scorched by the east wind, they are seven years of famine *and*

hunger.

²⁸“This is the message just as I have told Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do.

²⁹“Listen very carefully: seven years of great abundance will come throughout all the land of Egypt;

³⁰but afterward seven years of famine *and* hunger will come, and [there will be such desperate need that] all the great abundance [of the previous years] will be forgotten in the land of Egypt [as if it never happened], and famine *and* destitution will ravage *and* destroy the land.

³¹“So the great abundance will become forgotten in the land because of that subsequent famine, for it will be very severe.

³²“That the dream was repeated twice to Pharaoh [and in two different ways] indicates that this matter is fully determined *and* established by God, and God will bring it to pass very quickly.

³³“So now let Pharaoh [prepare ahead and] look for a man discerning *and* clear-headed and wise, and set him [in charge] over the land of Egypt [as governor under Pharaoh].

³⁴“Let Pharaoh take action to appoint overseers *and* officials over the land, and set aside one-fifth [of the produce] of the [entire] land of Egypt in the seven years of abundance.

³⁵“Let them gather [as a tax] all [of the fifth of] the food of these good years that are coming, and store up grain under the direction *and* authority of Pharaoh, and let them guard the food [in fortified granaries] in the cities.

³⁶“That food shall be put [in storage] as a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine *and* hunger which will

occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land (people) will not be ravaged during the famine.”

³⁷Now the plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all of his servants.

³⁸So Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find a man like this [a man equal to Joseph], in whom is the divine spirit [of God]?”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Think and Speak Positively

As we can clearly see from Joseph's life, God brings us through our difficulties and gives us victory in the end. He doesn't want us to ignore or deny hardships or challenges when we face them, but He does want us to deny their right to control us through negative thinking. Joseph was a young man sold into slavery by his very own brothers, but "the LORD was with him; whatever Joseph did, the LORD made to prosper" (Gen. 39:23), and eventually Joseph became second in command over all of Egypt (see Gen. 41:41).

Learn to think and speak positively, as Joseph did, "I may have difficult circumstances, but God is with me." One person can think, I lost my job, but God is faithful. Another may think, My husband left me, but God is my Provider. I had to think, I was abused, but God has promised me double for my trouble. The sick person can think, I have health problems, but God is my healer.

No matter what you don't have, you do have God—and with Him, all things are possible.

³⁹Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since [your] God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning *and* clear-headed and wise as you are.

⁴⁰"You shall have charge over my house, and all my people

shall be governed according to your word and pay respect [to you with reverence, submission, and obedience]; only in [matters of] the throne will I be greater than you [in Egypt].”

⁴¹Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you [in charge] over all the land of Egypt.”

⁴²Then Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand, and dressed him in [official] vestments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck.

⁴³He had him ride in his second chariot; and runners proclaimed before him, “[Attention,] bow the knee!” And he set him over all the land of Egypt.

⁴⁴Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, “*Though* I am Pharaoh, yet without your permission shall no man raise his hand [to do anything] or set his foot [to go anywhere] in all the land of Egypt [all classes of people shall submit to your authority].”

⁴⁵Then Pharaoh named Joseph Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, priest of On (Heliopolis in Egypt), as his wife. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt [to inspect and govern it].

⁴⁶Now Joseph [had been in Egypt thirteen years and] was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Joseph departed from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt [performing his duties].

⁴⁷In the seven abundant years the earth produced handfuls [for each seed planted].

⁴⁸And Joseph gathered all the [surplus] food of the seven [good] years in the land of Egypt and stored [enormous quantities of] the food in the cities. He stored away in every

city the food [collected] from its own surrounding fields.

⁴⁹Thus Joseph gathered *and* stored up grain in great abundance like the sand of the sea, until he stopped counting it, for it could not be measured.

⁵⁰Now two sons were born to Joseph before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, bore to him.

⁵¹Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh (causing to forget), for *he said*, “God has made me forget all my trouble *and* hardship and all [the sorrow of the loss of] my father’s household.”

⁵²He named the second [son] Ephraim (fruitfulness), for “God has caused me to be fruitful *and* very successful in the land of my suffering.”

⁵³When the seven years of plenty came to an end in the land of Egypt,

⁵⁴the seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said [they would]; the famine was in all the [surrounding] lands, but in the land of Egypt there was bread (food).

⁵⁵So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried out to Pharaoh for food; and Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph; do whatever he says to you.”

⁵⁶When the famine was *spread* over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold [surplus grain] to the Egyptians; and the famine grew [extremely] severe in the land of Egypt.

⁵⁷And [the people of] all countries came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the [known] earth.

42 NOW WHEN Jacob (Israel) learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, “Why are you staring at one another [in bewilderment and not taking action]?”

²He said, “I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down there and buy [some] grain for us, so that we may live and not die [of starvation].”

³So ten of Joseph’s brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt.

⁴But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph’s [younger] brother, with his brothers, for he said, “I am afraid that some harm *or* injury may come to him.”

⁵So the sons of Israel came [to Egypt] to buy grain along with the others who were coming, for famine was in the land of Canaan *also*.

⁶Now Joseph was the ruler over the land, and he was the one who sold [grain] to all the people of the land; and Joseph’s [half] brothers came and bowed down before him with *their* faces to the ground.

⁷When Joseph saw his brothers he recognized them, but [hiding his identity] he treated them as strangers and spoke harshly to them. He said to them, “Where have you come from?” And they said, “From the land of Canaan, to buy food.”

⁸Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him.

⁹Joseph remembered the dreams he had dreamed about them, and said to them, “You are spies; you have come [with a malicious purpose] to observe the undefended parts of our land.”

¹⁰But they said to him, “No, my lord, for your servants have [only] come to buy food.

¹¹“We are all the sons of one man; we are honest men, your servants are not spies.”

¹²Yet he said to them, “No, you have come to see the undefended parts of our land.”

¹³But they said, “Your servants are twelve brothers [in all], the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; please listen: the youngest is with our father today, and one is no longer alive.”

¹⁴Joseph said to them, “It is as I said to you, you are spies.

¹⁵“In this way you shall be tested: by the life of Pharaoh, you shall not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here!

¹⁶“Send one of you [back home], and let him bring your brother [here], while [the rest of] you remain confined, so that your words may be tested, [to see] whether there is any truth in you [and your story]; or else, by the life of Pharaoh, certainly you are spies.”

¹⁷Then Joseph put them all in prison for three days.

¹⁸Now Joseph said to them on the third day, “Do this and [you may] live, for I fear God:

¹⁹if you are honest men, let one of your brothers be confined in your [place here in] prison; but as for *the rest of* you, go, carry grain for the famine in your households,

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Faithfulness and Responsibility

When I think about what led to Joseph's eventual greatness after years of suffering yet remaining faithful to God, I'm reminded of the parable in Matthew 21:28–31. In this story, a father asks his two sons to work in his vineyard. One said no, but later changed his mind and went to work; the other said yes, but never did go into the vineyard. Jesus asked His listeners, "Which one did the will of the father?" The answer is obvious.

One lesson of this story is about responsibility. God constantly calls people to service, but not everyone goes. Some of us are like the son who initially refused. We resist at first, because we feel unworthy or unequal to the task, or perhaps because we counted the cost or wanted to be sure we could be faithful. But whatever the reason for our initial refusal, we finally said yes. We are responsible.

The second son is like those who get excited and tell everyone about the great call of God on their lives. But nothing happens immediately, and troubles come along, finances hang

them up, and health problems drag them down—in short, they find ways to avoid their responsibility to respond to God's call.

Where responsibility counts most is being true to God's will when nothing seems to be happening. This is where you will find yourself when you fight the battle for the mind. Satan steps aside during the excitement of the call. He waits until you've started to question, *Did I hear God right?*

Responsibility is our response to God's ability. If you are going to be responsible, it's necessary to respond to the opportunities that God places in front of you. And being responsible often means waiting patiently and being persistent.

Young Joseph had dreams that his father and brothers would bow down to him. Instead, his brothers sold him into slavery. But he remained faithful. He was seventeen when they sold him into slavery; he was thirty when he sold them grain (see Gen. 42:6). Joseph faced his responsibility and held fast to his commitment to God.

Thirteen years may seem like a long time. But God isn't looking at the duration of suffering; He's looking at your response to His guidance.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Heavenly Father, please forgive me for not always being responsive to You and to Your ability. Help me to focus not on circumstances and hindrances but on Your love and abundant resources. I ask this in the name of Your Son. Amen.

²⁰but bring your youngest brother to me, so your words will be verified and you will not die.” And they did so.

²¹And they said to one another, “Truly we are guilty regarding our brother [Joseph], because we saw the distress *and* anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us [to let him go], yet we would not listen [to his cry]; so this distress *and* anguish has come on us.”

²²Reuben answered them, “Did I not tell you, ‘Do not sin against the boy’; and you would not listen? Now the accounting for his blood is required [of us for we are guilty of his death].”

²³They did not know that Joseph understood [their conversation], because he spoke to them through an interpreter.

²⁴He turned away from his brothers and [left the room and] wept; then he returned and talked with them, and took Simeon from them and bound him in front of them [to be kept as a hostage in Egypt].

²⁵Then Joseph gave orders [privately] that their bags be filled with grain, and that every man’s money [used to pay for the grain] be put back in his sack, and that provisions be given to them for the journey. And so this was done for them.

²⁶They loaded their donkeys with grain and left from there.

²⁷And at the lodging place, as one *of them* opened his sack to feed his donkey, he saw his money in the opening of his sack.

²⁸And he said to his brothers, “My money has been returned! Here it is in my sack!” And their hearts sank, and

they were afraid *and* turned trembling to one another, saying, “What is this that God has done to us?”

²⁹When they came to Jacob their father in the land of Canaan, they told him everything that had happened to them, saying,

³⁰“The man who is the lord of the land spoke harshly to us, and took us for spies of the land.

³¹“But we told him, ‘We are honest men; we are not spies.

³²‘We are twelve brothers, sons of our father; one is no longer alive, and the youngest is with our father today in the land of Canaan.’

³³“And the man, the lord of the country, said to us, ‘By this [test] I will know that you are honest men: leave one of your brothers here with me and take *grain for* your starving households and go.

POWERPOINT

God often arranges our circumstances, as He did for Joseph's brothers, in order to help us confront our wrongdoing and find freedom through truth. As long as the enemy can hide in our soul, he will always have a certain amount of control over us. But when God exposes him, we are on our way to freedom. Put yourself in God's hands and permit Him to do what He desires to do.



³⁴“Bring your youngest brother to me; then I will know that you are not spies, but that you are honest men. Then I will return your [imprisoned] brother [back] to you, and you may trade *and* do business in the land.”

³⁵Now when they emptied their sacks, every man's bundle of money [paid to buy grain] was in his sack. When they and

their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid.

³⁶Jacob their father said to them, “You have bereaved me [by causing the loss] of my children. Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and you would take Benjamin [from me]. All these things are [working] against me.”

³⁷Then Reuben spoke to his father, “You may put my two sons to death if I do not bring Benjamin back to you; put him in my care, and I will return him to you.”

³⁸But Jacob said, “My son shall not go down [to Egypt] with you; for his brother is dead, and he alone is left [of Rachel’s children]. If any harm *or* accident should happen to him on the journey you are taking, then you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol (the place of the dead) in sorrow.”

43 NOW THE famine was very severe in the land [of Canaan].

²And it happened that when the families of Jacob’s sons had finished eating [all of] the grain which they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, “Go again, buy us a little food.”

³But Judah said to him, “The man [representing Pharaoh] solemnly *and* sternly warned us, saying, ‘You will not see my face [again] unless your brother is with you.’”

⁴“If you will send our brother with us, we will go down [to Egypt] and buy you food.

⁵“But if you will not send him, we will not go down there; for the man said to us, ‘You will not see my face unless your brother is with you.’”

⁶And Israel (Jacob) said, “Why did you treat me so badly by telling the man that you had *another* brother?”

⁷And they said, “The man asked us straightforward questions about ourselves and our relatives. He said, ‘Is your father still alive? Have you *another* brother?’ And we answered him accordingly. How could we possibly know that he would say, ‘Bring your brother down [here to Egypt]’?”

⁸Judah said to Israel his father, “Send the young man with me and we will get up and go [buy food], so that we may live and not die [of starvation], we as well as you and our little ones.

⁹“I will be security (a guarantee) for him; you may hold me [personally] responsible for him. If I do not bring him [back] to you and place him [safely] before you, then let me bear the blame before you forever.

¹⁰“For if we had not delayed like this, surely by now we would have returned the second time.”

¹¹Then their father Israel said to them, “If *it must be* so, then do this; take some of the choicest products of the land in your sacks, and carry it as a present [of tribute] to the man [representing Pharaoh], a little balm and a little honey, aromatic spices *or* gum, resin, pistachio nuts, and almonds.

¹²“Take double the [amount of] money with you, and take back the money that was returned in the opening of your sacks; perhaps it was an oversight.

¹³“Take your brother [Benjamin] also, and get up, and go to the man;

¹⁴and may God Almighty grant you compassion *and* favor before the man, so that he will release to you your other

brother [Simeon] and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children [Joseph, Simeon, and Benjamin], I am bereaved.”

¹⁵Then the men took the present, and they took double the [amount of] money with them, and Benjamin; then they left and went down to Egypt and stood before Joseph.

¹⁶When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, “Bring the men into the house, and kill an animal and make [a meal] ready; for the men will dine with me at noon.”

¹⁷So the man did as Joseph said, and brought the men to Joseph’s house.

¹⁸The men were afraid, because they were brought to Joseph’s house; and [expecting the worst] they said, “It is because of the money that was returned in our sacks the first time [we came] that we are being brought in, so that he may find a reason to accuse us and assail us, and take us as slaves, and *seize* our donkeys.”

¹⁹So they approached the steward of Joseph’s house, and talked with him at the entrance of the house,

²⁰and said, “Oh, my lord, we indeed came down here the first time to buy food;

²¹and when we arrived at the inn [after leaving here], we opened our sacks and there was each man’s money [with which he had paid for grain], in full, returned in the mouth of his sack. So we have brought it back [this time].

²²“We have also brought down with us additional money to buy food; we do not know who put our money [back] in our sacks [last time].”

²³But the steward [encouraged them and] said, “Peace be

to you, do not be afraid; your God and the God of your father has [miraculously] given you treasure in your sacks. I [already] had your money [which you paid to us].” Then he brought Simeon out to them.

²⁴Then the steward brought the men into Joseph’s house and gave them water, and they washed [the dust off] their feet; and he gave their donkeys feed.

²⁵So they prepared the present [of tribute] for Joseph before his arrival at noon; for they had heard that they were to eat a meal there.

POWERPOINT

Joseph believed in the dreams God had given him and he saw them come to pass. Despite all the opposition, he continued making big plans and refused to give them up. The devil will go to great lengths to discourage you from having dreams of better things. Set your mind right now to follow God's good plans for your life and never give up.



²⁶When Joseph came home, they brought into the house to him the present [of tribute] which they had with them and bowed to the ground before him.

²⁷He asked them about their well-being, and said, "Is your old father well, of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?"

²⁸And they answered, "Your servant our father is in good health; he is still alive." And they bowed down [their heads before Joseph] in respect.

²⁹And he looked up and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's [only other] son, and said, "Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me?" And Joseph said, "God be gracious to you *and* show you favor, my son."

³⁰Then Joseph hurried out [of the room] because his heart was deeply touched over his brother, and he sought *privacy* to weep; so he entered his chamber and wept there.

³¹Then he washed his face and came out, and, restraining himself, said, "Let the meal be served."

³²So the servants served Joseph by himself [in honor of his rank], and his brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because [according to custom] the Egyptians could not eat food with the Hebrews, for that is loathsome to the Egyptians.

³³Now Joseph's brothers were seated [by the steward] before him [in the order of their birth]—the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth; and the men looked at one another in astonishment [because so much was known about them].

³⁴Joseph selected *and* sent portions to them from his own table, but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. So they feasted and drank freely *and* celebrated with him.

44 AND HE commanded the steward of his house, saying, "Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's [grain] money in the mouth of the sack.

²"Put my [personal] cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the

sack of the youngest, with his grain money.” And the steward did as Joseph had told him.

³As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their donkeys.

⁴When they had left the city, and were not yet far away, Joseph said to his steward, “Get up, follow after the men; and when you overtake them, say to them, ‘Why have you repaid evil [to us] for good [paid to you]?’

⁵‘Is this not my lord’s drinking cup and the one which he uses for divination? You have done [a great and unforgivable] wrong in doing this.’”

⁶So the steward overtook them and he said these words to them.

⁷They said to him, “Why does my lord speak these things? Far be it from your servants to do such a thing!

⁸“Please remember, the money which we found in the mouths of our sacks we have brought back to you from the land of Canaan. Is it likely then that we would steal silver or gold from your master’s house?

⁹“With whomever of your servants your master’s cup is found, let him die, and the rest of us will be my lord’s slaves.”

¹⁰And the steward said, “Now let it be as you say; he with whom the cup is found will be my slave, but *the rest of you* shall be blameless.”

¹¹Then every man quickly lowered his sack to the ground and each man opened his sack [confident the cup would not be found among them].

¹²The steward searched, beginning with the eldest and ending with the youngest, and the cup was found in

Benjamin's sack.

¹³Then they tore their clothes [in grief]; and after each man had loaded his donkey again, they returned to the city.

¹⁴When Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, he was still there; and they fell to the ground before him.

¹⁵Joseph spoke harshly to them, "What is this thing that you have done? Do you not realize that such a man as I can indeed practice divination *and* foretell [everything you do without outside knowledge of it]?"

¹⁶So Judah said, "What can we say to my lord? What can we reply? Or how can we clear ourselves, since God has exposed the sin *and* guilt of your servants? Behold, we are my lord's slaves, the rest of us as well as he with whom the cup is found."

¹⁷But Joseph said, "Far be it from me that I should do that; but the man in whose hand the cup has been found, he will be my servant; and as for [the rest of] you, get up and go in peace to your father."

¹⁸Then Judah approached him, and said, "O my lord, please let your servant say a word to you in private, and do not let your anger blaze against your servant, for you are equal to Pharaoh [so I speak as if directly to him].

¹⁹"My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father or a brother?'

²⁰"We said to my lord, 'We have an old father and a young [brother, Benjamin, the] child of his old age. Now his brother [Joseph] is dead, and he alone is left of [the two sons born of] his mother, and his father loves him.'

²¹"Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me

that I may actually see him.’

²²“But we said to my lord, ‘The young man cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.’

²³“You said to your servants, ‘Unless your youngest brother comes with you, you shall not see my face again.’

²⁴“So when we went back to your servant my father, we told him what my lord had said.

²⁵“Our father said, ‘Go back [to Egypt], and buy us a little food.’

²⁶“But we said, ‘We cannot go down [to Egypt]. If our youngest brother is with us, then we will go down [there]; for we [were sternly told that we] cannot see the man’s face unless our youngest brother is with us.’

²⁷“Your servant my father said to us, ‘You know that my wife [Rachel] bore me [only] two sons.

²⁸“And one [son] went out from me, and I said, “Surely he is torn to pieces,” and I have not seen him since.

²⁹“If you take this one also from me, and harm *or* an accident happens to him, you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow.’

³⁰“Now, therefore, when I come to your servant my father, and the young man is not with us, since his life is bound up in the young man’s life,

³¹when he sees that the young man is not *with us*, he will die; and your servants will bring the gray hair of your servant our father down to Sheol in [great] sorrow.

³²“For your servant became security for the young man to my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, then let me bear the blame before my father forever.’

³³“Now, therefore, please let your servant (Judah) remain here instead of the youth [to be] a slave to my lord, and let the young man go home with his brothers.

³⁴“How can I go up to my father if the young man is not with me—for fear that I would see the tragedy that would overtake my [elderly] father [if Benjamin does not return]?”

45 THEN JOSEPH could not control himself [any longer] in front of all those who attended him, and he called out, “Have everyone leave me.” So no man stood there when Joseph revealed himself to his brothers.

²Joseph wept aloud, and the Egyptians [who had just left him] heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard of it.

³Then Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?” But his brothers were speechless, for they were stunned *and* dismayed by [the fact that they were in] Joseph’s presence.

⁴And Joseph said to his brothers, “Please come closer to me.” And they approached him. And he said, “I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt.

⁵“Now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me ahead of you to save life *and* preserve our family.

⁶“For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five more years in which there will be no plowing and harvesting.

⁷“God sent me [to Egypt] ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on the earth, and to keep you alive by a great

escape.

⁸“So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

⁹“Hurry and go up to my father, and tell him, ‘Your son Joseph says this to you: “God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay.

¹⁰“You shall live in the land of Goshen [the best pasture land of Egypt], and you shall be close to me—you and your children and your grandchildren, your flocks and your herds and all you have.

¹¹“There I will provide for you *and* sustain you, so that you and your household and all that are yours may not become impoverished, for there are still five years of famine *to come*.” ’

¹²“Look! Your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that I am speaking to you [personally in your language and not through an interpreter].

¹³“Now you must tell my father of all my splendor *and* power in Egypt, and of everything that you have seen; and you must hurry and bring my father down here.”

¹⁴Then he embraced his brother Benjamin’s neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck.

¹⁵He kissed all his brothers and wept on them, and afterward his brothers talked with him.

¹⁶When the news was heard in Pharaoh’s house that Joseph’s brothers had come, it pleased Pharaoh and his servants.

¹⁷Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Tell your brothers, ‘Do this: load your animals and return to the land of Canaan

[without delay],

¹⁸and get your father and your households and come to me. I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you will eat the fat (the finest produce) of the land.’

¹⁹“Now you [brothers of Joseph] are ordered [by Pharaoh], ‘Do this: take wagons from the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father and come.

²⁰‘Do not be concerned with your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.’”

²¹Then the sons of Israel did so; and Joseph gave them wagons according to the command of Pharaoh, and gave them provisions for the journey.

²²To each of them Joseph gave changes of clothing, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred *pieces of* silver and five changes of clothing.

²³To his father he sent the following: ten *male* donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and provision for his father [to supply all who were with him] on the journey.

²⁴So he sent his brothers away, and as they departed, he said to them, “See that you do not quarrel on the journey [about how to explain this to our father].”

²⁵So they went up from Egypt, and came to the land of Canaan to Jacob their father,

²⁶and they said to him, “Joseph is still alive, and indeed he is ruler over all the land of Egypt.” But Jacob was stunned *and* his heart almost stopped beating, because he did not believe them.

²⁷When they told him everything that Joseph had said to

them, and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived.

²⁸And Israel (Jacob) said, “It is enough! Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.”

46 SO ISRAEL set out with all that he had, and came to Beersheba [where both his father and grandfather had worshiped God], and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. [Gen 21:33; 26:23–25]

²And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, “Jacob, Jacob!” And he said, “Here I am.”

³And He said, “I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you (your descendants) a great nation there.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Thoughts of Courage and Confidence

When God wanted to bring Jacob and his entire family to Egypt, He told Jacob in a nighttime vision, “I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you (your descendants) a great nation there” (Gen. 46:3). He didn’t tell Jacob that he wouldn’t feel fear; but that he would have to have courage in the face of fear. He was basically saying, “You will be tempted to turn back, but you have to keep going forward. Do it afraid, and you will arrive at your desired destination.” When you feel fear, a wise thing to do is to intentionally think thoughts about confidence and courage.

I am not suggesting we do foolish things, but if we are fully assured that we have direction from God, we can press forward no matter what we feel like or what people say. I have often heard it said that “courage is not the absence of fear; it is progress in its presence.”

⁴“I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you (your people) up again; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes [to close them at the time of your death].”

⁵So Jacob set out from Beersheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob and their children and their wives in the wagons that Pharaoh had sent to carry him.

⁶And they took their livestock and the possessions which they had acquired in the land of Canaan and came to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him.

⁷His sons and his grandsons, his daughters and his granddaughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt.

⁸Now these are the names of the sons of Israel, Jacob and his sons, who went to Egypt: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn.

⁹The sons of Reuben: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.

¹⁰The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman.

¹¹The sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

¹²The sons of Judah: Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah—but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. And the sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul.

¹³The sons of Issachar: Tola, Puvah, Job, and Shimron.

¹⁴The sons of Zebulun: Sered, Elon, and Jahleel.

¹⁵These are the sons of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob in Paddan-aram, with his daughter Dinah; all of his sons and daughters *numbered* thirty-three.

¹⁶The sons of Gad: Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli.

¹⁷The sons of Asher: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah, and Serah their sister. And the sons of Beriah: Heber and Malchiel.

¹⁸These are the sons of Zilpah, [the maid] whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter [when she married Jacob]; and she bore to Jacob these sixteen persons [two sons and fourteen grandchildren].

¹⁹The sons of Rachel, Jacob's wife: Joseph and Benjamin.

²⁰Now to Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, priest of On (Heliopolis in Egypt), bore to him.

²¹And the sons of Benjamin: Bela, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppin, and Ard.

²²These are the sons of Rachel, who were born to Jacob; [there were] fourteen persons in all [two sons and twelve grandchildren].

²³The son of Dan: Hushim.

²⁴The sons of Naphtali: Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem.

²⁵These are the sons of Bilhah, [the maid] whom Laban gave to Rachel his daughter [when she married Jacob]. And she bore these to Jacob; [there were] seven persons in all [two sons and five grandchildren].

²⁶All the persons who came with Jacob into Egypt—who were his direct descendants, not counting the wives of [Jacob or] Jacob's sons, were sixty-six persons in all,

²⁷and the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt, were two. All the persons of the house of Jacob [including Jacob, and Joseph and his sons], who came into Egypt, were seventy.

²⁸Now Jacob (Israel) sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph, to direct him to Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen.

²⁹Then Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to meet Israel his father in Goshen; as soon as he presented himself before him (authenticating his identity), he fell on his [father's] neck and wept on his neck a [very] long time.

³⁰And Israel said to Joseph, “Now let me die [in peace], since I have seen your face [and know] that you are still alive.”

³¹Joseph said to his brothers and to his father’s household, “I will go up and tell Pharaoh, and say to him, ‘My brothers and my father’s household, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me;

³²and the men are shepherds, for they have been keepers of livestock; and they have brought their flocks and their herds and all that they have.’

³³“And it shall be that when Pharaoh calls you and says, ‘What is your occupation?’

³⁴you shall say, ‘Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth until now, both we and our fathers [before us],’ in order that you may live [separately and securely] in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is repulsive to the Egyptians.”

47 THEN JOSEPH came and told Pharaoh, “My father and my brothers, with their flocks and their herds and all that they own, have come from the land of Canaan, and they are in the land of Goshen.”

²He took five men from among his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh.

³And Pharaoh said to his brothers [as Joseph expected], “What is your occupation?” And they said to Pharaoh, “Your servants are shepherds, both we and our fathers [before us].”

⁴Moreover, they said to Pharaoh, “We have come to live temporarily (sojourn) in the land [of Egypt], for there is no

pasture for the flocks of your servants [in our land], for the famine is very severe in Canaan. So now, please let your servants live in the land of Goshen.”

⁵Then Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, saying, “Your father and your brothers have come to you.

⁶“The land of Egypt is before you; settle your father and your brothers in the best of the land. Let them live in the land of Goshen; and if you know of any men of ability among them, put them in charge of my livestock.”

⁷Then Joseph brought Jacob (Israel) his father and presented him before Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

⁸And Pharaoh asked Jacob, “How old are you?”

⁹Jacob said to Pharaoh, “The years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty. Few and unpleasant have been the years of my life, and they have not reached the years that my fathers lived during the days of their pilgrimage.”

¹⁰And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and departed from his presence.

¹¹So Joseph settled his father and brothers and gave them a possession in Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses (Goshen), as Pharaoh commanded.

¹²Joseph provided *and* supplied his father and his brothers and all his father’s household with food, according to [the needs of] their children.

¹³Now [in the course of time] there was no food in all the land, for the famine was distressingly severe, so that the land of Egypt and all the land of Canaan languished [in destitution and starvation] because of the famine.

¹⁴Joseph gathered all the money that was found in the land

of Egypt and in the land of Canaan [in payment] for the grain which they bought, and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house.

¹⁵And when the money was exhausted in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, "Give us food! Why should we die before your very eyes? For our money is gone."

¹⁶Joseph said, "Give up your livestock, and I will give you food in exchange for your livestock, since the money is gone."

¹⁷So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and he gave them food in exchange for the horses and the flocks and the herds and the donkeys; and he supplied them with food in exchange for all their livestock that year.

¹⁸When that year was ended, they came to him the next year and said to him, "We will not hide from my lord [the fact] that our money is spent; my lord also has our herds of livestock; there is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our lands.

¹⁹"Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we and our land will be servants to Pharaoh. And give us seed [to plant], that we may live and not die, and that the land may not be desolate."

²⁰So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for every Egyptian sold his field because the famine was severe upon them. So the land became Pharaoh's.

²¹And as for the people, he relocated them [temporarily] to cities from one end of Egypt's border to the other.

²²Only the land of the priests he did not buy, for the priests

had an allotment from Pharaoh, and they lived on the amount which Pharaoh gave them, so they did not sell their land.

²³Then Joseph said to the people, “Look, today I have bought you and your land for Pharaoh; now, here is seed for you, and you shall plant the land.

²⁴“At harvest time [when you reap the increase] you shall give one-fifth of it to Pharaoh, and four-fifths will be your own to use for seed for the field and as food for you and those of your households and for your little ones.”

POWERPOINT

How did Joseph get from the pit to the palace, where he saved untold lives? I believe he made that journey by refusing to be bitter, staying positive and confident in God, and trusting Him. To do this he surely had to win the battle in his mind. He may have been labeled a “slave” or a “convict,” but he refused to have the mentality that goes with those labels. If you keep standing strong on the inside because you know that God is with you, then He can do great things through you.



²⁵And they said, “You have saved our lives! Let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh’s servants.”

²⁶And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt—valid to this day—that Pharaoh should have the fifth part [of the crops]; only the land of the priests did not become Pharaoh's.

²⁷Now [the people of] Israel lived in the country of Egypt, in [the land of] Goshen, and they gained possessions *and* acquired property there and were fruitful and multiplied greatly.

²⁸And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years; so the length of Jacob's life was a hundred and forty-seven years.

²⁹And when the time drew near for Israel to die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "If now I have found favor in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh and [promise to] deal loyally and faithfully with me. Please do not bury me in Egypt,

³⁰but when I lie down with my fathers [in death], you will carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place [at Hebron in the cave of Machpelah]." And Joseph said, "I will do as you have directed."

³¹Then he said, "Swear to me [that you will do it]." So he swore to him. Then Israel (Jacob) bowed *in worship* at the head of the bed.

48 NOW SOME time after these things happened, Joseph was told, "Your father is sick." So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim with him [to go to Goshen].

²And when Jacob (Israel) was told, "Look now, your son Joseph has come to you," Israel strengthened himself and sat up on the bed.

³Then Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to

me at Luz (Bethel) in the land of Canaan and blessed me,

⁴and said to me, ‘Behold, I will make you fruitful and numerous, and I will make you a great company of people, and will give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession.’ [Gen 28:13–22; 35:6–15]

⁵“Now your two sons [Ephraim and Manasseh], who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine [that is, adopted as my heirs and sons as surely], as Reuben and Simeon are *my sons*.

⁶“But other sons who were born to you after them shall be your own; they shall be called by the names of their [two] brothers in their inheritance.

⁷“Now as for me, when I came from Paddan [in Mesopotamia], Rachel died beside me in the land of Canaan on the journey, when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).”

⁸When Israel [who was almost blind] saw Joseph’s sons, he said, “Who are these?”

⁹Joseph said to his father, “They are my sons, whom God has given me here [in Egypt].” So he said, “Please bring them to me, so that I may bless them.”

¹⁰Now Israel’s eyes were so dim from age that he could not see [clearly]. Then Joseph brought them close to him, and he kissed and embraced them.

¹¹Israel said to Joseph, “I never expected to see your face, but see, God has shown me your children as well.”

¹²Then Joseph took the boys [from his father’s embrace],

and he bowed [before him] with his face to the ground.

¹³Then Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right, and brought them close to him.

¹⁴But Israel reached out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, crossing his hands [intentionally], even though Manasseh was the firstborn.

¹⁵Then Jacob (Israel) blessed Joseph, and said,

“The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked [in faithful obedience],
The God who has been my Shepherd [leading and caring for me] all my life to this day,

¹⁶The Angel [that is, the LORD Himself] who has redeemed me [continually] from all evil,

Bless the boys;

And may my name live on in them [may they be worthy of having their names linked with mine],

And the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac;

And may they grow into a [great] multitude in the midst of the earth.”

¹⁷When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim's head, it displeased him [because he was not the firstborn]; and he grasped his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head.

¹⁸Joseph said to his father, “Not so, my father, for this is the firstborn; place your right hand on Manasseh's head.”

¹⁹But his father refused and said, “I know, my son, I know;

Manasseh also will become a people and he will be great; but his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.”

²⁰Then Jacob blessed them that day, saying,

“By you Israel will pronounce a blessing, saying,
“May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.””

And he put Ephraim before Manasseh.

²¹Then Israel said to Joseph, “Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to [Canaan] the land of your fathers.

²²“Moreover, I have given you [the birthright,] one portion [Shechem, one mountain ridge] more than any of your brothers, which I took [reclaiming it] from the hand of the Amorites with my sword and with my bow.” [Gen 33:18, 19; Josh 24:32, 33; John 4:5]

49 THEN JACOB called for his sons and said, “Assemble yourselves [around me] that I may tell you what will happen to you *and* your descendants in the days to come.

²“Gather together and hear, O sons of Jacob;
And listen to Israel (Jacob) your father.

³“Reuben, you are my firstborn;
My might, the beginning of my strength *and* vigor,
Preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power [that should
have been your birthright].

⁴“But unstable *and* reckless *and* boiling over like water [in

sinful lust], you shall not excel *or* have the preeminence
[of the firstborn],

Because you went up to your father's bed [with Bilhah];
You defiled it—he went up to my couch. [Gen 35:22]

5“Simeon and Levi are brothers [equally headstrong,
deceitful, vindictive, and cruel];
Their swords are weapons of violence *and* revenge. [Gen
34:25–30]

6“O my soul, do not come into their secret council;
Let not my glory (honor) be united with their assembly [for I
knew nothing of their plot];
Because in their anger they killed men [an honored man,
Shechem, and the Shechemites],
And in their self-will they lamed oxen.

7“Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce;
And their wrath, for it was cruel.
I will divide *and* disperse them in Jacob,
And scatter them in [the midst of the land of] Israel.

8“Judah, you are the one whom your brothers shall praise;
Your hand will be on the neck of your enemies;
Your father's sons shall bow down to you.

9“Judah, a lion's cub;
With the prey, my son, you have gone high up [the
mountain].
He stooped down, he crouched like a lion,
And like a lion—who dares rouse him? [Rev 5:5]

10“The scepter [of royalty] shall not depart from Judah,

Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
Until Shiloh [the Messiah, the Peaceful One] comes,
And to Him *shall be* the obedience of the peoples. [Num
24:17; Ps 60:7; Ezek 21:27]

¹¹“Tying his foal to the [strong] vine
And his donkey's colt to the choice vine,
He washes his clothing in wine [because the grapevine
produces abundantly],
And his robes in the blood of grapes. [Is 63:1–3; Zech 9:9;
Rev 19:11–16]

¹²“His eyes are darker *and* sparkle more than wine,
And his teeth whiter than milk.

POWERPOINT

If you are waiting to have nothing to worry about before you stop worrying, you will have to wait a long time, because that time may never come. Each day will have sufficient trouble of its own (see Matt. 6:34). Jesus, our “Shiloh [the Messiah, the Peaceful One]” (Gen. 49:10), said that. Being at peace, enjoying the rest of God in the midst of the storm, gives much glory to the Lord because it proves that His ways work.



- 13“Zebulun shall dwell at the seashore;
And he shall be a haven (landing place) for ships,
And his flank shall be toward Sidon.
- 14“Issachar is [like] a strong-boned donkey,
Crouching down between the sheepfolds.

- 15“When he saw that the resting place was good
And that the land was pleasant,
He bowed his shoulder to bear [burdens],
And became a servant at forced labor.
- 16“Dan shall judge his people,
As one of the tribes of Israel.
- 17“Dan shall be a [venomous] serpent in the way,
A fanged snake in the path,
That bites the horse’s heels,
So that his rider falls backward.
- 18“*I wait for Your salvation, O LORD.*
- 19“*As for Gad—a raiding troop shall raid him,
But he shall raid at their heels and assault them
[victoriously].*
- 20“*Asher’s food [supply] shall be rich and bountiful,
And he shall yield and deliver royal delights.*
- 21“*Naphtali is a doe let loose, [a swift warrior],
Which yields branched antlers (eloquent words).*
- 22“*Joseph is a fruitful bough (a main branch of the vine),
A fruitful bough by a spring (a well, a fountain);
Its branches run over the wall [influencing others].*
- 23“*The [skilled] archers have bitterly attacked and provoked
him;
They have shot [at him] and harassed him.*
- 24“*But his bow remained firm and steady [in the Strength that*

does not fail],
For his arms were made strong *and* agile
By the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob,
(By the name of the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), [Gen
48:15; Deut 32:4; Is 9:6; 49:26]

²⁵By the God of your father who will help you,
And by the Almighty who blesses you
With blessings of the heavens above,
Blessings lying in the deep that couches beneath,
Blessings of the [nursing] breasts and of the [fertile] womb.

²⁶“The blessings of your father
Are greater than the blessings of my ancestors [Abraham
and Isaac]
Up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills;
They shall be on the head of Joseph,
Even on the crown of the head of him who was the
distinguished one *and* the one who is prince among
(separate from) his brothers.

²⁷“Benjamin is a ravenous wolf;
In the morning he devours the prey,
And at night he divides the spoil.”

²⁸All these are the [beginnings of the] twelve tribes of
Israel, and this is what their father said to them as he blessed
them, blessing each one according to the blessing appropriate
to him.

²⁹He charged them and said to them, “I am to be gathered
to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the
field of Ephron the Hittite,

³⁰in the cave in the field at Machpelah, east of Mamre, in the land of Canaan, that Abraham bought, along with the field from Ephron the Hittite, to possess as a burial site. [Gen 23:17–20]

³¹“There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife, there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah

³²the field and the cave that is in it was purchased from the sons of Heth.”

³³When Jacob (Israel) had finished commanding his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people [who had preceded him in death].

50 THEN JOSEPH fell upon his father’s face, and wept over him and kissed him [tenderly].

²Then Joseph ordered his servants the physicians to embalm (mummify) his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel (Jacob).

³Now forty days were required for this, for that is the customary number of days [of preparation] required for embalming. And the Egyptians wept *and* grieved for him [in public mourning as they would for royalty] for seventy days.

⁴When the days of weeping *and* public mourning for him were past, Joseph spoke to [the nobles of] the house of Pharaoh, saying, “If now I have found favor in your sight, please speak to Pharaoh, saying,

⁵“My father made me swear [an oath], saying, “Hear me, I am about to die; bury me in my tomb which I prepared for

myself in the land of Canaan.” So now let me go up [to Canaan], please, and bury my father; then I will return.”

⁶And Pharaoh said, “Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear.”

⁷So Joseph went up [to Canaan] to bury his father, and with him went all the officials of Pharaoh, [the nobles of his court and] the elders of his household and all [the nobles and] the elders of the land of Egypt—

⁸and all the household of Joseph and his brothers and his father’s household. They left only their little ones and their flocks and herds in the land of Goshen.

⁹Both chariots and horsemen also went up [to Canaan] with Joseph; and it was a very great company.

¹⁰When they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, they mourned there with a great lamentation (expressions of mourning for the deceased) and [extreme demonstrations of] sorrow [according to Egyptian custom]; and Joseph observed a seven-day mourning for his father.

¹¹When the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, “This is a grievous mourning for the Egyptians.” Therefore the place was named Abel-mizraim (mourning of Egypt); it is west of the Jordan.

¹²So Jacob’s sons did for him as he had commanded them;

¹³for his sons carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, east of Mamre, which Abraham bought along with the field as a burial site from Ephron the Hittite.

¹⁴After he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers, and all who had gone up with him.

¹⁵When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph carries a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him?"

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Choosing To Forgive

After the death of their father, the brothers' concern about whether Joseph had actually forgiven them was reasonable. God helped Joseph work through the process of forgiving his brothers for their cruel treatment of him.

How we feel about our enemies doesn't have to stop us from taking the right steps toward forgiving them. The first thing you decide is to forgive those who have hurt you; the second thing is to pray for them. Another thing God tells you to do is to bless your enemies. To bless someone means to speak well of them and want good things for them. Refuse to talk unkindly about those who hurt you. Don't keep talking about what your enemies did; it only keeps the pain stirred up in you. The fourth thing you must do is wait. Don't give up. Keep doing what is right, and wait on God to change your feelings and He will.

¹⁶So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father commanded us before he died, saying,

¹⁷"You are to say to Joseph, "I beg you, please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong." ' Now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

¹⁸Then his brothers went and fell down before him [in confession]; then they said, “Behold, we are your servants (slaves).”

¹⁹But Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? [Vengeance is His, not mine.]

²⁰“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present outcome, that many people would be kept alive [as they are this day].

²¹“So now, do not be afraid; I will provide for you *and* support you and your little ones.” So he comforted them [giving them encouragement and hope] and spoke [with kindness] to their hearts.

²²Now Joseph lived in Egypt, he and his father’s household, and Joseph lived a hundred and ten years.

²³Joseph saw the third generation of Ephraim’s children; also the children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were born *and* raised on Joseph’s knees.

²⁴Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you and bring you up out of this land to the land which He promised to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob [to give you].”

²⁵Then Joseph made the sons of Israel (Jacob) swear [an oath], saying, “God will surely visit you *and* take care of you [returning you to Canaan], and [when that happens] you shall carry my bones up from here.”

²⁶So Joseph died, being a hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, God, that what
other people mean for evil
against me, You intend for
good, to bring about the
positive outcome You intend
for my life.*

• *adapted from Genesis 50:20*

Exodus

Author: | Moses
Date: | About 1440
BC

The book of Exodus is the story of the Israelites' journey out of bondage in Egypt and into freedom in the land that God had promised them. The story teaches us many lessons about the process of winning the battle of the mind. The battle begins when the enemy uses our thoughts to enslave us to his ways, attempting to get us to think certain ways, so we will not follow God or grow in an intimate, personal relationship with Him. As we learn God's Word, we realize that He wants to set us free to think as He thinks. We then begin the journey toward freedom and wholeness, making progress as we break free from the mental strongholds the enemy has established in our minds. As we stay focused on God's promises, we keep going from one victory to another.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM EXODUS:

Just as God rescued the Israelites from bondage under the Egyptians and led them to the Promised Land, He wants to deliver you from every form of bondage and lead you into a good place (see Exodus 3:8).

If you are being tested, there is no need to be afraid. Simply continue trusting God so that you can resist the temptation to sin (see Exodus 20:20).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM EXODUS:

Do not be afraid! Take your stand [be firm and confident and undismayed] and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for those Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you while you [only need to] keep silent and remain calm. | Exodus 14:13–14

If you will diligently listen and pay attention to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and listen to His commandments, and keep [foremost in your thoughts and actively obey] all His precepts and statutes, then I will not put on you any of the diseases which I have put on the Egyptians; for I am the LORD who heals you. | Exodus 15:26

THE SECOND BOOK OF MOSES, COMMONLY CALLED
EXODUS

1 NOW THESE are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob; each came with his household: ²Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah;

³Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin;

⁴Dan and Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.

⁵All the descendants of Jacob were seventy people; Joseph was [already] in Egypt.

⁶Then Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation,

⁷but the Israelites were prolific and increased greatly; they multiplied and became extremely strong, so that the land was filled with them.

⁸Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph [nor the history of his accomplishments].

⁹He said to his people, "Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are too many and too mighty for us [they greatly outnumber us].

¹⁰"Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, so that they will not multiply and in the event of war, join our enemies, and fight

against us and escape from the land.”

¹¹So they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with hard labor. And the sons of Israel built Pithom and Raamses as storage cities for Pharaoh.

¹²But the more the Egyptians oppressed them, the more they multiplied and expanded, so that the Egyptians dreaded *and* were exasperated by the Israelites.

¹³And the Egyptians made the Israelites serve rigorously [forcing them into severe slavery].

¹⁴They made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar, brick, and all kinds of field work. All their labor was harsh *and* severe.

¹⁵Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah (beauty) and the other named Puah (splendor),

! REMEMBER, don't wait
until the battle is finished to
declare your victory. Thank
God in advance!

¹⁶“When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him; but if it is a daughter, she shall live.”

¹⁷But the midwives feared God [with profound reverence] and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded, but they let the boy babies live.

¹⁸So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to

them, “Why have you done this thing, and allowed the boy babies to live?”

¹⁹The midwives answered Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth quickly and their babies are born before the midwife can get to them.”

²⁰So God was good to the midwives, and the people [of Israel] multiplied and became very strong.

²¹And because the midwives feared God [with profound reverence], He established families *and* households for them.

²²Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, “Every son who is born [to the Hebrews] must be thrown into the Nile, but every daughter you shall keep alive.”

2 NOW A man of the house of Levi [the priestly tribe] went and took as his wife a daughter of Levi. [Ex 6:18, 20; Num 26:59]

²The woman conceived and gave birth to a son; and when she saw that he was [especially] beautiful *and* healthy, she hid him for three months [to protect him from the Egyptians]. [Acts 7:20; Heb 11:23]

³When she could no longer hide him, she got him a basket (chest) made of papyrus reeds and covered it with tar and pitch [making it waterproof]. Then she put the child in it and set it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile.

⁴And his sister [Miriam] stood some distance away to find out what would happen to him.

⁵Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the Nile, and [she, together with] her maidens walked along the

river's bank; she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid [to get it], and she brought it *to her*.

⁶When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby was crying. And she took pity on him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children."

⁷Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a wet-nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?"

⁸And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go *ahead*." So the girl went and called the child's mother.

⁹Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him.

¹⁰And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. And she named him Moses, and said, "Because I drew him out of the water."

¹¹One day, after Moses had grown [into adulthood], it happened that he went to his countrymen and looked [with compassion] at their hard labors; and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his countrymen.

¹²He turned to look around, and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

¹³He went out the next day and saw two Hebrew men fighting with each other; and he said to the aggressor, "Why are you striking your friend?"

¹⁴But the man said, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid and said, "Certainly this incident is known."

¹⁵When Pharaoh heard about this matter, he tried to kill Moses. Then Moses fled from Pharaoh's presence and took refuge in the land of Midian, where he sat down by a well.

¹⁶Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters; and they came and drew water [from the well where Moses was resting] and filled the troughs to water their father's flock.

¹⁷Then shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and helped them and watered their flock.

¹⁸When they came to Reuel (Jethro) their father, he said, "How is it that you have come back so soon today?"

¹⁹They said, "An Egyptian saved us from the shepherds. He even drew water [from the well] for us and watered the flock."

²⁰Then he said to his daughters, "Where is he? Why have you left the man behind? Invite him to have something to eat."

²¹Moses was willing to remain with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah [to be his wife].

²²She gave birth to a son, and he named him Gershom (stranger); for he said, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land."

²³Now it happened after a long time [about forty years] that the king of Egypt died. And the children of Israel (Jacob) groaned *and* sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out. And their cry for help because of their bondage ascended to God.

²⁴So God heard their groaning and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel). [Gen 12:1-3; 15:18-21; 17:3-8, 21; 35:10-12]

²⁵God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice [of them] *and* was concerned about them [knowing all, understanding all, remembering all]. [Ps 56:8, 9; 139:2]

3 NOW MOSES was keeping the flock of Jethro (Reuel) his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb (Sinai), the mountain of God.

²The Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing flame of fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was on fire, yet it was not consumed.

³So Moses said, “I must turn away [from the flock] and see this great sight—why the bush is not burned up.”

⁴When the LORD saw that he turned away [from the flock] to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.”

⁵Then God said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet [out of respect], because the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Knowing God as “I AM”

What is God saying to Moses when He refers to Himself as “I AM” (Ex. 3:14)? He is saying that He is all we need all wrapped up in one. He can do anything that needs to be done. He is the answer to all our problems, and all things are possible with Him. God is so great that we do not have proper words to describe Him, so He told Moses to tell the people that “I AM” sent him. In essence He was saying, “I have everything covered so there is nothing you need to worry about.” Our finite human minds cannot expand far enough even to begin to comprehend the limitless power that has been invested in God’s name, I AM.

Jesus described Himself to His disciples the same way God the Father characterized Himself to Moses, as “I Am” (John 8:58). When we pray in Jesus’ name, we are praying in the name of the great I AM, the all-powerful God of all eternity.

Let there be no limits to the way you think about the greatness of the Lord, always remembering that He is I AM—above, beyond, and more than anything your mind can conceive.

⁶Then He said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Then Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

⁷The LORD said, “I have in fact seen the affliction

(suffering, desolation) of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters (oppressors); for I know their pain *and* suffering.

⁸“So I have come down to rescue them from the hand (power) of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a land [that is] good and spacious, to a land flowing with milk and honey [a land of plenty]—to the place of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

⁹“Now, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me; and I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them.

¹⁰“Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, and then bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”

¹¹But Moses said to God, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?”

¹²And God said, “Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve *and* worship God at this mountain.”

¹³Then Moses said to God, “Behold, when I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers (ancestors) has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them?”

¹⁴God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM”; and He said, “You shall say this to the Israelites, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

¹⁵Then God also said to Moses, “This is what you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the

God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob (Israel), has sent me to you.’ This is My Name forever, and this is My memorial [name] to all generations.

¹⁶“Go, gather the elders (tribal leaders) of Israel together, and say to them, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared to me, saying, “I am indeed concerned about you and what has been done to you in Egypt.

¹⁷“So I said I will bring you up out of the suffering *and* oppression of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey.” ’

¹⁸“The elders [of the tribes] will listen *and* pay attention to what you say; and you, with the elders of Israel, shall go to the king of Egypt and you shall say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; so now, please, [we ask and plead with you,] let us go on a three days’ journey into the wilderness, so that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.’

¹⁹“But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless [he is forced] by a strong hand.

²⁰“So I will reach out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go.

²¹“And I will grant this people favor *and* respect in the sight of the Egyptians; therefore, it shall be that when you go, you will not go empty-handed.

²²“But every woman shall [insistently] ask her neighbor and any woman who lives in her house, for articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; and you shall put them on

your sons and daughters. In this way you are to plunder the Egyptians [leaving bondage with great possessions that are rightfully yours].” [Gen 15:14]

4 THEN MOSES answered [the LORD] and said, “What if they will not believe me or take seriously what I say? For they may say, ‘The LORD has not appeared to you.’”

²And the LORD said to him, “What is that in your hand?” And he said, “A staff.”

³Then He said, “Throw it on the ground.” So Moses threw it on the ground, and it became a [living] serpent [like the royal symbol on the crown of Pharaoh]; and Moses ran from it.

⁴But the LORD said to Moses, “Reach out your hand and grasp it by the tail.” So he reached out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand— ⁵[“You shall do this,” said the LORD,] “so that the elders may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has [most certainly] appeared to you.”

⁶The LORD also said to him, “Put your hand into your robe [where it covers your chest].” So he put his hand into his robe, and when he took it out, his hand was leprous, as white as snow.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Focus on What You Can Do

In Exodus 4, God appears to Moses to tell him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt; but because of the limitations in his thinking, Moses doesn't believe he can do all God is asking him to do. God responds to Moses by asking him, "What is that in your hand?" (v. 2).

God is essentially saying, "Stop telling Me what you don't have and can't do, and tell Me what you do have—what is in your hand?" Then God takes what Moses has—a staff (stick)—and fills it with His power.

God can use anything we are willing to offer Him. If He can use a stick, surely He can use you and me! Sometimes we feel we need to wait to obey God until we can figure out how to do it all on our own. That's not necessary. All we need to do is give Him what we have, receive the power He offers us, and do whatever He asks of us through His strength.

⁷Then God said, "Put your hand into your robe again." So he put his hand back into his robe, and when he took it out, it was restored [and was] like the rest of his body.

⁸"If they will not believe you or pay attention to the evidence of the first sign, they may believe the evidence of the second sign.

⁹"But if they will not believe these two signs or pay

attention to what you say, you are to take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground; and the water which you take out of the river will turn into blood on the dry ground.”

¹⁰Then Moses said to the LORD, “Please, Lord, I am not a man of words (eloquent, fluent), neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and tongue.”

¹¹The LORD said to him, “Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes the mute or the deaf, or the seeing or the blind? Is it not I, the LORD?

¹²“Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and will teach you what you shall say.”

¹³But he said, “Please my Lord, send *the message* [of rescue to Israel] by [someone else,] whomever else You will [choose].”

¹⁴Then the anger of the LORD was kindled *and* burned against Moses; He said, “Is there not your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know that he speaks fluently. Also, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be overjoyed.

¹⁵“You must speak to him and put the words in his mouth; I, even I, will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you are to do.

¹⁶“Moreover, he shall speak for you to the people; he will act as a mouthpiece for you, and you will be as God to him [telling him what I say to you].

¹⁷“You shall take in your hand this staff, with which you shall perform the signs [the miracles which prove I sent you].”

¹⁸Then Moses went away and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said to him, “Please, let me go back so that I may

return to my relatives in Egypt, and see if they are still alive.”
And Jethro said to Moses, “Go in peace.”

POWERPOINT

Just as God was with Moses' mouth, He is also able to teach you what to say and how to say it in the difficult situations you face.



¹⁹Then the LORD said to Moses in Midian, “Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life [for killing the Egyptian] are dead.” [Ex 2:11, 12]

²⁰So Moses took his wife [Zipporah] and his sons [Gershom and Eliezer] and seated them on donkeys, and returned to the land of Egypt. Moses also took the staff of God in his hand.

²¹The LORD said to Moses, “When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders (miracles) which I have put in your hand, but I will harden his heart *and* make him stubborn so that he will not let the people go.

²²“Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, ‘Israel is My son, My firstborn.

²³“So I say to you, ‘Let My son go so that he may serve Me’; and if you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your son,

your firstborn.” ”

²⁴Now it happened at the lodging place, that the LORD met Moses and sought to kill him [making him deathly ill because he had not circumcised one of his sons]. [Gen 17:9–14]

²⁵Then Zipporah took a flint knife and cut off the foreskin of her son and threw it at Moses’ feet, and said, “Indeed you are a husband of blood to me!”

²⁶So He let Moses alone [to recover]. At that time Zipporah said, “*You are* a husband of blood”—because of the circumcision.

²⁷The LORD said to Aaron, “Go into the wilderness to meet Moses.” So he went and met him at the mountain of God (Sinai) and kissed him.

²⁸Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD with which He had sent him, and all the signs that He had commanded him to do.

²⁹Then Moses and Aaron went [into Egypt] and assembled all the elders of the Israelites;

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Think Well of Yourself

When God appears to Moses and says He is sending him to Pharaoh, Moses quickly comes up with questions and objections. Finally, in Exodus 4:10, Moses admits he has a negative view of himself. The Lord directs Moses to Himself as the solution: “Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and will teach you what you shall say” (Ex. 4:12).

It is God’s will that you love yourself in a healthy, balanced way. If you dislike and disrespect yourself, your self-talk will be negative and devastating to your spiritual growth. The only way to have a healthy self-image is to know personally the love of God, as well as His grace, forgiveness, mercy, and long-suffering kindness. We can love ourselves because God loves us! We recognize that we sin and come short of God’s perfect standard, but we can love the person God has created us to be, the one we are always in the process of becoming through Christ.

How we talk to ourselves about ourselves is vitally important to our own self-image and to the ways we relate to

other people and to God Himself. Some people have never learned just how much their own thoughts influence how they feel about themselves.

Do you like yourself? One of the most important things I have learned during my journey with God is that I cannot have good relationships with anyone else if I don't have a good relationship with myself. My thoughts about myself are connected to my thoughts and attitudes toward others.

If I am harsh, legalistic, and condemning with myself, I will be the same way with other people. A perfectionist will not only demand perfection from herself but from others. People who expect more of themselves than they can possibly achieve put terrible pressure on themselves. If we do that to ourselves, we will usually do the same to other people.

If we take the time to do it, we can almost always connect wrong behavior to some type of wrong thinking. And when we do, we can know that God is saying to us what he said to Moses, "I, even I, will be with you and teach you."

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Gracious God, shine Your light into my heart and help me to be honest about how I see myself. I thank You that You have promised to be with me and that because You love me, I can love myself. In Jesus' name. Amen.

³⁰and Aaron said all the words which the LORD had spoken to Moses. Then Moses performed the signs [given to him by God] before the people.

³¹So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD was concerned about the Israelites and that He had looked [with compassion] on their suffering, then they bowed their heads and worshiped [the LORD].

5 AFTERWARD MOSES and Aaron came and said to Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Let My people go, so that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness.’”

²But Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, nor will I let Israel go.”

³Then they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go on a three days’ journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the LORD our God, so that He does not discipline us with pestilence or with the sword.”

⁴But the king of Egypt said to Moses and Aaron, “Why do you take the people away from their work? Get back to your burdens!”

⁵Pharaoh said, “Look, the people of the land are now many, and you would have them stop their work!”

⁶The very same day Pharaoh gave orders to the [Egyptian] taskmasters in charge of the people and their [Hebrew]

foremen, saying,

⁷“You will no longer give the people straw to make brick as before; let them go and gather straw for themselves.

⁸“But the number of bricks which they were making before, you shall [still] require of them; you are not to reduce it in the least. For they are idle *and* lazy; that is why they cry, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to our God.’

⁹“Let labor be heavier on the men, and let them work [hard] at it so that they will pay no attention to [their God’s] lying words.”

¹⁰Then the [Egyptian] taskmasters [in charge] of the people and their [Hebrew] foremen went out and said to the people, “Thus says Pharaoh, ‘I will not give you any straw.

¹¹“Go, get straw for yourselves wherever you can find it, but your work [quota] will not be reduced in the least.”

¹²So the people were scattered throughout the land of Egypt to gather stubble to use for straw.

¹³And the taskmasters pressured them, saying, “Finish your work, [fulfill] your daily quotas, just as when there was straw [given to you].”

¹⁴And the Hebrew foremen, whom Pharaoh’s taskmasters had set over them, were beaten and were asked, “Why have you not fulfilled your required quota of making bricks yesterday and today, as before?”

¹⁵Then the Hebrew foremen came to Pharaoh and cried, “Why do you deal like this with your servants?

¹⁶“No straw is given to your servants, yet they say to us, ‘Make bricks!’ And look, your servants are being beaten, but it is the fault of your own people.”

¹⁷But Pharaoh said, “You are lazy, very lazy *and* idle! That is why you say, ‘Let us go *and* sacrifice to the LORD.’

¹⁸“Get out now and get to work; for no straw will be given to you, yet you are to deliver the same quota of bricks.”

¹⁹The Hebrew foremen saw that they were in a bad situation because they were told, “You must not reduce [in the least] your daily quota of bricks.”

²⁰When they left Pharaoh’s presence, the foremen met Moses and Aaron, who were waiting for them.

²¹And the foremen said to them, “May the LORD look upon you and judge you, because you have made us odious (something hated) in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, and you have put a sword in their hand to kill us.”

²²Then Moses turned again to the LORD and said, “O Lord, why have You brought harm *and* oppression to this people? Why did You ever send me? [I cannot understand Your purpose!]

²³“Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has harmed *and* oppressed this people, and You have done nothing at all to rescue Your people.”

6 THEN THE LORD said to Moses, “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for under compulsion he will [not only] let them go, but under compulsion he will drive them out of his land.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Is More than Enough

God appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as “God Almighty [El Shaddai],” the God of More Than Enough (Ex. 6:3), and He promised to bring their descendants into the Promised Land. He is abundant in lovingkindness, mercy, and forgiveness. Jesus came so we might have life and have it more abundantly (see John 10:10). He is truly a God of abundance.

He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above and beyond all that we ever dare to hope, ask, or think (see Eph. 3:20). In His wisdom, God may not give us everything we want when we want it, but He will always take care of us.

Never forget that He is the God of More Than Enough; think about and speak of His abundance and generosity—and expect to be amazed.

²Then God spoke further to Moses and said to him, “I am the LORD. [Ex 3:14]

³“I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob (Israel) as God Almighty [El Shaddai], but by My name, LORD, I did not make Myself known to them [in acts and great miracles]. [Gen 17:1]

⁴“I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as strangers (temporary residents, foreigners). [Gen 12:1–3; 13:14–17; 15:18–

21; 17:19; 26:3, 4; 28:13]

⁵“And I have also heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, whom the Egyptians have enslaved, and I have [faithfully] remembered My covenant [with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob].

⁶“Therefore, say to the children of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will free you from their bondage. I will redeem *and* rescue you with an outstretched (vigorous, powerful) arm and with great acts of judgment [against Egypt].

⁷“Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who redeemed you *and* brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

⁸“I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel); and I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD [you have the promise of My changeless omnipotence and faithfulness].”

⁹Moses told this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their impatience *and* despondency, and because of their forced labor.

¹⁰The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

¹¹“Go, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the children of Israel go out of his land.”

¹²But Moses said to the LORD, “Look, [my own people] the Israelites have not listened to me; so how then will Pharaoh listen to me, for I am unskilled *and* inept in speech?”

¹³Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, and gave them a command concerning the Israelites and Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the Israelites out of the land of Egypt.

¹⁴These are the heads of their fathers' households. The sons of Reuben, Israel's (Jacob's) firstborn: Hanoah and Pallu, Hezron and Carmi; these are the families of Reuben.

¹⁵The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman; these are the families of Simeon.

¹⁶These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their births: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari; and Levi lived a hundred and thirty-seven years.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Place Yourself in God's Hands

God gave Moses this liberating message to take to His people: “I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will free you from their bondage” (Ex. 6:6). All of us have certain issues that need to be settled once and for all. We can be set free from whatever hinders us from walking in the fullness of the joy, peace, and rest of the Lord.

Peter says we are to humble ourselves before God and to cast “all your cares [all your anxieties, all your worries, and all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares about you [with deepest affection, and watches over you very carefully]” (1 Pet. 5:7). The Greek word translated *care* means “to draw in different directions; to distract.” Why does the enemy give us care? His whole purpose is to distract us from our fellowship with God.

God has provided two wonderful weapons you can use to defeat the devil's plan. First, when the enemy brings trials and tribulations, humble yourself, turning yourself totally over to

God. And when the devil tries to burden you with worry or some other heavy load, you cast it on God—who catches it and takes it away because He cares for you.

When we worry, we are looking for a way to solve our own problems instead of trusting God. Isn't that pride? Aren't we saying, "I can defeat these problems by myself"? The truly humble are those who know their weaknesses, but they also know their strength is in Jesus Christ.

Paul understood that and wrote to the Corinthians: "But He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you [My lovingkindness and My mercy are more than enough—always available—regardless of the situation]; for [My] power is being perfected [and is completed and shows itself most effectively] in [your] weakness.' Therefore, I will all the more gladly boast in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ [may completely enfold me and] may dwell in me" (2 Cor. 12:9).

We waste time and energy when we insist on shouldering our burdens instead of giving them to the Lord. Only God can deliver us. Place yourself totally into God's hands and allow Him to be the Manager of your life.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Loving and caring Father, forgive me for not humbling myself before You and casting my cares upon You. I place myself totally in Your hands and ask that Your power be perfected in me. In Jesus' precious name. Amen.

¹⁷The sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei, by their families.

¹⁸The sons of Kohath: Amram (Moses' father), Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel; and Kohath lived a hundred and thirty-three years.

¹⁹The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of Levi according to their generations.

²⁰Amram married his father's sister Jochebed, and she gave birth to Aaron and Moses; and Amram lived a hundred and thirty-seven years.

²¹The sons of Izhar: Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri.

²²The sons of Uzziel: Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri.

²³Aaron married Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab and the sister of Nahshon, and she gave birth to Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

²⁴The sons of Korah: Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph. These are the [extended] families of the Korahites.

²⁵Eleazar, Aaron's son, married one of the daughters of Putiel, and she gave birth to Phinehas. These are the heads of the fathers' households of the Levites by their families.

²⁶These are [the same] Aaron and Moses to whom the LORD said, "Bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies."

²⁷They were the ones who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt about bringing the Israelites out of Egypt; these are [the same] Moses and Aaron.

²⁸Now it happened on the day when the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt,

²⁹that He said, “I am the LORD; tell Pharaoh king of Egypt everything that I say to you.”

³⁰But Moses said before the LORD, “Look, I am unskilled *and* inept in speech; how then will Pharaoh listen to me *and* pay attention to what I say?”

1 THEN THE LORD said to Moses, “Now hear this: I make you as God to Pharaoh [to declare My will and purpose to him]; and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet.

²“You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the children of Israel go out of his land.

³“And I will make Pharaoh’s heart hard, and multiply My signs and My wonders (miracles) in the land of Egypt.

⁴“But Pharaoh will not listen to you, and I shall lay My hand on Egypt and bring out My hosts [like a defensive army, tribe by tribe], My people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment (the plagues).

⁵“The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them.”

⁶And Moses and Aaron did so; just as the LORD commanded them, so they did.

⁷Now Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three years old when they spoke to Pharaoh.

⁸Now the LORD said to Moses and Aaron,

⁹“When Pharaoh says to you, ‘Work a miracle [to prove

your authority],’ then you say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh, so that it may become a serpent.’”

¹⁰So Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh, and did just as the LORD had commanded; Aaron threw down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent.

¹¹Then Pharaoh called for the wise men [skilled in magic and omens] and the sorcerers [skilled in witchcraft], and they also, these magicians (soothsayer-priests) of Egypt, did the same with their secret arts *and* enchantments.

¹²For every man threw down his staff and they turned into serpents; but Aaron’s staff swallowed up their staffs.

¹³Yet Pharaoh’s heart was hardened and he would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said.

¹⁴Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh’s heart is hard; he refuses to let the people go.

¹⁵“Go to Pharaoh in the morning as he is going out to the water, and wait for him on the bank of the Nile; and you shall take in your hand the staff that was turned into a serpent.

¹⁶“You shall say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to you, saying, “Let My people go, so that they may serve Me in the wilderness. But behold, you have not listened until now.”

¹⁷Thus says the LORD, “By this you shall know *and* recognize *and* acknowledge that I am the LORD: look, with the staff in my hand I will strike the water in the Nile, and it shall be turned to blood.

¹⁸“The fish in the Nile will die, and the Nile will become foul, and the Egyptians will not be able to drink water from the

Nile.” ”

¹⁹Then the LORD said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their streams, over their pools, and over all their reservoirs of water, so that they may become blood; and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, in *containers* both of wood and of stone.’”

²⁰So Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded; Aaron lifted up the staff and struck the waters in the Nile, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, and all the water that was in the Nile was turned into blood.

²¹The fish in the Nile died, and the river became foul smelling, and the Egyptians could not drink its water, and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

²²But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts *and* enchantments; so Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he did not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said.

²³Then Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he did not take even this [divine sign] to heart.

²⁴So all the Egyptians dug near the river for water to drink, because they could not drink the water of the Nile.

²⁵Seven days passed after the LORD had struck the Nile.

8 THEN THE LORD said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Let My people go, so that they may serve Me.

²“However, if you refuse to let them go, hear this: I am going to strike your entire land with frogs.

³“The Nile will swarm with frogs, which will come up and go into your home, into your bedroom and on to your bed, and into the houses of your servants and on your people, and into your ovens and your kneading bowls.

⁴“So the frogs will come up on you and on your people and all your servants.” ”

⁵Then the LORD said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers, over the streams *and* canals, over the pools [among the reeds], and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt.’”

⁶So Aaron stretched out his hand [with his staff] over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt.

⁷But the magicians (soothsayer-priests) did the same thing with their secret arts *and* enchantments, and brought up [more] frogs on the land of Egypt.

⁸Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, “Plead with the LORD that He may take away the frogs from me and my people; and I will let the people go, so that they may sacrifice to the LORD.”

⁹And Moses said to Pharaoh, “I am entirely at your service: when shall I plead [with the Lord] for you and your servants and your people, so that the frogs may leave you and your houses and remain only in the Nile?”

¹⁰Then Pharaoh said, “Tomorrow.” Moses replied, “*May it be* as you say, so that you may know [without any doubt] *and* acknowledge that there is no one like the LORD our God.

¹¹“The frogs will leave you and your houses and leave your servants and your people; they will remain only in the Nile.”

¹²So Moses and Aaron left Pharaoh, and Moses cried out to the LORD [as he had agreed to do] concerning the frogs which God had inflicted on Pharaoh.

¹³The LORD did as Moses asked, and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the courtyards *and* villages, and out of the fields.

¹⁴So they piled them up in heaps, and the land was detestable *and* stank.

¹⁵But when Pharaoh saw that there was [temporary] relief, he hardened his heart and would not listen *or* pay attention to them, just as the LORD had said.

¹⁶Then the LORD said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the ground, and it will become [biting] gnats (lice) throughout the land of Egypt.’”

¹⁷They did so; Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff and struck the dust of the earth, and there were [biting] gnats on man and animal. All the dust of the land became gnats through all the land of Egypt.

¹⁸The magicians (soothsayer-priests) tried by their secret arts *and* enchantments to create gnats, but they could not; and there were gnats on man and animal.

¹⁹Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the [supernatural] finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart was hardened and he would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said.

²⁰Now the LORD said to Moses, “Get up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh as he is coming out to the water [of the Nile], and say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Let My people go, so that they may serve Me.

²¹“For if you do not let My people go, hear this: I will send swarms of [bloodsucking] insects on you and on your servants and on your people and into your houses; and the houses of the Egyptians will be full of swarms of insects, as well as the ground on which they stand.

²²“But on that day I will separate *and* set apart the land of Goshen, where My people are living, so that no swarms of insects will be there, so that you may know [without any doubt] *and* acknowledge that I, the LORD, am in the midst of the earth.

²³“I will put a division (distinction) between My people and your people. By tomorrow this sign shall be in evidence.”
”

²⁴Then the LORD did so. And there came heavy *and* oppressive swarms of [bloodsucking] insects into the house of Pharaoh and his servants’ houses; in all the land of Egypt the land was corrupted *and* ruined because of the [great invasion of] insects.

²⁵Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, “Go, sacrifice to your God [here] in the land [of Egypt].”

²⁶But Moses said, “It is not right [or even possible] to do that, for we will sacrifice to the LORD our God what is repulsive *and* unacceptable to the Egyptians [that is, animals that the Egyptians consider sacred]. If we sacrifice what is repulsive *and* unacceptable to the Egyptians, will they not riot *and* stone

us?

²⁷“We must go a three days’ journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the LORD our God as He commands us.”

²⁸So Pharaoh said, “I will let you go, so that you may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only you shall not go very far away. Plead [with your God] for me.”

²⁹Moses said, “I am going to leave you, and I will urgently petition (pray, entreat) the LORD that the swarms of insects may leave Pharaoh, his servants, and his people tomorrow; only do not let Pharaoh act deceitfully again by not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD.”

³⁰So Moses left Pharaoh and prayed to the LORD [on behalf of Pharaoh].

³¹The LORD did as Moses asked, and removed the swarms of [bloodsucking] insects from Pharaoh, from his servants and from his people; not one remained.

³²But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and he did not let the people go.

9 THEN THE LORD said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh and tell him, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews: “Let My people go, so that they may serve Me.

²“But if you refuse to let them go and continue to hold them,

³now hear this: the hand of the LORD will fall on your livestock which are out in the field, on the horses, the donkeys, the camels, the herds, and the flocks—a horrible plague shall

come.

⁴“But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing that belongs to the Israelites will die.” ”

⁵The LORD set a [definite] time, saying, “Tomorrow the LORD will do this thing in the land.”

⁶And the LORD did this thing the next day, and all [kinds of] the livestock of Egypt died; but of the livestock of the Israelites, not one died.

⁷Then Pharaoh sent [men to investigate], and not even one of the livestock of the Israelites had died. But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened [and his mind was firmly set], and he did not let the people go.

⁸Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Take handfuls of soot from the brick kiln, and let Moses throw it toward the sky in the sight of Pharaoh.

⁹“It will become fine dust over the entire land of Egypt, and it will become boils breaking out in sores on man and animal in all the land [occupied by the Egyptians].”

¹⁰So they took soot from the kiln, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses threw it toward the sky, and it became boils erupting in sores on man and animal.

¹¹The magicians (soothsayer-priests) could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils were on the magicians as well as on all the Egyptians.

¹²But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen *or* pay attention to them, just as the LORD had told Moses.

¹³Then the LORD said to Moses, “Get up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, “Let My people go, so that they may serve Me.

¹⁴“For this time I will send all My plagues on you [in full force,] and on your servants and on your people, so that you may know [without any doubt] *and* acknowledge that there is no one like Me in all the earth.

¹⁵“For by now I could have put out My hand and struck you and your people with a pestilence, and you would then have been cut off (obliterated) from the earth.

¹⁶“But indeed for this very reason I have allowed you to live, in order to show you My power and in order that My name may be proclaimed throughout all the earth. [Rom 9:17–24]

¹⁷“Since you are still [arrogantly] exalting yourself [in defiance] against My people by not letting them go,

¹⁸hear this: tomorrow about this time I will send a very heavy *and* dreadful hail, such as has not been seen in Egypt from the day it was founded until now.

¹⁹“Now therefore send [a message], bring your livestock and whatever you have in the field to safety. Every man and animal that is in the field and is not brought home shall be struck by the hail and shall die.” ”

²⁰Then everyone among the servants of Pharaoh who feared the word of the LORD made his servants and his livestock flee into the houses *and* shelters; ²¹but everyone who ignored *and* did not take seriously the word of the LORD left his servants and his livestock in the field.

²²Now the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand [with your staff] toward the sky, so that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, on man and on animal and on all the vegetation of the field, throughout the land of Egypt.”

²³Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and lightning (fireballs) ran down to the earth *and* along the ground. And the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt.

²⁴So there was hail, and lightning (fireballs) flashing intermittently in the midst of the extremely heavy hail, such as had not been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.

²⁵The hail struck down everything that was in the field throughout all the land of Egypt, both man and animal; the hail struck *and* beat down all the plants in the field and shattered every tree in the field.

²⁶Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel lived, was there no hail.

²⁷Then Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, “I have sinned this time; the LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.

²⁸“Pray *and* entreat the LORD, for there has been enough of God’s thunder and hail; I will let you go, and you shall stay here no longer.”

²⁹Moses said to him, “As soon as I leave the city, I will stretch out my hands to the LORD; the thunder will cease and there will be no more hail, so that you may know [without any doubt] *and* acknowledge that the earth is the LORD’s.

³⁰“But as for you and your servants, I know that you do

not yet fear the LORD God.”

³¹(Now the flax and the barley were battered *and* ruined [by the hail], because the barley was in the ear (ripe, but soft) and the flax was in bud, ³²but the wheat and spelt (coarse wheat) were not battered *and* ruined, because they *ripen* late in the season.)

³³So Moses left the city and Pharaoh, and stretched out his hands to the LORD; then the thunder and hail ceased, and rain no longer poured on the earth.

³⁴But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned again and hardened his heart, both he and his servants.

³⁵Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he did not let the Israelites go, just as the LORD had said through Moses. [Ex 4:21]

10 THEN THE LORD said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants [making them determined and unresponsive], so that I may exhibit My signs [of divine power] among them, ²and that you may recount *and* explain in the hearing of your son, and your grandson, what I have done [repeatedly] to make a mockery of the Egyptians—My signs [of divine power] which I have done among them—so that you may know [without any doubt] *and* recognize [clearly] that I am the LORD.”

³So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to him, “Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews: ‘How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go,

so that they may serve Me.

⁴For if you refuse to let My people go, then hear this: tomorrow I will bring [migratory] locusts into your country.

⁵They shall cover the [visible] surface of the land, so that no one will be able to see the ground, and they will eat the rest of what has remained—that is, the *vegetation* left after the hail—and they will eat every one of your trees that grows in the field; ⁶your houses and those of all your servants and of all the Egyptians shall be filled *with locusts*, as neither your fathers nor your grandfathers have seen, from their birth until this day.” Then Moses turned and left Pharaoh.

⁷Pharaoh’s servants said to him, “How long shall this man be a trap to us? Let the men go, so that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not realize that Egypt is destroyed?”

⁸So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh, and he said to them, “Go, serve the LORD your God! Who specifically are the ones that are going?”

⁹Moses said, “We will go with our young and our old, with our sons and our daughters, with our flocks and our herds [all of us and all that we have], for we must hold a feast to the LORD.”

¹⁰Pharaoh said to them, “The LORD be with you [to help you], if I ever let you go with your children [because you will never return]! Look [be forewarned], you have an evil plan in mind.

¹¹“No! Go now, you who are men, [without your families] and serve the LORD, if that is what you want.” So Moses and Aaron were driven from Pharaoh’s presence.

¹²Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand

over the land of Egypt for the locusts, so that they may come up on the land of Egypt and eat all the plants of the land, all that the hail has left.”

¹³So Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind on the land all that day and all that night; when it was morning, the east wind had brought the [swarms of] locusts.

¹⁴The locusts came up over all the land of Egypt and settled down in the whole territory, a very dreadful mass of them; never before were there such locusts as these, nor will there ever be again.

¹⁵For they covered the [visible] surface of the land, so that the ground was darkened; and they ate every plant of the land and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left. There remained not a green thing on the trees or the plants of the field throughout all the land of Egypt.

¹⁶Then Pharaoh hurried to call for Moses and Aaron, and he said, “I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you.

¹⁷“Now therefore, please forgive my sin only this once [more], and pray *and* entreat the LORD your God, so that He will remove this [plague of] death from me.”

¹⁸Moses left Pharaoh and entreated the LORD.

¹⁹So the LORD shifted *the wind* to a violent west wind which lifted up the locusts and drove them into the ^{*}Red Sea; not one locust remained within the border of Egypt.

²⁰But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart [so that it was even more resolved and obstinate], and he did not let the Israelites go.

²¹Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward the sky, so that darkness may come over the land of Egypt, a darkness which [is so awful that it] may be felt.”

²²So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and for three days a thick darkness was all over the land of Egypt [no sun, no moon, no stars].

²³The Egyptians could not see one another, nor did anyone leave his place for three days, but all the Israelites had [supernatural] light in their dwellings.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God's Favor

I want to encourage you to develop your faith in the area of God's favor; think about it, and live expecting it all the time. Here are some ways to do that: Pray for favor. Trust God to open the right doors and to close the wrong ones. Ask the Lord for "divine connections" and friendships that are right for you. Confess that you have favor with God and He gives you favor with others, as He did the people of Israel with the Egyptians (see Ex. 11:3). Before embarking on any business venture or personal relationship, ask for favor. When you meet new people, ask for God's favor.

James 4:2 says, "You do not have because you do not ask [it of God]." Start asking for favor regularly and you will be amazed at the acceptance and blessings that come your way.

²⁴Then Pharaoh called to Moses, and said, "Go, serve the LORD; only your flocks and your herds must be left behind. Even your children may go with you."

²⁵But Moses said, "You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings, so that we may sacrifice them to the LORD our God.

²⁶"Therefore, our livestock must also go with us; not one hoof shall be left behind, for we must take some of them to serve the LORD our God. Even we do not know with what we

will serve the LORD until we arrive there.”

²⁷But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he was not willing to let them go.

²⁸Then Pharaoh said to Moses, “Get away from me! See that you never enter my presence again, for on the day that you see my face again you will die!”

²⁹Then Moses said, “You are correct; I will never see your face again!”

11 THEN THE LORD said to Moses, “I will bring yet one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt; after that he will let you go. When he lets you go, he will most certainly drive you out of here completely.

²“Speak so that all of the people [of Israel] may hear, and tell every man to ask from his neighbor, and every woman to ask from her neighbor, articles of silver, and articles of gold.”

³The LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, the man Moses was greatly esteemed in the land of Egypt, [both] in the sight of Pharaoh’s servants and in the sight of the people.

⁴Then Moses said, “Thus says the LORD: ‘At midnight I am going out into the midst of Egypt,

⁵and all the firstborn in the land [the pride, hope, and joy] of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the hand-mill, and all the firstborn of cattle as well.

⁶“There shall be a great cry [of heartache and sorrow] throughout the land of Egypt, such as has never been before

and such as shall never be again.

⁷‘But not even a dog will threaten any of the Israelites, whether man or animal, so that you may know [without any doubt] *and* acknowledge how the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.’

⁸“All these servants of yours will come down to me and bow down before me, saying, ‘Get out, you and all the people who follow you.’ After that I will leave.” And he left Pharaoh in the heat of anger.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*God, I am believing that You
will give me favor everywhere
I go, with everyone I meet.*

• *adapted from Exodus 11:3*

⁹Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that My wonders (miracles) may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.”

¹⁰Moses and Aaron did all these wonders (miracles) before Pharaoh; yet the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did

not let the Israelites go out of his land.

12 THE LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt,

²“This month shall be the beginning of months to you; it is to be the first month of the year to you.

³“Tell all the congregation of Israel, ‘On the tenth [day] of this month they are to take a lamb *or* young goat for themselves, according to [the size of] the household of which he is the father, a lamb *or* young goat for each household.

⁴“Now if the household is too small for a lamb [to be consumed], let him and his next door neighbor take one according to the number of people [in the households]; according to what each man can eat, you are to divide the lamb.

⁵“Your lamb *or* young goat shall be [perfect] without blemish *or* bodily defect, a male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. [1 Pet 1:19, 20]

⁶“You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to slaughter it at twilight.

⁷“Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel [above the door] of the houses in which they eat it. [Matt 26:28; John 1:29; Heb 9:14]

⁸“They shall eat the meat that same night, roasted in fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

⁹“Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted in fire—both its head and its legs, along with its inner parts.

¹⁰“You shall let none of the meat remain until the morning, and anything that remains left over until morning, you shall

burn completely in the fire.

¹¹Now you are to eat it in this manner: [be prepared for a journey] with your loins girded [that is, with the outer garment tucked into the band], your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; you shall eat it quickly—it is the LORD's Passover.

¹²For I [the LORD] will pass through the land of Egypt on this night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and animal; against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments [exhibiting their worthlessness]. I am the LORD.

¹³The blood shall be a sign for you on [the doorposts of] the houses where you live; when I see the blood I shall pass over you, and no affliction shall happen to you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. [1 Cor 5:7; Heb 11:28]

¹⁴Now this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as an ordinance forever.

¹⁵[In the celebration of the Passover in future years,] seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, but on the first day you shall remove the leaven from your houses [because it represents the spread of sin]; for whoever eats leavened bread on the first day through the seventh day, that person shall be cut off *and* excluded from [the atonement made for] Israel.

¹⁶On the first day [of the feast] you shall have a holy *and* solemn assembly, and on the seventh day there shall be another holy *and* solemn assembly; no work of any kind shall be done on those days, except for the preparation of food which every person must eat—only that may be done by you.

¹⁷“You shall also observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because on this very day I brought your hosts [grouped according to tribal armies] out of the land of Egypt; therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an ordinance forever.

¹⁸“In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, [and continue] until the twenty-first day of the month at evening.

¹⁹“Seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses; whoever eats what is leavened shall be cut off *and* excluded from [the atonement made for] the congregation of Israel, whether a stranger or native-born. [1 Cor 5:6–8]

²⁰“You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.”

²¹Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Go and take a lamb for yourselves according to [the size of] your families and slaughter the Passover *lamb*.

²²“You shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood which is in the basin, and touch some of the blood to the lintel [above the doorway] and to the two doorposts; and none of you shall go outside the door of his house until morning.

²³“For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel [above the entry way] and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to slay you.

²⁴“You shall observe this event [concerning Passover] as an ordinance for you and for your children forever.

²⁵“When you enter the land which the LORD will give you,

as He has promised, you shall keep *and* observe this service.

²⁶“When your children say to you, ‘What does this service mean to you?’

²⁷you shall say, ‘It is the sacrifice of the LORD’s Passover, for He passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians, but spared our houses.’” And the people bowed [their heads] low and worshiped [God].

²⁸Then the Israelites went and did [as they had been told]: just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.

²⁹Now it happened at midnight that the LORD struck every firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the prisoner who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the cattle.

³⁰Pharaoh got up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians, and there was a great cry [of heartache and sorrow] in Egypt, for there was no house where there was not someone dead.

³¹Then he called for Moses and Aaron at night and said, “Get up, get out from among my people, both you and the Israelites; and go, serve the LORD, as you said.

³²“Take both your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and go, and [ask your God to] bless me also.”

³³The Egyptians [anxiously] urged the people [to leave], to send them out of the land quickly, for they said, “We will all be dead.”

³⁴So the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading bowls being bound up in their clothes on their shoulders.

³⁵Now the Israelites had acted in accordance with the word of Moses; and they had asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing.

³⁶The LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they gave them what they asked. And so they plundered the Egyptians [of those things].

³⁷Now the Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides [the women and] the children.

³⁸A mixed multitude [of non-Israelites from foreign nations] also went with them, along with both flocks and herds, a very large number of livestock. [Num 11:4; Deut 29:11]

³⁹And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought from Egypt; it was not leavened, since they were driven [quickly] from Egypt and could not delay, nor had they prepared any food for themselves.

⁴⁰Now the period of time the children of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. [Gen 15:13, 14]

⁴¹At the end of the four hundred and thirty years, to that very day, all the hosts of the LORD [gathered into tribal armies] left the land of Egypt.

⁴²It is a night of watching to be observed for the LORD for having brought them out of the land of Egypt; this [same] night is for the LORD, to be observed *and* celebrated by all the Israelites throughout their generations.

⁴³The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “This is the ordinance of the Passover: no foreigner is to eat it;

⁴⁴but every man’s slave who is bought with money, after

you have circumcised him, then he may eat it.

⁴⁵“No stranger (temporary resident, foreigner) or hired servant shall eat it.

⁴⁶“It is to be eaten inside one house; you shall not take any of the meat outside the house, nor shall you break any of its bones. [John 19:33, 36]

⁴⁷“The entire congregation of Israel shall keep *and* celebrate it.

⁴⁸“If a stranger living temporarily among you wishes to celebrate the Passover to the LORD, all his males must be circumcised, and then he may participate *and* celebrate it like one that is born in the land. But no uncircumcised person may eat it.

⁴⁹“The same law shall apply to the native-born and to the stranger who lives temporarily among you.”

⁵⁰Then all the Israelites did so; they did just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron.

⁵¹And on that very same day the LORD brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt by their hosts (tribal armies).

13 THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Sanctify to Me [that is, set apart for My purpose] every firstborn, the first offspring of every womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of animal; it is Mine.”

³Moses said to the people, “Remember [solemnly observe and commemorate] this day on which you came out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage *and* slavery; for by a strong *and*

powerful hand the LORD brought you out of this place. And nothing leavened shall be eaten.

⁴“On this day in the month Abib, you are about to go onward.

⁵“And it shall be when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land [of abundance] flowing with milk and honey, that you shall keep *and* observe this rite (service) in this month.

⁶“For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD.

⁷“Unleavened bread shall be eaten throughout the seven days; no leavened bread shall be seen with you, nor shall there be leaven within the borders of your territory.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, God, for always
leading me in the right way. I
may not see a cloud in the
daytime or a pillar of fire at
night, but I trust You to guide*

*me by Your Spirit as I seek
You.*

• adapted from Exodus 13:21–22

⁸“You shall explain this to your son on that day, saying, ‘It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.’

⁹“It shall serve as a sign to you on your hand (arm), and as a reminder on your forehead, so that the instruction (law) of the LORD may be in your mouth; for with a strong *and* powerful hand the LORD brought you out of Egypt.

¹⁰“Therefore, you shall keep this ordinance at this time from year to year.

¹¹“Now it shall be when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanite, as He swore to you and your fathers, and gives it to you, ¹²you shall set apart *and* dedicate to the LORD all that first opens the womb. All the firstborn males of your livestock shall be the LORD’S.

¹³“Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem by [substituting] a lamb [as a sacrifice for it], but if you do not [wish to] redeem it, then you shall break its neck; and every firstborn among your sons you shall redeem [that is, “buy back” from God with a suitable sacrifice].

¹⁴“And it shall be when your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What does this mean?’ you shall say to him, ‘With a strong *and* powerful hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of bondage *and* slavery.

¹⁵“For it happened, when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let

us go, that the LORD struck every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animal. Therefore, I sacrifice to the LORD all the males, the first [to be born] of every womb, but every firstborn of my sons I redeem.’

¹⁶“So it shall serve as a sign *and* a reminder on your [left] hand (arm) and as frontlets between your eyes, for by a strong *and* powerful hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt.”

¹⁷So it happened, when Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was nearer; for God said, “The people might change their minds when they see war [that is, that there will be war], and return to Egypt.”

¹⁸But God led the people around by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea; the sons of Israel went up in battle array (orderly ranks, marching formation) out of the land of Egypt.

¹⁹Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for Joseph had solemnly ordered (placed under an oath) the Israelites, saying, “God will assuredly take care of you, and you must carry my bones away from here with you.” [Gen 50:25]

²⁰They journeyed from Succoth [in Goshen] and camped at Etham on the edge of the wilderness.

²¹The [presence of the] LORD was going before them by day in a pillar (column) of cloud to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, so that they could travel by day and by night.

²²He did not withdraw the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from going before the people.

14 NOW THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Tell the sons of Israel to turn back and camp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. You shall camp in front of Baal-zephon, opposite it, by the sea.

³“For Pharaoh will say of the Israelites, ‘They are wandering aimlessly in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.’

⁴“I will harden (make stubborn, defiant) Pharaoh’s heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will be glorified *and* honored through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians shall know [without any doubt] *and* acknowledge that I am the LORD.” And they did so.

⁵When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his servants had a change of heart toward the people, and they said, “What is this that we have done? We have let Israel go from serving us!”

⁶So Pharaoh harnessed *horses to* his war-chariots [for battle] and took his army with him;

⁷and he took six hundred chosen war-chariots, and all the other war-chariots of Egypt with fighting charioteers over all of them.

⁸The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he pursued the Israelites, as they were leaving confidently *and* defiantly. [Acts 13:17]

⁹The Egyptians chased them with all the horses and war-chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and they overtook them as they camped by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.

¹⁰As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up and saw the Egyptians marching after them, and they were very frightened; so the Israelites cried out to the LORD.

¹¹Then they said to Moses, “Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What is this that you have done to us by bringing us out of Egypt?”

¹²“Did we not say to you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians?’ For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians [as slaves] than to die in the wilderness.”

¹³Then Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid! Take your stand [be firm and confident and undismayed] and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for those Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see again.

¹⁴“The LORD will fight for you while you [only need to] keep silent *and* remain calm.”

¹⁵The LORD said to Moses, “Why do you cry to Me? Tell the sons of Israel to move forward [toward the sea].

POWERPOINT

Often the fear of something is worse than the thing itself. If we will be courageous and determined enough to do whatever it is we fear, we will often discover it is not nearly as bad as we thought it would be.



KEYS to a Victorious Life

Resisting the Temptation To Fear

One of the most intense mental strongholds people deal with is fear. That has been true for thousands of years, as we can see in Exodus 14:13, when Moses says to the Israelites, “Do not be afraid!” In fact, throughout the Word of God we find the Lord saying to His people again and again that they should not be afraid. In the same way, because He knows we tend to be fearful, the Lord continues to exhort and encourage us to press through what lies before us and to do His will. Why? Because He knows great blessings await us.

On the other hand, the enemy, who is “a liar and the father of lies and half-truths” (John 8:44), tries to use falsehood to deceive God’s people into fear so we will not be bold enough to be obedient to the Lord and reap the blessings He has in store for us.

Fear, which is spelled f-e-a-r, stands for false evidence appearing real. For example, the enemy may tell you that your current situation is evidence that your future will be a failure, but the Bible teaches us that no matter what our present circumstances, no matter how bad life seems, nothing is impossible with God (see Mark 9:17–23).

The better you know God’s Word, the better you will recognize the lies of the enemy, especially the lies designed to make you fearful. Know, think about, and confess the Word of God, and

you will find yourself much better able to resist the temptation to fear.

¹⁶“As for you, lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, so that the sons of Israel may go through the middle of the sea on dry land.

¹⁷“As for Me, hear this: I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they will go in [the sea] after them; and I will be glorified *and* honored through Pharaoh and all his army, and his war-chariots and his horsemen.

¹⁸“And the Egyptians shall know [without any doubt] *and* acknowledge that I am the LORD, when I am glorified *and* honored through Pharaoh, through his war-chariots and his charioteers.”

¹⁹The angel of God, who had been going in front of the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them. The pillar of the cloud moved from in front and stood behind them.

²⁰So it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel. It was a cloud along with darkness [even by day to the Egyptians], but it gave light by night [to the Israelites]; so one [army] did not come near the other all night.

²¹Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD swept the sea back by a strong east wind all that night and turned the seabed into dry land, and the waters were divided.

²²The Israelites went into the middle of the sea on dry land, and the waters formed a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

²³Then the Egyptians pursued them into the middle of the

sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his war-chariots and his charioteers.

²⁴So it happened at the early morning watch [before dawn], that the LORD looked down on the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud and put them in a state of confusion.

²⁵He made their chariot wheels hard to turn, and the chariots difficult to drive; so the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from Israel, for the LORD is fighting for them against the Egyptians."

²⁶Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may come back over the Egyptians, on their war-chariots and their charioteers."

²⁷So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal flow at sunrise; and the Egyptians retreated right into it [being met by the returning water]; so the LORD overthrew the Egyptians *and* tossed them into the midst of the sea.

²⁸The waters returned and covered the chariots and the charioteers, and all the army of Pharaoh that had gone into the sea after them; not even one of them survived.

²⁹But the Israelites walked on dry land in the middle of the sea, and the waters formed a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

³⁰The LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians [lying] dead on the seashore.

³¹When Israel saw the great power which the LORD had used against the Egyptians, they feared the LORD [with

reverence and awe-filled respect], and they believed in the LORD, and in His servant Moses.

15 THEN MOSES and the children of Israel sang this song to the LORD, singing, “I will sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously;

The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea.

2““The LORD is my strength and my song,

And He has become my salvation;

This is my God, and I will praise Him;

My father’s God, and I will exalt Him.

3““The LORD is a warrior;

The LORD is His name.

4““Pharaoh’s chariots and his army He has thrown into the sea;

His chosen captains are drowned in the ^{*}Red Sea.

5““The deep [water] covers them;

[Clad in armor] they sank into the depths like a stone.

6““Your right hand, O LORD, is glorious in power;

Your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy.

7““In the greatness of Your majesty You overthrow *and* annihilate those [adversaries] who rise [in rebellion] against You;

You send out Your fury, and it consumes them like chaff.

8““With the blast of Your nostrils the waters piled up,

The flowing waters stood up like a mound;

The deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea.

9“‘The enemy said, ‘I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil;

My desire shall be satisfied against them;

I will draw my sword, my hand shall dispossess them *and* drive them out.’

10“‘You blew with Your wind, the sea covered them;

[Clad in armor] they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

11“‘Who is like You among the gods, O LORD?

Who is like You, majestic in holiness,

Awesome in splendor, working wonders?

12“‘You stretched out Your right hand,

The sea swallowed them.

13“‘You in Your lovingkindness *and* goodness have led the people whom You have redeemed;

In Your strength You have guided them with care to Your holy habitation.

14“‘The peoples have heard [about You], they tremble;

Anguish *and* fear has gripped the inhabitants of Philistia.

15“‘Then the [tribal] chiefs of Edom were dismayed *and* horrified;

The [mighty] leaders of Moab, trembling grips them;

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Pay Attention to God's Words

The writers of both Exodus 15:26 and Proverbs 4:20–22 used the words, *pay attention* to the words of God, which is another way of exhorting us to meditate. I love the fact that God not only frequently tells us to meditate—to ponder seriously—His Word, but He frequently promises results. In both of these passages, the promise is life and health. Isn't it amazing that when you contemplate and think deeply about God's Word, it will affect your physical body?

We've known for a long time that filling our minds with healthy, positive thoughts affects our bodies and improves our health. When we fill our minds with negative thoughts it weakens us and not only makes us sad and miserable, but it can even make us sick.

Recently when I meditated on several passages in the Bible, I realized God was showing me that the Word has hidden treasures in it—powerful, life-giving secrets that God wants to reveal to us. They are there for those who meditate on, ponder, and contemplate the Word of God.

God wants our fellowship, our company, and our time. If we want a deep relationship with our heavenly Father, it's only as we spend time with Him on a regular, daily basis that we will have an awareness of His Presence in our lives. He will give revelation regarding His Word to those who diligently seek Him.

As we enjoy times of concentrating on God's Word and allowing it to fill our thoughts, we will push away all desire to sin or to displease God in any way. We become more deeply rooted in Him and His light comes into our souls. But when our mind remains focused on our problems all the time, we become consumed by them. If we meditate on what's wrong with others, we see even more flaws and faults. If we meditate on our problems, they seem larger than they truly are.

To condition our minds for victory, here's exactly what we need to do as stated in *The Message* paraphrase: "Summing it all up, friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse" (Phil. 4:8).

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Dear Father in heaven, teach me the blessings of pondering Your Word, of filling my heart and mind with Your thoughts. May I grow into maturity and become more and more like Your Son, Jesus. It's in His name that I pray. Amen.

All the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away [in despair]

¹⁶Terror and dread fall on them;

Because of the greatness of Your arm they are as still as a stone;

Until Your people pass by *and* [into Canaan], O LORD,

Until the people pass by whom You have purchased.

¹⁷“You will bring them [into the land of promise] and plant them on the mountain (Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem) of Your inheritance,

The place, O LORD, You have made for Your dwelling [among them],

The sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established.

¹⁸“The LORD shall reign to eternity and beyond.”

¹⁹For the horses of Pharaoh went with his war-chariots and his charioteers into the sea, and the LORD brought back the waters of the sea on them, but the sons of Israel walked on dry land in the middle of the sea.

²⁰Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron [and Moses], took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her with timbrels and dancing. [Mic 6:4]

²¹Miriam answered them,

“Sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously *and* is highly exalted;

The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea.”

²²Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea, and they went into the Wilderness of Shur; they went [a distance of] three days (about thirty-three miles) in the wilderness and found no water.

²³Then they came to Marah, but they could not drink its waters because they were bitter; therefore it was named Marah (bitter).

²⁴The people [grew discontented and] grumbled at Moses, saying, “What are we going to drink?”

²⁵Then he cried to the LORD [for help], and the LORD showed him a tree, [a branch of] which he threw into the waters, and the waters became sweet.

There the LORD made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He tested them,

²⁶saying, “If you will diligently listen *and* pay attention to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and listen to His commandments, and keep [foremost in your thoughts and actively obey] all His precepts *and* statutes, then I will not put on you any of the diseases which I have put on the Egyptians; for I am the LORD who heals you.”

Speak God's Word

*God is the Lord who heals me
and His healing power is
available to me right now.*

| adapted from EXODUS 15:26 |

²⁷Then the children of Israel came to Elim where there were twelve springs of water and seventy date palms, and they camped there beside the waters.

16 THEY SET out from Elim, and all the congregation of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they left the land of Egypt.

²The whole congregation of the Israelites [grew discontented and] murmured *and* rebelled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness,

³and the Israelites said to them, “Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and ate bread until we were full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this entire assembly with hunger.”

⁴Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I will cause bread to rain from heaven for you; the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, so that I may test them [to determine] whether or not they will walk [obediently] in My instruction (law).

⁵“And it shall be that on the sixth day, they shall prepare to bring in twice as much as they gather daily [so that they will not need to gather on the seventh day].”

⁶So Moses and Aaron said to all Israel, “At evening you shall know that the LORD has brought you out of the land of Egypt, ⁷and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, for He hears your murmurings against the LORD. What are we, that you murmur *and* rebel against us?”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

A Good Attitude

No doubt, the Israelites mentioned in Exodus 16:2 had negative thoughts about their situation, and then developed negative attitudes, which led to negative words and complaining against Moses and Aaron, which ultimately resulted in outright rebellion.

We need to remember that our thoughts are the raw materials for our attitudes. It isn't possible for us to treat people in loving, kind, godly ways if we think unloving, unkind, ungodly thoughts about them. Good attitudes are fed and kept alive by good thoughts. Bad attitudes are fed and kept alive by bad thoughts.

We can have good attitudes or we can have bad attitudes; it's our choice and it starts in our thinking. We can't just wait for a good attitude to show up; we have to decide what kind of attitude we are going to have. I hope you'll choose to think good thoughts that will lead to godly attitudes in all circumstances.

⁸Moses said, “*This will happen* when the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening, and in the morning [enough] bread to be fully satisfied, because the LORD has heard your murmurings against Him; for what are we? Your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD.”

⁹Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to all the congregation of Israel, ‘Approach the LORD, because He has heard your murmurings.’”

¹⁰So it happened that as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of Israel, they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory *and* brilliance of the LORD appeared in the cloud!

¹¹Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

¹²“I have heard the murmurings of the Israelites; speak to them, saying, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God.’”

¹³So in the evening the quails came up and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a blanket of dew around the camp.

¹⁴When the layer of dew evaporated, on the surface of the wilderness there was a fine, flake-like thing, as fine as frost on the ground.

¹⁵When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “This is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat. [John 6:31, 33]

¹⁶“This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Let every man gather as much of it as he needs. Take an omer for each person, according to the number of people each of you has in his tent.’”

¹⁷The Israelites did so, and some gathered much [of it] and some [only a] little.

¹⁸When they measured it with an omer, he who had gathered a large amount had no excess, and he who had gathered little had no lack; every man gathered according to his need (family size).

¹⁹Moses said, "Let none of it be left [overnight] until [the next] morning."

²⁰But they did not listen to Moses, and some left a supply of it until morning, and it bred worms and became foul *and* rotten; and Moses was angry with them.

²¹So they gathered it every morning, each as much as he needed, because when the sun was hot it melted.

²²Now on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each person; and all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses.

²³He said to them, "This is what the LORD has said: 'Tomorrow is a solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD'; bake and boil what you will bake and boil [today], and all that remains left over put aside for yourselves to keep until morning."

²⁴They put it aside until morning, as Moses told them, and it did not become foul nor was it wormy.

²⁵Then Moses said, "Eat that today, for today is a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field.

²⁶"Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will be none [in the field]."

²⁷Now on the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, but they found none.

²⁸Then the LORD said to Moses, "How long do you

[people] refuse to keep My commandments and My instructions (laws)?

²⁹“See, the LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you the bread for two days on the sixth day. Let every man stay in his place; no man is to leave his place on the seventh day.”

³⁰So the people rested on the seventh day.

³¹The house of Israel called the bread manna; it was like coriander seed, white, and it tasted like flat pastry (wafers) made with honey.

³²Then Moses said, “This is the word which the LORD commands, ‘Let an omer of it be kept throughout your generations, that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.’”

³³So Moses said to Aaron, “Take a pot and put an omer of manna in it, and place it before the LORD to be kept throughout your generations.”

³⁴As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron [eventually] placed it in the presence of the Testimony, to be kept. [Heb 9:4]

³⁵The Israelites ate manna forty years, until they reached an inhabited land; they ate the manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.

³⁶(Now an omer is the tenth of an ephah.)

17 THEN ALL the congregation of the children of Israel moved on from the Wilderness of Sin by stages, according to

the commandment of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink.

²Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water so we may [have something to] drink.” And Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you tempt the LORD *and* try His patience?”

³But the people were thirsty for water; and the people murmured against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us up from Egypt to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?”

⁴So Moses cried out to the LORD for help, saying, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.”

⁵Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.

⁶“Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; there you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may [have something to] drink.” And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. [1 Cor 10:4]

⁷He named the place [where this miracle occurred] Massah (test) and Meribah (contention) because of the quarreling of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the [patience of the] LORD, saying, “Is the LORD among us, or not?”

POWERPOINT

Not unlike the Israelites and their thirst for water, we often want everything instantaneously. But sometimes God takes His time about bringing us to our full deliverance or destination. He uses the difficult periods of waiting to stretch our faith and develop our patience. Let me encourage you to trust God's timing. It's always perfect.



⁸Then Amalek [and his people] came and fought with Israel at Rephidim.

⁹So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek [and his people]. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand."

¹⁰So Joshua did as Moses said, and fought with Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the hilltop.

¹¹Now when Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and

when he lowered his hand [due to fatigue], Amalek prevailed.

¹²But Moses' hands were heavy *and* he grew tired. So they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. Then Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side and one on the other side; so it was that his hands were steady until the sun set.

¹³So Joshua overwhelmed *and* defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

¹⁴Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this in the book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly wipe out the memory of Amalek [and his people] from under heaven." [1 Sam 15:2–8]

¹⁵And Moses built an altar and named it The LORD Is My Banner;

¹⁶saying, "The LORD has sworn [an oath]; the LORD will have war against [the people of] Amalek from generation to generation."

18 NOW JETHRO (Reuel), the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people, and that the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt.

²Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Moses' wife Zipporah, after he had sent her away [from Egypt],

³along with her two sons, of whom one was named Gershom (stranger), for Moses said, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land."

⁴The other [son] was named Eliezer (my God is help), for

Moses said, “The God of my father was my help, and He rescued me from the sword of Pharaoh.”

⁵Then Jethro, his father-in-law, came with Moses’ sons and his wife to [join] Moses in the wilderness where he was camped, at the mountain of God [that is, Mt. Sinai in Horeb].

⁶He sent a message to Moses, “I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons [who are] with her.”

⁷So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and he bowed down [in respect] and kissed him. They asked each other about their well-being and went into the tent.

⁸Moses told his father-in-law about all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel’s sake, and about all the hardship that had happened during the journey, and how the LORD had rescued them.

⁹Jethro rejoiced over all the good things the LORD had done to Israel, in that He had rescued them from the hand of the Egyptians.

¹⁰Jethro said, “Blessed be the LORD, who has rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of Pharaoh, and who has rescued the people from under the hand of the Egyptians.

¹¹“Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods; indeed, it was proven when they acted insolently toward Israel [and the LORD showed Himself infinitely superior to all their gods].”

¹²Then Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, took a burnt offering and [other] sacrifices [to offer] to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with Moses’ father-in-law

before God.

¹³Now the next day Moses sat to judge [the disputes] the people [had with one another], and the people stood around Moses from dawn to dusk.

¹⁴When Moses' father-in-law saw everything that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this that you are doing for the people? Why are you sitting alone [as a judge] with all the people standing around you from dawn to dusk?"

¹⁵Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to ask [about the will] of God.

¹⁶"When they have a dispute they come to me, and I judge between a man and his neighbor and I make known the statutes of God and His laws."

¹⁷Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you are doing is not good.

¹⁸"You will certainly wear out both yourself and these people who are with you, because the task is too heavy for you [to bear]; you cannot do it alone.

¹⁹"Now listen to me; I will advise you, and may God be with you [to confirm my advice]. You shall represent the people before God. You shall bring their disputes *and* causes to Him.

POWERPOINT

If we were to use modern language to describe what Moses' father-in-law is talking about in Exodus 18:17–23, we would call it stress management. He's teaching Moses how to handle the stress and strain of his busy life. What lessons can you learn from this passage about the stress you face?



²⁰“You shall teach them the decrees and laws. You shall show them the way they are to live and the work they are to do.

²¹“Furthermore, you shall select from all the people competent men who [reverently] fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; you shall place these over the people as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens.

²²“They shall judge the people at all times; have them bring every major dispute to you, but let them judge every minor dispute themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will

bear *the burden* with you.

²³“If you will do this thing and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure [the responsibility], and all these people will also go [back] to their tents in peace.”

²⁴So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything that he had said.

²⁵Moses chose able men from all Israel and made them heads over the people, leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens [from the highest to the lowest judicial levels].

²⁶And they judged the people at all times; they would bring the difficult cases to Moses, but every minor dispute they judged *and* decided themselves.

²⁷Then Moses said goodbye to his father-in-law, and Jethro went back to his own land (Midian).

19 IN THE third month after the children of Israel had left the land of Egypt, the very same day, they came into the Wilderness of Sinai.

²When they moved out from Rephidim, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai and they camped there; Israel camped at the base of the mountain [of Sinai].

³Moses went up to God [on the mountain], and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, “Say this to the house of Jacob and tell the Israelites: ⁴‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to Myself.

⁵‘Now therefore, if you will in fact obey My voice and keep

My covenant (agreement), then you shall be My own special possession *and* treasure from among all peoples [of the world], for all the earth is Mine; ⁶and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation [set apart for My purpose].’ These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites.”

⁷So Moses called for the elders of the people, and told them all these words which the LORD commanded him.

⁸All the people answered together and said, “We will do everything that the LORD has spoken.” And Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD.

⁹The LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I will come to you in a thick cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with you and may believe *and* trust in you forever.” Then Moses repeated the words of the people to the LORD.

¹⁰The LORD also said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow [that is, prepare them for My sacred purpose], and have them wash their clothes ¹¹and be ready by the third day, because on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai [in the cloud] in the sight of all the people.

¹²“You shall set barriers for the people all around [the mountain], saying, ‘Beware that you do not go up on the mountain or touch its border; whoever touches the mountain must be put to death.

¹³‘No hand shall touch him [that is, no one shall try to save the guilty party], but the offender must be stoned or shot through [with arrows]; whether man or animal [that touches the mountain], he shall not live.’ When the ram’s horn sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain.” [Num 24:8]

POWERPOINT

Breaking free from mental strongholds is not always easy, but remember Exodus 20:2 and believe that just as God brought the Israelites out of slavery, He also wants to deliver you from any form of thinking that is not beneficial to you.



¹⁴So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified them [for God's sacred purpose], and they washed their clothes.

¹⁵He said to the people, "Be prepared for the third day; do not be intimate with a woman."

¹⁶So it happened on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and flashes of lightning, and a thick cloud was on the mountain, and a very loud blast was sounded on a ram's horn, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.

¹⁷Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet

God, and they stood *and* presented themselves at the foot of the mountain.

¹⁸Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently.

¹⁹And it happened, as the blast of the ram's horn grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him with [a voice of] thunder. [Deut 4:12]

²⁰The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain; and the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and he went up.

²¹Then the LORD spoke to Moses, "Go down, warn the people, so that they do not break through [the barriers around the mountain] to the LORD to see [Me], and many of them perish [as a result].

²²"Also have the priests who approach the LORD consecrate (sanctify, set apart) themselves [for My sacred purpose], or else the LORD will break forth [in judgment] against them [and destroy them]."

²³Moses said to the LORD, "The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, because You warned us, saying, 'Set barriers around the mountain and consecrate it.'"

²⁴Then the LORD said to him, "Go down and come up again, you and Aaron with you; but do not let the priests and the people break through [the barriers] to come up to the LORD, or He will break forth [in judgment] against them [and destroy them]."

²⁵So Moses went down to the people and told them [again about God's warning].

20 THEN GOD spoke all these words:

²“I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

³“You shall have no other gods before Me.

⁴“You shall not make for yourself any idol, or any likeness (form, manifestation) of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth [as an object to worship].

⁵“You shall not worship them nor serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous (impassioned) God [demanding what is rightfully and uniquely mine], visiting (avenging) the iniquity (sin, guilt) of the fathers on the children [that is, calling the children to account for the sins of their fathers], to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, [Is 42:8; 48:11]

⁶but showing graciousness *and* steadfast lovingkindness to thousands [of generations] of those who love Me and keep My commandments.

⁷“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain [that is, irreverently, in false affirmations or in ways that impugn the character of God]; for the LORD will not hold guiltless *nor* leave unpunished the one who takes His name in vain [disregarding its reverence and its power].

Speak God's Word

*I will not take the name of the
Lord lightly or use it in vain.
I will honor His name in my
thoughts and with my words.*

| *adapted from* EXODUS 20:7 |

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Be Happy for Others

When we judge others because of what they own—their houses, cars, jewelry, clothes, or other possessions—it is usually because we are unhappy with what we have (or don't have), not with what they have. For example, someone who speaks badly of a person's car—saying that it is too expensive, or how frivolous the owner must be—may really be saying, "I'm not happy with my car; I am jealous, and I want your car."

Have you ever heard about a blessing someone received and thought, When is that going to happen to me? Instead of being unhappy or jealous when God blesses someone with something you would like to have (see Ex. 20:17), you can train your mind and emotions to be happy for them and let their blessing be an encouragement to you, believing that what God did for someone else, He can also do for you.

⁸“Remember the Sabbath (seventh) day to keep it holy (set apart, dedicated to God).

⁹“Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

¹⁰but the seventh day is a Sabbath [a day of rest dedicated] to the LORD your God; on that day you shall not do any work, you or your son, or your daughter, or your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock or the

temporary resident (foreigner) who stays within your [city] gates.

¹¹“For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and everything that is in them, and He rested (ceased) on the seventh day. That is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy [that is, set it apart for His purposes].

¹²“Honor (respect, obey, care for) your father and your mother, so that your days may be prolonged in the land the LORD your God gives you.

¹³“You shall not commit murder (unjustified, deliberate homicide). [Gen 9:6; Ex 21:12, 14, 18]

¹⁴“You shall not commit adultery. [Prov 6:25, 26; Matt 5:27, 28; Rom 1:24; Eph 5:3]

¹⁵“You shall not steal [secretly, openly, fraudulently, or through carelessness]. [Prov 11:1; 16:8; 21:6; 22:16; Jer 17:11; Mal 3:8]

¹⁶“You shall not testify falsely [that is, lie, withhold, or manipulate the truth] against your neighbor (any person). [Ex 23:1; Prov 19:9; 24:28]

¹⁷“You shall not covet [that is, selfishly desire and attempt to acquire] your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.” [Luke 12:15; Col 3:5]

¹⁸Now all the people witnessed the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the smoking mountain; and as they looked, the people were afraid, and they trembled [and moved backward] and stood at a [safe] distance.

¹⁹Then they said to Moses, “You speak to us and we will listen, but do not let God speak to us or we will die.”

²⁰Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him [that is, a profound reverence for Him] will remain with you, so that you do not sin.”

²¹So the people stood at a [safe] distance, but Moses approached the thick cloud where God was.

²²Then the LORD said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘You have seen for yourselves that I have spoken to you from heaven.

²³‘You shall not make *other gods* [to worship] besides Me; gods of silver or gods of gold, you shall not make [these lifeless idols] for yourselves.

²⁴‘You shall make an altar of earth for Me, and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I cause My Name to be recorded *and* remembered [through revelation of My divine nature] I will come to you and bless you.

²⁵‘If you make an altar of stone for Me, you shall not build it of cut stones, for if you use a chisel on it, you will profane it.

²⁶‘Nor shall you go up to My altar on steps, so that your nakedness will not be exposed on it.’

21 “NOW THESE are the ordinances (laws) which you shall set before the Israelites: ²“If you purchase a Hebrew servant [because of his debt or poverty], he shall serve six years, and

in the seventh [year] he shall leave as a free man, paying nothing. [Lev 25:39]

³“If he came [to you] alone, he shall leave alone; if he came married, then his wife shall leave with him.

⁴“If his master gives him a wife, and she gives birth to sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall belong to her master, and he shall leave [your service] alone.

⁵“But if the servant plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not leave as a free man,’

⁶then his master shall bring him to God [that is, to the judges who act in God’s name], then he shall bring him to the door or doorpost. And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl (strong needle); and he shall serve him for life.

⁷“If a man sells his daughter to be a female servant, she shall not go free [after six years] as male servants do.

⁸“If she does not please her master who has chosen her for himself [as a wife], he shall let her be redeemed [by her family]. He does not have the authority to sell her to a foreign people, because he has been unfair to her.

⁹“If her master chooses her [as a wife] for his son, he shall act toward her as if she were legally his daughter.

¹⁰“If her master marries another wife, he may not reduce her food, her clothing, or her privilege as a wife.

¹¹“If he does not do these three things for her, then shall she leave free, without *payment of* money.

¹²“Whoever strikes a man so that he dies must be put to death.

¹³“However, if he did not lie in wait [for him], but God allowed him to fall into his hand, then I will establish for you a

place to which he may escape [for protection until duly tried].
[Num 35:22–28]

¹⁴“But if a man acts intentionally against another and kills him by [design through] treachery, you are to take him from My altar [to which he may have fled for protection], so that he may be put to death.

¹⁵“Whoever strikes his father or his mother must be put to death.

¹⁶“Whoever kidnaps a man, whether he sells him or is found with him in his possession, must be put to death.

¹⁷“Whoever curses his father or his mother *or* treats them contemptuously must be put to death.

¹⁸“If men quarrel and one strikes another with a stone or with his fist, and he does not die but is confined to bed,

¹⁹if he gets up and walks around leaning on his cane, then the one who struck him shall be left [physically] unpunished; he must only pay for his loss of time [at work], and the costs [of treatment and recuperation] until he is thoroughly healed.

²⁰“If a man strikes his male or his female servant with a staff and the servant dies at his hand, he must be punished.

²¹“If, however, the servant survives for a day or two, the offender shall not be punished, for the [injured] servant is his own property.

²²“If men fight with each other and injure a pregnant woman so that she gives birth prematurely [and the baby lives], yet there is no *further* injury, the one who hurt her must be punished with a fine [paid] to the woman’s husband, as much as the judges decide.

23“But if there is *any further* injury, then you shall require [as a penalty] life for life,

24eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,

25burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

26“If a man hits the eye of his male servant or female servant and it is destroyed, he must let the servant go free because of [the loss of] the eye.

27“And if he knocks out the tooth of his male servant or female servant, he must let the servant go free because of [the loss of] the tooth.

28“If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox must be stoned and its meat shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be cleared [of responsibility].

29“But if the ox has tried to gore on a previous occasion, and its owner has been warned, but has not kept it confined and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner shall be put to death as well.

30“If a ransom is demanded of him [in return for his life], then he shall give whatever is demanded for the redemption of his life.

31“If the ox has gored another’s son or daughter, he shall be dealt with according to this same rule.

32“If the ox gores a male or a female servant, the owner shall give to the servant’s master thirty shekels of silver [the purchase price for a slave], and the ox shall be stoned.

33“If a man leaves a pit open, or digs a pit and does not cover it, and an ox or a donkey falls into it,

34the owner of the pit shall make restitution; he shall give

money to the animal's owner, but the dead [animal] shall be his.

³⁵“If one man's ox injures another's so that it dies, then they shall sell the live ox and divide the proceeds equally; they shall also divide the dead ox [between them].

³⁶“Or if it is known that the ox was previously in the habit of goring, and its owner has not kept it confined, he must make restitution of ox for ox, and the dead [animal] shall be his.

22 “IF A man steals an ox or sheep and kills or sells it, he shall make restitution of five oxen for an ox or four sheep for a sheep.

²“If a thief is caught breaking in [after dark] and is struck [by the owner] so that he dies, there shall be no bloodguilt for him.

³“But if the sun has risen, there will be bloodguilt for him. The thief [if he lives] must make [full] restitution; if he has nothing, then he shall be sold [as a slave to make restitution] for his theft.

⁴“If the animal that he stole is found alive in his possession, whether it is ox or donkey or sheep, he shall pay double [for it].

⁵“If a man causes a field or vineyard to be grazed bare or lets his livestock loose so that it grazes in another man's field, he shall make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard.

⁶“If fire breaks out and spreads to thorn bushes so that the stacked grain or standing grain or the field is consumed, he who started the fire shall make full restitution.

⁷“If a man gives his neighbor money or [other] goods to keep [for him while he is away] and it is stolen from the neighbor’s house, then, if the thief is caught, he shall pay double [for it].

⁸“If the thief is not caught, the owner of the house shall appear before the judges [who act in God’s name], to determine whether or not he had stolen his neighbor’s goods.

⁹“For every offense involving property, whether it concerns ox, donkey, sheep, clothing, or any piece of lost property, which another identifies as his, the case of both parties shall come before the judges [who act in God’s name]. Whomever the judges pronounce guilty shall pay double to his neighbor.

¹⁰“If a man gives his neighbor a donkey or an ox or a sheep or any [other] animal to keep [for him], and it dies or is injured or taken away while no one is looking, ¹¹then an oath before the LORD shall be made by the two of them that he has not taken his neighbor’s property; and the owner of it shall accept his word and not require him to make restitution.

¹²“But if it is actually stolen from him [when in his care], he shall make restitution to its owner.

¹³“If it is torn to pieces [by some predator or by accident], let him bring the mangled carcass as evidence; he shall not make restitution for what was torn to pieces.

¹⁴“And if a man borrows an animal from his neighbor, and it gets injured or dies while its owner is not with it, the borrower shall make full restitution.

¹⁵“But if the owner is with it [when the damage is done], the borrower shall not make restitution. If it was hired, the

damage is included in [the price of] its fee.

16“If a man seduces a virgin who is not betrothed, and lies with her, he must pay a dowry (marriage price) for her to be his wife.

17“If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he must [still] pay money equivalent to the dowry of virgins.

18“You shall not allow a woman who practices sorcery to live.

19“Whoever lies with an animal must be put to death. [Lev 18:23]

20“He who sacrifices to any god, other than to the LORD alone, shall be put under a ban (designated) for destruction (execution).

21“You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

22“You shall not harm *or* oppress any widow or fatherless child.

23“*If you harm or oppress them in any way, and they cry at all to Me [for help], I will most certainly hear their cry;*

24*and My wrath shall be kindled and burn; I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.*

25“*If you lend money to any one of My people with you who is poor, you shall not act as a creditor (professional moneylender) to him; you shall not charge him interest.*

26“*If you ever take your [poor] neighbor’s robe in pledge, you must return it to him before sunset,*

27*for that is his only covering; it is his clothing for his*

body. In what shall he sleep? And when he cries to Me [for help], I will hear him, for I am compassionate *and* gracious.

²⁸“You shall not curse God, nor curse the ruler of your people [since he administers God’s law]. [Acts 23:5]

²⁹“You shall not delay *the offering from* your harvest and your vintage. You shall give (consecrate, dedicate) to Me the firstborn of your sons. [Ex 34:19, 20]

³⁰“You shall do the same with your oxen *and* with your sheep. It shall be with its mother for seven days; on the eighth day you shall give it [as an offering] to Me.

³¹“You shall be holy men to Me; therefore you shall not eat meat [from any animal] that has been torn to pieces [by predators] in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs.

23 “YOU SHALL not give a false report; you shall not join hands with the wicked to be a malicious witness [promoting wrong and violence].

²“You shall not follow a crowd to do [something] evil, nor shall you testify at a trial *or* in a dispute so as to side with a crowd in order to pervert *justice*;

³nor shall you favor *or* be partial to a poor man in his dispute [simply because he is poor].

⁴“If you meet your enemy’s ox or his donkey wandering off, you must bring it back to him.

⁵“If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying helpless under its load, you shall not leave the man to deal with it [alone]; you must help him release the animal [from its burden].

6“You shall not pervert (bend) the justice due to your poor in his dispute.

7“Keep far away from a false charge *or* action, and do not condemn to death the innocent or the righteous, for I will not justify *and* acquit the guilty.

8“You shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the testimony *and* the cause of the righteous.

9“You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the soul [the feelings, thoughts, and concerns] of a stranger, for you were strangers in Egypt.

10“You shall sow your land six years and harvest its yield,

11but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie uncultivated, so that the poor among your people may eat [what the land grows naturally]; whatever they leave the animals of the field may eat. You shall do the same with your vineyard and olive grove.

12“Six days [each week] you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall stop [working] so that your ox and your donkey may settle down *and* rest, and the son of your female servant, as well as your stranger, may be refreshed.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Take Care of Yourself

Most of us would like for Exodus 23:25, when the Lord promises to take sickness from Israel's midst, to become a reality in our lives. If we want to feel better physically, be well, and live healthy lives, our thoughts and actions can help.

Many times symptoms of illness are simply the results of excessive worry and anxiety, or simply not taking good care of ourselves. We may think we are too busy or too tired to exercise or eat healthily. But this is not true. We need to change our minds and begin to realize that taking care of ourselves is worth the effort.

You are valuable, and I urge you to invest time, energy, and finances in doing things that will keep you healthy. Whether you need to change your eating habits, sleep more, exercise more, reduce stress, or worry less—no matter what it takes—find out why you do not feel well and do something about it. Avoid future problems by taking good care of yourself now!

¹³“Now concerning everything which I have said to you, be on your guard; do not mention the name of other gods [either in a blessing or in a curse]; do not let such speech be heard [coming] from your mouth.

¹⁴“Three times a year you shall celebrate a feast [dedicated] to Me.

¹⁵“You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. No one shall appear before Me empty-handed [but you shall bring sacrificial offerings].

¹⁶“Also [you shall observe] the Feast of Harvest (Weeks, Pentecost, or First Fruits), acknowledging the first fruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field. And [third] the Feast of Ingathering (Booths or Tabernacles) at the end of the year when you gather in [the fruit of] your labors from the field.

¹⁷“Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD.

¹⁸“You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; and the fat of My feast is not to be left overnight until morning.

¹⁹“You shall bring the choice first fruits of your ground into the house of the LORD your God.

“You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk.

²⁰“Behold, I am going to send an Angel before you to keep *and* guard you on the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared.

²¹“Be on your guard before Him, listen to *and* obey His voice; do not be rebellious toward Him *or* provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgression, since My Name (authority) is in Him. [Ex 32:34; 33:14; Is 63:9]

²²“But if you will indeed listen to *and* truly obey His voice and do everything that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.

²³“When My Angel goes before you and brings you to

[the land of] the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Canaanite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, I will reject them *and* completely destroy them.

²⁴“You shall not bow down to worship their gods, nor serve them, nor do [anything] in accordance with their practices. You shall completely overthrow them and break down their [sacred] pillars *and* images [of pagan worship].

²⁵“You shall serve [only] the LORD your God, and He shall bless your bread and water. I will also remove sickness from among you.

²⁶“No one shall suffer miscarriage or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days.

²⁷“I will send My terror ahead of you, and I will throw into confusion all the people among whom you come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you [in flight].

²⁸“I will send hornets ahead of you which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite before you.

²⁹“I will not drive them out before you in a single year, so that the land does not become desolate [due to lack of attention] and the [wild] animals of the field do not become too numerous for you.

³⁰“I will drive them out before you little by little, until you have increased and are strong enough to take possession of the land.

³¹“I will establish your borders from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines (the Mediterranean), and from the wilderness to the River *Euphrates*; for I will hand over the residents of the land to you, and you shall drive them out before you.

³²“You shall not make a covenant with them or with their

gods.

³³“They shall not live in your land, because they will make you sin against Me; for if you serve their gods, it is certain to be a trap for you [resulting in judgment].”

24 THEN GOD said to Moses, “Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu (Aaron’s older sons), and seventy of Israel’s elders, and you shall worship at a [safe] distance.

²“Moses alone shall approach the LORD, but the others shall not come near, nor shall the people come up with him.”

³Then Moses came and told the people everything that the LORD had said and all the ordinances. And all the people answered with one voice, “Everything the LORD has said we will do.”

⁴Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. Then he got up early in the morning, and built an altar [for worship] at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars (memorial stones) representing the twelve tribes of Israel.

⁵Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the LORD.

⁶Moses took half of the blood and put it in large basins, and [the other] half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.

⁷Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it aloud to the people; and they said, “Everything that the LORD has said we will do, and we will be obedient.”

⁸So Moses took the blood [which had been placed in the large basins] and sprinkled it on the people, and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.” [1 Cor 11:25; Heb 8:6; 10:28, 29]

⁹Then Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up [the mountainside],

¹⁰and they saw [a manifestation of] the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, just as clear as the sky itself. [Ex 33:20–23; Deut 4:12; Ezek 28:14]

¹¹Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the Israelites; and they saw [the manifestation of the presence of] God, and ate and drank. [Ex 19:21]

¹²Now the LORD said to Moses, “Come up to Me on the mountain and stay there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandments which I have written for their instruction.” [2 Cor 3:2, 3]

¹³So Moses arose with Joshua his attendant, and he went up to the mountain of God.

¹⁴And he said to the elders, “Wait here for us until we come back to you. Remember that Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a legal matter, let him go to them.”

¹⁵Then Moses went up to the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain.

¹⁶The glory *and* brilliance of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days. On the seventh day God called to Moses from the midst of the cloud.

¹⁷In the sight of the Israelites the appearance of the glory *and* brilliance of the LORD was like consuming fire on the top of the mountain.

¹⁸Moses entered the midst of the cloud and went up the mountain; and he was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

25 THEN THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Tell the children of Israel to take an offering for Me. From every man whose heart moves him [to give willingly] you shall take My offering.

³“This is the offering you are to receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze,

⁴blue, purple, and scarlet fabric, fine twisted linen, goats’ hair,

⁵rams’ skins dyed red, porpoise skins, acacia wood,

⁶[olive] oil for lighting, balsam for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense,

⁷onyx stones and setting stones for the [priest’s] ephod and for the breastpiece.

⁸“Have them build a sanctuary for Me, so that I may dwell among them. [Heb 8:1, 2; 10:1]

⁹“You shall construct it in accordance with everything that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture.

¹⁰“They shall make an ark of acacia wood two and a half cubits long, one and a half cubits wide, and one and a half

cubits high.

¹¹“You shall overlay the ark with pure gold, overlay it inside and out, and you shall make a gold border (frame) around its top.

¹²“You shall cast four gold rings for it and attach them to the four feet, two rings on either side.

¹³“You shall make [carrying] poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold,

¹⁴and put the poles through the rings on the sides of the ark, by which to carry it.

¹⁵“The poles shall remain in the rings of the ark; they shall not be removed from it [so that the ark itself need not be touched].

¹⁶“You shall put into the ark the Testimony (Ten Commandments) which I will give you.

¹⁷“You shall make a mercy seat (cover) of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Have a Willing Heart

In Exodus 25:1–2, God says He is looking for people who will give to Him with willing hearts. When we talk about a willing heart, we are basically talking about “want to.” If there is something we want to do strongly enough, somehow we will find a way to do it. With a willing heart we can enjoy victorious lives, get to know God, keep our house clean and tidy, save money, get out of debt, or reach any other goal we may set for ourselves. Our victory or defeat has a lot to do with our “want to.”

When we make mistakes or fail in certain ways, we can be easily tempted to blame other people, our pasts, our circumstances, and so on. But sometimes the bottom line is that we simply don't have enough of the right kind of “want to.”

God examines our heart attitude, and when we do things for Him we need to do so willingly (see Ex. 25:1–2). We don't always feel like doing what we need to do; but feeling like doing it is not necessary. What matters is that we make up our minds that we want to serve God willingly and then do it cheerfully, all while leaning on God for the help we need.

¹⁸“You shall make two cherubim (winged angelic figures) of [solid] hammered gold at the two ends of the mercy seat.

¹⁹“Make one cherub at each end, making the cherubim of *one piece* with the mercy seat at its two ends.

²⁰“The cherubim shall have their wings spread upward, covering the mercy seat with their wings and facing each other. The faces of the cherubim are to be *looking downward* toward the mercy seat.

²¹“You shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony which I will give you.

²²“There I will meet with you; from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, I will speak [intimately] with you regarding every commandment that I will give you for the Israelites.

²³“You shall make a table of acacia wood, two cubits long, one cubit wide, and one and a half cubits high.

²⁴“You shall overlay it with pure gold and make a border of gold around the top of it.

²⁵“You shall make a rim of a hand width around it; you shall make a gold border for the rim around it.

²⁶“You shall make four gold rings for it and fasten them at the four corners that are on the table’s four legs.

²⁷“The rings shall be close against the rim as holders for the poles to carry the table.

²⁸“You shall make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold, so that the table may be carried with them.

²⁹“You shall make its plates [for the showbread] and its cups [for incense] and its pitchers and bowls for sacrificial drink offerings; you shall make them of pure gold.

³⁰“You shall set the bread of the Presence (showbread) on

the table before Me at all times. [John 6:58]

³¹“You shall make a lampstand of pure gold. The lampstand and its base and its shaft shall be made of hammered work; its cups, its calyxes and its flowers shall be *all of one piece* with it.

³²“Six branches shall come out of its sides; three branches of the lampstand out of the one side and three branches of the lampstand out of its other side [the shaft being the seventh branch].

³³“Three cups shall be made like almond *blossoms*, each with a calyx and a flower on one branch, and three cups made like almond *blossoms* on the other branch with a calyx and a flower—so for the six branches coming out of the lampstand; ³⁴and in the [center shaft of the] lampstand [you shall make] four cups shaped like almond *blossoms*, with their calyxes and their flowers.

³⁵“A calyx shall be under the *first* pair of branches coming out of it, and a calyx under the *second* pair of branches coming out of it, and a calyx under the *third* pair of branches coming out of it, for the six branches coming out of the lampstand.

³⁶“Their calyxes and their branches *shall be of one piece* with it; all of it shall be one piece of hammered work of pure gold.

³⁷“Then you shall make the lamps [of the lampstand] seven *in number* [with one lamp at the top of the shaft]. The priests shall set up its *seven* lamps so that they will light the space in front of it.

³⁸“Its snuffers and their trays shall be of pure gold.

³⁹“It shall be made from a talent (50–80 lbs.) of pure gold, including all these utensils.

⁴⁰“See that you make them [exactly] after their pattern which was shown to you on the mountain. [Heb 8:5, 6]

26 “MOREOVER, YOU shall make the tabernacle (sacred tent of worship) with ten [interior] curtains of fine twisted linen, and blue, purple, and scarlet fabric; you shall make them with [embroidered] cherubim, the handwork of a skillful craftsman.

²“The length of each curtain shall be twenty-eight cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits; all of the curtains shall measure the same.

³“The five curtains shall be joined to one another, and *the other* five curtains shall be joined to one another.

⁴“You shall make loops of blue on the *outer* edge of the last curtain in the *first* set, and likewise in the second set.

⁵“You shall make fifty loops on the one curtain, and fifty loops on the edge of the *last* curtain that is in the second set. The loops on one curtain correspond to the loops on the other.

⁶“You shall make fifty gold hooks, and fasten the curtains together with the hooks; and the tabernacle shall be one unit.

⁷“Then you shall make [exterior] curtains of goats’ *hair* as a tent over the tabernacle. You shall make eleven curtains in all.

⁸“Each curtain shall be thirty cubits long and four cubits wide. The eleven curtains shall all measure the same.

⁹“You shall join five curtains by themselves and the *other* six curtains by themselves, and you shall double over the sixth curtain at the front of the tent [to make a closed door].

¹⁰“Make fifty loops on the edge of the outermost curtain in

the *first* set, and fifty loops on the edge of the *outermost* curtain in the second set.

¹¹“You shall make fifty bronze hooks and put the hooks into the loops and join the tent together so that it may be one unit.

¹²“The overlapping part that is left over from the tent curtains, the half curtain that is left over, shall lap over the back of the tabernacle.

¹³“The cubit on one side and the cubit on the other, of what is left over in the length of the curtains of the tent shall lap over the sides of the tabernacle on one side and the other side, to cover it.

¹⁴“You shall make a *third* covering for the tent of rams’ skins dyed red, and a *fourth* covering above that of porpoise skins.

¹⁵“Then you shall make the boards for the tabernacle of acacia wood, standing upright [as a trellis-like frame].

¹⁶“The length of each board shall be ten cubits and the width of each board shall be one and a half cubits.

¹⁷“Make two dovetails in each board for fitting [them] together; you shall do the same for all the tabernacle boards.

¹⁸“You shall make the boards for the tabernacle [in the following quantities]: twenty boards for the south side.

¹⁹“You shall make forty silver sockets under the twenty boards, two sockets under each board for its two dovetails, and two sockets under another board for its two dovetails;
²⁰for the north side of the tabernacle there shall be twenty boards,

²¹and their forty silver sockets, two sockets under each

board.

²²“For the back or west side of the tabernacle you shall make six boards.

²³“Make two boards for the corners of the tabernacle at the rear [on both sides].

²⁴“They shall be joined together underneath, and joined together on top with one ring. So shall it be for both of them; they shall form the two [rear] corners.

²⁵“There shall be eight boards and sixteen silver sockets; two sockets under each board.

²⁶“Then you shall make [fifteen] bars of acacia wood: five for the boards of one side of the tabernacle,

²⁷and five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the rear end of the tabernacle, for the back wall toward the west.

²⁸“And the middle bar in the center of the boards shall pass through [horizontally] from end to end.

²⁹“You shall overlay the boards with gold and make their rings of gold to hold the bars. You shall overlay the bars with gold.

³⁰“You shall erect the tabernacle according to its plan [the direction corresponding to its meaning and purpose] which has been shown to you on the mountain.

³¹“You shall make a veil [to divide the two rooms] of blue, purple, and scarlet fabric and fine twisted linen, skillfully worked with cherubim on it.

³²“You shall hang it on four pillars (support poles) of acacia wood overlaid with gold, with gold hooks, on four silver sockets.

³³“You shall hang the veil from the hooks [that connect the curtains together], and you shall bring the ark of the Testimony there within the veil. The veil shall separate for you the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.

³⁴“You shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the Testimony in the Holy of Holies.

³⁵“You shall set the table [for the bread] outside the veil [in the Holy Place] on the north side, and the lampstand opposite the table on the south side of the tabernacle.

³⁶“You shall make a screen [to provide a covering] for the doorway of the tent of blue, purple, and scarlet fabric and finely woven [embroidered] linen, the work of an embroiderer. [John 10:9]

³⁷“You shall make five pillars (support poles) of acacia wood to support the hanging curtain and overlay them with gold. Their hooks shall be of gold, and you shall cast five [base] sockets of bronze for them.

27 “AND YOU shall make the altar [for burnt offerings] of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits wide; the altar shall be square, and its height shall be three cubits.

²“Make horns (horn-shaped projections) for it on its four corners; the horns shall be of one piece with it, and you shall overlay it with bronze.

³“You shall make pots to remove its ashes, and shovels, basins [to catch the blood of the sacrificed animal], meat-forks, and firepans [to store live coals]. You shall make all its utensils of bronze.

⁴“Also make a grate for it, a network of bronze; and on the grid you are to make four bronze rings at its four corners.

⁵“And you shall put it under the ledge of the altar, so that the grid will extend halfway up the altar.

⁶“You shall make [carrying] poles for the altar, poles of acacia wood, overlaid with bronze.

⁷“The poles shall be inserted through the rings on the two sides of the altar so that it may be carried. [Num 4:14, 15]

⁸“You are to make the altar hollow with planks; as you were shown on the mountain [of Sinai], so shall it be made.

⁹“You shall make the court of the tabernacle. The south side of the court is to have curtains of fine twisted linen, a hundred cubits long for one side; ¹⁰it shall have twenty pillars and twenty bronze sockets; but the hooks of the pillars and their fasteners shall be silver;

¹¹likewise for the north side there shall be curtains, a hundred *cubits* long, and its twenty pillars and twenty bronze sockets; but the hooks of the pillars and their fasteners shall be silver.

¹²“For the width of the court on the west side there shall be curtains of fifty cubits, with ten pillars (support poles) and ten sockets.

¹³“The width of the court [to the front], on the east side shall be fifty cubits.

¹⁴“The curtains for one side [of the gate] shall be fifteen cubits with three pillars and three sockets.

¹⁵“On the other side [of the gate] the curtains shall be fifteen cubits with three pillars and three sockets.

¹⁶“For the gate of the court there shall be a screen [to provide a covering] of twenty cubits, of blue, purple, and scarlet fabric and finely woven [embroidered] linen, the work of an embroiderer, with four pillars and four [base] sockets.

¹⁷“All the pillars (support poles) around the court shall be joined together with silver rods; their hooks shall be of silver and their sockets of bronze.

¹⁸“The length of the court shall be a hundred cubits, and the width fifty [cubits] throughout, and the height five cubits of fine twisted linen, and their sockets of bronze.

¹⁹“All the tabernacle’s utensils *and* instruments used in all its service, and all its stakes, and all the stakes for the court, shall be of bronze.

²⁰“You shall command the Israelites to provide you with clear oil of beaten olives for the light, to make a lamp burn continually [every night].

²¹“In the Tent of Meeting [of God with His people], outside the veil which is in front of the [ark of the] Testimony [and sets it apart], Aaron [the high priest] and his sons shall keep the lamp burning from evening to morning before the LORD. It shall be a perpetual statute [to be observed] throughout their generations on behalf of the Israelites.

28 “NOW BRING your brother Aaron near, and his sons with him from among the sons of Israel, so that he may serve as priest to Me—Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron’s sons.

²“You are to make sacred garments [official clothing

reserved for holy services] for Aaron your brother, for honor and for beauty (ornamentation).

³“Tell all the skilled *and* talented people whom I have endowed with a spirit of wisdom, that they are to make Aaron’s garments to sanctify him *and* set him apart to serve as a priest for Me.

⁴“These are the garments which they shall make: a breastpiece and an ephod [for the breastpiece] and a robe and a tunic of checkered work, a turban, and a sash. They shall make sacred garments for Aaron your brother and his sons, so that he may serve as a priest to Me.

POWERPOINT

Exodus 28:3 mentions wisdom. As we begin to think thoughts that agree with God's Word instead of random thoughts we simply feel like thinking, we develop wisdom. As we go through life facing various tests and trials, one of the best ways to get through them victoriously is to think wisely. I encourage you to ask God to help you develop a mind-set of wisdom.



⁵“They are to use the gold and the blue and the purple and the scarlet fabric and fine twisted linen [from the people],

⁶and they shall make the ephod of gold and blue, purple, and scarlet fabric and fine twisted linen, skillfully woven *and* [beautifully] worked.

⁷“It is to have two shoulder pieces joined to its two [back and front] ends, so that it may be joined together.

⁸“And the skillfully woven sash, which is on the ephod shall be made of the same material: of gold, of blue, purple, and scarlet fabric and fine twisted linen.

⁹“You shall take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the [twelve] sons of Israel,

¹⁰six of their names on one stone and the remaining six names on the other stone, arranged in the order of their births.

¹¹“With the work of a jeweler, like the engravings of a signet, you shall engrave the two stones according to the names of the sons of Israel. You shall have them set in filigree [settings] of gold.

¹²“You shall put the two stones on the [two] shoulder pieces of the ephod [of the high priest], as memorial stones for Israel; and Aaron shall bear their names on his two shoulders as a memorial before the LORD.

¹³“You shall make filigree [settings] of gold,

¹⁴and you are to make two chains of pure gold like twisted cords, and fasten the corded chains to the *settings*.

¹⁵“You are to make a breastpiece of judgment, the work of a skilled *and* talented craftsman; like the work of the ephod you shall make it: of gold, of blue, purple, and scarlet fabric and of fine twisted linen.

¹⁶“The breastpiece shall be square and folded double; a span [about nine inches] in length and a span in width.

¹⁷“You shall mount on it four rows of stones: the first row shall be a row of ruby, topaz, and emerald;

¹⁸the second row a turquoise, a sapphire, and a diamond;

¹⁹the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst;

²⁰and the fourth row a beryl and an onyx and a jasper; they shall be set in gold filigree.

²¹“The [engraved] stones shall be twelve, according to the names of [the twelve tribes of] the sons of Israel; they shall be like the engravings of a signet, each with its name for the twelve tribes.

²²“You shall make for the breastpiece chains of pure gold twisted like cords.

²³“You shall make on the breastpiece two rings of gold, and shall put the two rings on the two ends of the breastpiece.

²⁴“You shall put the two twisted cords of gold in the two rings which are on the ends of the breastpiece.

²⁵“The *other* two ends of the two cords you shall fasten in the two filigree *settings* in front, putting them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod.

²⁶“You shall make two gold rings and put them at the two ends of the breastpiece, on its inside edge next to the ephod.

²⁷“You are to make two gold rings and attach them to the lower part of the two shoulder pieces of the ephod in front, close to the place where it is joined, above the skillfully woven sash of the ephod.

²⁸“They shall bind the breastpiece by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a blue cord, so that it will be above the skillfully woven sash of the ephod, so that the breastpiece will not come loose from the ephod.

²⁹“So Aaron shall carry the names of the sons of Israel (Jacob) in the breastpiece of judgment over his heart when he enters the Holy Place, to bring them in continual remembrance before the LORD.

³⁰“In the breastpiece of judgment you shall put the Urim (Lights) and the Thummim (Perfections) [to be used for determining God’s will in a matter]. They shall be over Aaron’s heart whenever he goes before the LORD, and Aaron shall always carry the judgment (verdict, judicial decisions) of the sons of Israel over his heart before the LORD.

³¹“And you shall make the robe of the ephod all of blue.

³²“There shall be an opening at its top in the center [for the head], with a binding of woven work around the opening, like the opening in a coat of armor, so that it will not tear *or* fray.

³³“You shall make pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet fabric all around its hem, with gold bells between them;

³⁴a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, all around the [bottom] hem of the robe.

³⁵“Aaron shall wear the robe when he ministers, and its sound shall be heard when he goes [alone] into the Holy Place before the LORD, and when he comes out, so that he will not die there.

³⁶“You shall also make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it, like the engravings of a signet, ‘Holy to the LORD.’ [Ex 39:30]

³⁷“You shall fasten it on the front of the turban with a blue cord.

³⁸“It shall be on Aaron’s forehead, and Aaron shall take away the guilt from the holy things which the sons of Israel dedicate, with regard to all their holy gifts. It shall always be on his forehead, so that they may be accepted before the LORD. [Luke 24:44; Heb 8:1, 2]

³⁹“You shall weave the tunic of checkered work of fine

linen, and make a turban of fine linen. You shall make a sash, the work of an embroiderer.

⁴⁰“For Aaron’s sons you shall make tunics and sashes and [ornamental] caps, for glory *and* honor and beauty.

⁴¹“You shall put the various articles of clothing on Aaron your brother and on his sons with him, and shall anoint them and ordain and sanctify them, so that they may serve Me as priests.

⁴²“You shall make for them [white] linen undergarments to cover their bare flesh, reaching from the waist to the thighs.

⁴³“The various articles of clothing shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they enter the Tent of Meeting, or when they approach the altar [of incense] to minister in the Holy Place, so that they do not incur guilt and die. It shall be a statute forever to Aaron and to his descendants after him.

29 “THIS IS what you shall do to consecrate Aaron and his sons so that they may serve Me as priests: take one young bull and two rams, without blemish, ²and unleavened bread and unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil; you shall make them of fine wheat flour.

³“You shall put them in one basket, and present them in the basket along with the bull and the two rams.

⁴“Then bring Aaron and his sons to the doorway of the Tent of Meeting [out where the basin is] and wash them with water.

⁵“Then you shall take the garments, and put on Aaron the tunic and the robe of the ephod and the ephod and the

breastpiece, and wrap him with the skillfully woven sash of the ephod; ⁶and you shall put the turban on his head and put the holy crown on the turban.

⁷“Then you shall take the anointing oil and pour it on his head and anoint him.

⁸“You shall bring his sons and put tunics on them.

⁹“And you shall wrap them with sashes, Aaron and his sons, and put the [ornamental] caps on them; and the priest’s office shall be theirs by a perpetual statute. So you shall ordain Aaron and his sons.

¹⁰“Then you shall bring the bull before the Tent of Meeting, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the bull’s head.

¹¹“Then you shall kill the bull before the LORD by the doorway of the Tent of Meeting.

¹²“And you shall take some of the blood of the bull and with your finger put it on the horns of the altar [of burnt offering], and you shall pour out the remainder of the blood at the base of the altar.

¹³“You shall take all the fat that covers the intestines and the lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys and the fat that is on them, and offer them up in smoke on the altar.

¹⁴“But the meat of the bull, its hide, and the contents of its intestines you shall burn in the fire outside the camp; it is a sin offering. [Heb 13:11–13]

¹⁵“And you shall take one of the rams, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram;

¹⁶then you shall kill the ram and you shall take its blood and sprinkle it around the altar [of burnt offering].

¹⁷“Then you shall cut the ram into pieces, and wash its intestines and legs, and place them with its pieces and its head,

¹⁸and you shall burn the whole ram on the altar. It is a burnt offering to the LORD: it is a sweet *and* soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the LORD.

¹⁹“Then you shall take the other ram, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram.

²⁰“Then you shall kill the ram, and take some of its blood and put it on the tip of the right ears of Aaron and his sons and on the thumbs of their right hands and on the big toes of their right feet, and sprinkle the [rest of the] blood around on the altar [of burnt offering].

²¹“Then you shall take some of the blood that is on the altar and some of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron and his garments and on his sons and their garments. Now Aaron and his garments and his sons and their garments shall be consecrated (dedicated, made holy, declared sacred for God’s purpose).

²²“You shall also take the fat of the ram, the fat tail, the fat that covers the intestines, the lobe of the liver, the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, and the right thigh; (for it is a ram of ordination), ²³and one loaf of bread and one cake of oiled bread and one wafer out of the basket of the unleavened bread that is before the LORD; ²⁴and you shall put all these in the hands of Aaron and his sons, and wave them as a wave offering before the LORD.

²⁵“Then you shall take them from their hands, add them to the burnt offering, and burn them on the altar for a sweet *and* soothing aroma before the LORD; it is an offering by fire to the

LORD.

26“Then you shall take the breast of the ram of Aaron’s ordination, and wave it as a wave offering before the LORD; and it shall be your (Moses) portion.

27“You shall consecrate the waved breast offering [of the ram] used in the ordination and the waved thigh offering of the priests’ portion, since it is [a contribution] for Aaron and for his sons.

28“It shall be for Aaron and his sons as their due portion from the Israelites forever, for it is a heave offering. It shall be a heave offering to the LORD from the Israelites from the sacrifices of their peace offerings.

29“The holy garments of Aaron shall be for his sons after him, to be anointed and ordained in them.

30“That son who is [high] priest in his place shall put them on [each day for] seven days when he comes into the Tent of Meeting to minister in the Holy Place.

31“You shall take the ram of the ordination and boil its meat in a holy place.

32“Aaron and his sons shall eat the meat of the ram and the bread in the basket, at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting.

33“They shall eat those things by which atonement was made at their ordination and consecration; but a layman shall not eat them, because they are holy [that is, set apart to the worship of God].

34“And if any of the meat of ordination or the bread remains until morning, you shall burn it in the fire; it shall not be eaten, because it is holy.

³⁵“So you shall do to Aaron and to his sons in accordance with all I have commanded you; during seven days you are to ordain them.

³⁶“You shall offer a bull every day as a sin offering for atonement. You shall cleanse the altar *from sin* when you make atonement for it, and you shall anoint it to consecrate it [for God’s sacred purpose].

³⁷“For seven days you shall make atonement for the altar [of burnt offering] and consecrate it; then the altar shall be most holy. Whatever touches the altar must be holy (set apart for God’s service).

³⁸“Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two one year old lambs shall be offered each day, continuously.

³⁹“One lamb you shall offer in the morning and the other lamb at twilight;

⁴⁰and with the one lamb there shall be one-tenth of *a measure* of fine flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of beaten [olive] oil, and one-fourth of a hin of wine for a drink offering [to be poured out].

⁴¹“And the other lamb you shall offer at twilight, and do with it as with the grain offering of the morning and with the drink offering, for a sweet *and* soothing aroma [to appease God], an offering by fire to the LORD.

⁴²“This will be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting before the LORD, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there.

⁴³“There I will meet with the Israelites, and the Tent of Meeting shall be sanctified by My glory [the Shekinah, God’s dwelling presence].

⁴⁴“I will sanctify the Tent of Meeting and the altar [of burnt offering]; also I will sanctify Aaron and his sons to serve as priests to Me.

⁴⁵“I will dwell among the sons of Israel and be their God.

⁴⁶“They shall know [from personal experience] *and* acknowledge that I am the LORD their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt so that I might dwell among them; I am the LORD their God.

30 “YOU SHALL make an altar upon which to burn incense; you shall make it of acacia wood.

²“It shall be a cubit long and a cubit wide. It shall be square and it shall be two cubits high. Its horns of one piece with it.

³“You shall overlay it with pure gold, its top and its sides all around, and its horns; and you shall make a gold molding all around it.

⁴“You shall make two gold rings under its molding, make them on the two side walls—on opposite sides—they shall be holders for the poles with which to carry it.

⁵“You shall make the poles of acacia wood overlaid with gold.

⁶“You shall put the altar of incense [in the Holy Place] in front *and* outside of the veil that screens the ark of the Testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the Testimony, where I will meet with you.

POWERPOINT

The once-a-year sin offering of atonement foreshadows Jesus' death and the sufficiency of His sacrifice to atone for our sins once and for all. This action of offering the blood of animals was a type of what was to come. When Jesus finished the work of His sacrifice on the cross, He secured our complete redemption once and for all (see Heb. 9:12). This includes the redemption of our minds, so we can think like He thinks.



⁷“Aaron shall burn sweet *and* fragrant incense on it; he shall burn it every morning when he trims *and* tends the lamps. [Ps 141:2; Rev 5:8; 8:3, 4]

⁸“When Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he shall burn incense, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations.

⁹“You shall not offer any strange incense on this altar, or burnt offering or meal offering; you shall not pour out a drink offering on it.

¹⁰“Once a year Aaron shall make atonement [for sin] on its horns. He shall make atonement on it with the blood of the sin offering of atonement once a year throughout your generations. It is most holy to the LORD.”

¹¹Then the LORD said to Moses,

¹²“When you take the census of the Israelites, each one shall give a ransom for himself to the LORD when you count them, so that no plague will come on them when you number them. [Rom 8:1–4]

¹³“This is what everyone who is counted shall give [as he joins those already counted]: a half shekel, according to the sanctuary shekel (the shekel is twenty gerahs); a half shekel as a contribution to the LORD.

¹⁴“Everyone who is counted, from twenty years old and over, [as he joins those already counted], shall give this contribution to the LORD. [Matt 10:24; 1 Pet 1:18, 19]

¹⁵“The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when you give this contribution to the LORD to make atonement for yourselves.

¹⁶“You shall take the atonement money from the Israelites and use it [exclusively] for the service of the Tent of Meeting, so that it may be a memorial for the Israelites before the LORD, to make atonement for yourselves.”

¹⁷Then the LORD said to Moses,

¹⁸“You shall also make a basin of bronze, with a base of

bronze, for washing. You shall put it [outside in the court] between the Tent of Meeting and the altar [of burnt offering], and you shall put water in it.

¹⁹“Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet.

²⁰“When they enter the Tent of Meeting, they shall wash with water, so that they will not die. Also, when they approach the altar to minister, to burn an offering in the fire to the LORD [they shall do the same]. [John 13:6–8]

²¹“They shall wash their hands and their feet, so that they will not die; it shall be a perpetual statute for them, for Aaron and his descendants throughout their generations.”

²²Moreover, the LORD said to Moses,

²³“Take for yourself the best spices: five hundred *shekels* of liquid myrrh, half as much—two hundred and fifty—of sweet-scented cinnamon, and two hundred and fifty of fragrant cane, ²⁴and five hundred *shekels* of cinnamon blossom according to the sanctuary shekel, and a hin of olive oil.

²⁵“You shall make of these a holy anointing oil, a perfume mixture, the work of a perfumer; it shall be a sacred anointing oil.

²⁶“You shall anoint the Tent of Meeting with it, and the ark of the Testimony,

²⁷and the table [for the bread] and all its utensils, and the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense,

²⁸and the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the basin [for cleansing] and its base.

²⁹“You shall consecrate them, that they may be most holy;

whatever touches them must be holy (set apart for God).

³⁰“You shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may serve as priests to Me.

³¹“You shall say to the Israelites, ‘This shall be a holy *and* sacred anointing oil, to Me [alone] throughout your generations. [Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 12:3]

³²“It shall not be poured on anyone’s body, nor shall you make any like it in the same composition. It is holy, and it shall be sacred to you.

³³“Whoever prepares any like it or puts any of it on a layman shall be cut off from his people [excluding him from the atonement made for them].”

³⁴Then the LORD said to Moses, “Take sweet *and* fragrant spices—stacte, onycha, and galbanum, sweet *and* fragrant spices with pure frankincense; there shall be an equal amount of each—³⁵and make incense with it, a perfume, the work of a perfumer, salted, pure and sacred.

³⁶“You shall crush some of it [into a] very fine [powder], and put some of it before the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting, where I will meet with you; it shall be most holy to you.

³⁷“The incense which you shall make, you shall not make in the same proportions for yourselves; it shall be holy to you for the LORD.

³⁸“Whoever makes any like it, to use as perfume shall be cut off from his people [excluding him from the atonement made for them].”

31 NOW THE LORD said to Moses, ²“See, I have called by

name Bezalel, son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah.

³“I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom *and* skill, in understanding *and* intelligence, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship, ⁴to make artistic designs for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze,

⁵and in the cutting of stones for settings, and in the carving of wood, to work in all kinds of craftsmanship.

⁶“And behold, I Myself have appointed with him Oholiab, son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; to all who are wise-hearted I have given the skill *and* ability to make everything that I have commanded you: ⁷the Tent of Meeting, the ark of the Testimony, the mercy seat that is upon it, all the furnishings of the tent— ⁸the table [for the bread] and its utensils, the pure *gold* lampstand with all its utensils, the [golden] altar of incense,

⁹the [bronze] altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, the basin and its base—

¹⁰the finely worked garments, the holy garments for Aaron the [high] priest and the garments for his sons to minister as priests,

¹¹and the anointing oil and the sweet *and* fragrant incense for the Holy Place. They are to make *them* according to all that I have commanded you.”

¹²And the LORD said to Moses,

¹³“But as for you, say to the Israelites, ‘You shall most certainly observe My Sabbaths, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, so that you may know [without any doubt] *and* acknowledge that I am the LORD who

sanctifies you *and* sets you apart [for Myself].

¹⁴“Therefore, you shall keep the Sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it must be put to death; for whoever does work on the Sabbath, that person (soul) shall be cut off from among his people [excluding him from the atonement made for them].

¹⁵“For six days work may be done, but the seventh is the Sabbath of complete rest, sacred to the LORD; whoever does work on the Sabbath day must be put to death.

¹⁶“So the Israelites shall observe the Sabbath, to celebrate the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.’

¹⁷“It is a sign between Me and the Israelites forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He ceased and was refreshed.”

¹⁸When He had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.

32 NOW WHEN the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, they gathered together before Aaron and said to him, “Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.”

²So Aaron replied to them, “Take off the gold rings that are in the ears of your wives, your sons and daughters, and bring them to me.”

³So all the people took off the gold rings that were in their

ears and brought them to Aaron.

⁴And he took *the gold* from their hands, and fashioned it with an engraving tool and made it into a molten calf; and they said, “This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.”

⁵Now when Aaron saw the molten calf, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation, and said, “Tomorrow shall be a feast to the LORD!”

⁶So they got up early the next day and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; then the people sat down to eat and drink, and got up to play [shamefully—without moral restraint].

⁷Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves.

⁸“They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, ‘This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!’”

⁹The LORD said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and behold, they are a stiff-necked (stubborn, rebellious) people.

¹⁰“Now therefore, let Me alone *and* do not interfere, so that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you (your descendants) a great nation.”

¹¹But Moses appeased *and* entreated the LORD his God, and said, “LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?

¹²“Why should the Egyptians say, ‘With evil [intent] their God brought them out to kill them in the mountains and destroy them from the face of the earth’? Turn away from Your burning anger and change Your mind about harming Your people.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Patience, Patience, Patience...

It is remarkable that “when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain” (Ex. 32:1), they demanded that Aaron give them some visible representation to worship. They refused to be patient and wait on God, and ended up worshipping a golden calf fashioned from melting down their jewelry.

Impatience is a bad attitude that we need to avoid. It causes a lot of stress, because the simple truth is that we all have to wait on things we desire, so we might as well learn to wait patiently. The fruit of patience is in us as children of God, but we have to use self-control in order for it to manifest (see Gal. 5:22–23). The flesh is naturally impatient, but thankfully it can be controlled and retrained.

One of the best ways to be patient is to keep your mind focused on what you are currently doing. Don’t be so focused on the destination that you fail to enjoy the journey. We live in a fast-paced society where everything moves quickly, and it is easy to get caught up in the cycle of “hurry.” However, it is not

good for us, and it usually ends up causing us to have a short fuse when things don't go our way. It doesn't take much imposition or inconvenience to make us explode in frustration or anger.

Don't slip into an "It's just too hard to wait" attitude. Only people who are weak decide something is too hard before they have even tried to do it. Or perhaps they do try a couple of times and then they give up. Even that is less than God's best because His Word tells us not to get weary in doing what is right, because in due time we will reap if we don't faint and give up (see Gal. 6:9). The fainting actually takes place in our minds, and then our will to be patient and wait goes right down the drain.

Let's practice having a patient attitude with situations, people, and ourselves. Most of all, let's be patient with God when we are waiting on Him to do something we have asked Him to do. God has a perfect timing for all things, and He will not be rushed, so settle down and enjoy the wait.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God of all peace and patience, I am sorry for so often getting caught up in life's rush and allowing impatience to control my attitudes. In Jesus' name, help me stay calm and wait on You and Your perfect timing. Amen.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Intercession

Moses' intercession for the children of Israel is a stirring example that depicts how sincere prayer can change God's mind (see Ex. 32:9–14).

As Jesus told His disciples at Gethsemane, we are to “keep actively watching and praying.” (Matt. 26:41). We are to pray for one another; not judge and criticize one another. As we watch, pray, and interact with people, we may begin to realize when they need encouragement, when they are depressed, fearful, insecure, or when they are experiencing certain problems. God allows us to discern their needs in order to be part of the answer; not part of the problem. Remember we are not the potter: God is; we certainly don't know how to “fix” people, but He always does (see Isa. 64:8).

People who are hurting don't need someone trying to fix them; they need acceptance, compassion, love, and prayer.

I hope you will be faithful to intercede for the people around you. When God brings certain ones to your mind, it may well be because He wants you to pray for them.

¹³“Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel (Jacob), Your servants to whom You swore [an oath] by Yourself, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to

your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.”

¹⁴So the LORD changed His mind about the harm which He had said He would do to His people.

¹⁵Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hand; tablets that were written on both sides—they were written on one side and on the other.

¹⁶The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets.

¹⁷Now when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, “There is a sound of battle in the camp.”

¹⁸But Moses said,

“It is not the sound of the cry of victory,
Nor is it the sound of the cry of defeat;
But I hear the sound of singing.”

¹⁹And as soon as he approached the camp and he saw the calf and the dancing, Moses’ anger burned; and he threw the tablets from his hands and smashed them at the foot of the mountain.

²⁰Then Moses took the calf they had made and burned it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and scattered it on the surface of the water and made the Israelites drink it.

²¹Then Moses said to Aaron, “What did this people do to you, that you have brought so great a sin on them?”

²²Aaron said, “Do not let the anger of my lord burn; you know the people yourself, that they are prone to evil.

²³“For they said to me, ‘Make us a god who will go before

us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’

²⁴“I said to them, ‘Let whoever has gold [jewelry], take it off.’ So they gave it to me; then I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf.”

²⁵Now when Moses saw that the people were out of control—for Aaron had let them get out of control to the point of being an object of mockery among their enemies—²⁶then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, “Whoever is on the LORD’s side, come to me!” And all the sons of Levi [the priestly tribe] gathered together to him.

²⁷He said to them, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘Every man strap his sword on his thigh and go back and forth from gate to gate throughout the camp, and every man kill his brother, and every man his friend, and every man his neighbor [all who continue pagan worship].’”

²⁸So the sons of Levi did as Moses instructed, and about three thousand men of the people [of Israel] were killed that day.

²⁹Then Moses said [to the Levites], “Dedicate yourselves today to the LORD—for each man has been against his own son and his own brother [in his attempt to escape execution]—so that He may restore *and* bestow His blessing on you this day.”

³⁰Then the next day Moses said to the people, “You have committed a great sin. Now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.”

³¹So Moses returned to the LORD, and said, “Oh, these people have committed a great sin [against You], and have

made themselves a god of gold.

³²“Yet now, if You will, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out of Your book which You have written (kill me)!”

³³But the LORD said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book [not you]. [Ps 69:28; Dan 12:1; Phil 4:3; Rev 3:5]

³⁴“But now go, lead the people [to the place] where I have told you. Behold, My Angel shall go before you; nevertheless, in the day when I punish, I will punish them for their sin!” [Ex 23:20; 33:2, 3]

³⁵So the LORD struck the people with a plague, because of what they had done with the calf which Aaron had made [for them].

33 THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Depart, go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought from the land of Egypt, to the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel), saying, ‘To your descendants I will give it.’

POWERPOINT

The Israelites did not want to take responsibility for themselves. Moses prayed for them; he sought God on their behalf; he even did their repenting for them. But personal responsibility can't be delegated. When the Lord asks His people to do something, often there is a temptation to hold back until we think it won't be so difficult. But God expects you and me to admit our sin, no matter the cost, confess it, and repent. He is always faithful to forgive.



²“I will send an Angel before you and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite. [Ex 23:23; 34:11]

³“Go up to a land [of abundance] flowing with milk and

honey; for I will not go up in your midst, because you are a stiff-necked (stubborn, rebellious) people, and I might destroy you on the way.”

⁴When the people heard this sad word, they mourned, and none of them put on his ornaments.

⁵For the LORD had said to Moses, “Say to the sons of Israel, ‘You are a stiff-necked (stubborn, rebellious) people! If I should come among you for one moment, I would destroy you. Now therefore, [penitently] take off your ornaments, so that I may know what to do with you.’”

⁶So the Israelites left off all their ornaments [in repentance], from Mount Horeb (Sinai) *onward*.

⁷Now Moses used to take his own tent and pitch it outside the camp, far away from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting [of God with His own people]. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the [temporary] tent of meeting which was outside the camp.

⁸Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise and stand, each at his tent door, and look at Moses until he entered the tent.

⁹Whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the doorway of the tent; and the LORD would speak with Moses.

¹⁰When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the tent door, all the people would rise and worship, each at his tent door.

¹¹And so the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp, his attendant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man,

would not depart from the tent.

¹²Moses said to the LORD, “See, You say to me, ‘Bring up this people,’ but You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, ‘I know you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.’

¹³“Now therefore, I pray you, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways so that I may know You [becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted with You, recognizing and understanding Your ways more clearly] and that I may find grace *and* favor in Your sight. And consider also, that this nation is Your people.”

¹⁴And the LORD said, “My presence shall go *with you*, and I will give you rest [by bringing you and the people into the promised land].” [Deut 3:20]

¹⁵And Moses said to Him, “If Your presence does not go [with me], do not lead us up from here.

¹⁶“For how then can it be known that Your people and I have found favor in Your sight? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we are distinguished, Your people and I, from all the [other] people on the face of the earth?”

¹⁷The LORD said to Moses, “I will also do this thing that you have asked; for you have found favor (lovingkindness, mercy) in My sight and I have known you [personally] by name.” [Rev 2:17]

¹⁸Then Moses said, “Please, show me Your glory!”

¹⁹And God said, “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the Name of the LORD before you; for I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion (lovingkindness) on whom I will show

compassion.” [Rom 9:15, 16]

²⁰But He said, “You cannot see My face, for no man shall see Me and live!”

²¹Then the LORD said, “Behold, there is a place beside Me, and you shall stand there on the rock;

²²and while My glory is passing by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock and *protectively* cover you with My hand until I have passed by.

²³“Then I will take away My hand and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.”

34 THEN THE LORD said to Moses, “Cut two tablets of stone like the first, and I will write on these tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you smashed [when you learned of Israel’s idolatry].

²“So be ready by morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to Me on the top of the mountain.

³“No man is to come up with you, nor let any man be seen anywhere on the mountain; nor let flocks or herds feed in front of that mountain.”

⁴So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first ones, and he got up early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took the two tablets of stone in his hand.

⁵Then the LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with Moses as he proclaimed the Name of the LORD.

⁶Then the LORD passed by in front of him, and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth (faithfulness); ⁷keeping mercy *and* lovingkindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; but He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished, visiting (avenging) the iniquity (sin, guilt) of the fathers upon the children and the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations [that is, calling the children to account for the sins of their fathers].”

⁸Moses bowed to the earth immediately and worshiped [the Lord].

⁹And he said, “If now I have found favor *and* lovingkindness in Your sight, O Lord, let the Lord, please, go in our midst, though it is a stiff-necked (stubborn, rebellious) people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your possession.”

Speak God's Word

I watch myself so that I do not make an agreement with the ungodly people in the world, or it will become a dangerous trap for me.

| adapted from EXODUS 34:12 |

¹⁰Then God said, “Behold, I am going to make a covenant. Before all your people I will do wondrous works (miracles) such as have not been created *or* produced in all the earth nor among any of the nations; and all the people among whom you live shall see the working of the LORD, for it is a fearful *and* awesome thing that I am going to do with you.

¹¹“Be sure to observe what I am commanding you this day: behold, I am going to drive out the Amorite before you, and the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

¹²“Watch yourself so that you do not make a covenant (solemn agreement, treaty) with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a [dangerous] trap among you.

¹³“But you shall tear down *and* destroy their [pagan] altars, smash in pieces their [sacred] pillars (obelisks, images)

and cut down their Asherim ¹⁴—for you shall not worship any other god; for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous (impassioned) God [demanding what is rightfully and uniquely His]— ¹⁵otherwise you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the prostitute with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you to eat his sacrifice (meal), ¹⁶and you might take some of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters would play the prostitute with their gods and cause your sons also to play the prostitute (commit apostasy) with their gods [that is, abandon the true God for man-made idols].

¹⁷“You shall make for yourselves no molten gods.

¹⁸“You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover). For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I have commanded you, at the appointed time in the month of Abib; for in the month of Abib you came out of Egypt.

¹⁹“All the firstborn males among your livestock belong to Me, whether cattle or sheep.

²⁰“You shall redeem the firstborn of a donkey with a lamb; but if you do not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. You shall redeem all the firstborn of your sons. None of you are to appear before Me empty-handed.

²¹“You shall work for six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest; [even] in plowing time and in harvest you shall rest [on the Sabbath].

²²“You shall observe *and* celebrate the Feast of Weeks (Harvest, First Fruits, or Pentecost), the first fruits of the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering (Booths or Tabernacles) at the year’s end.

²³“Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel.

²⁴“For I will drive out *and* dispossess nations before you and enlarge your borders; nor shall any man covet (actively seek for himself) your land when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times a year.

²⁵“You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread, nor shall the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover (Unleavened Bread) be left over until morning.

²⁶“You shall bring the very first of the first fruits of your ground to the house of the LORD your God.

“You shall not boil a young goat in his mother’s milk [as some pagans do].”

²⁷Then the LORD said to Moses, “Write these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.”

²⁸Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he ate no bread and drank no water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

²⁹When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hand, he did not know that the skin of his face was shining [with a unique radiance] because he had been speaking with God.

³⁰When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to approach him.

³¹But Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him; and he spoke to them.

³²Afterward all the Israelites approached him, and he commanded them to do everything that the LORD had said to him on Mount Sinai.

³³When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face.

³⁴But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would take off the veil until he came out. When he came out and he told the Israelites what he had been commanded [by God], ³⁵the Israelites would see the face of Moses, how his skin shone [with a unique radiance]. So Moses put the veil on his face again until he went in to speak with God.

35 MOSES GATHERED all the congregation of the sons of Israel together, and said to them, “These are the things which the LORD has commanded you to do: ²“For six days work may be done, but the seventh day shall be a holy day for you, a Sabbath of complete rest to the LORD; whoever does any kind of work on that day shall be put to death.

³“You shall not kindle a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day.”

⁴And Moses said to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, “This is the thing which the LORD has commanded: ⁵“Take from among you an offering to the LORD. Whoever has a willing heart, let him bring it as the LORD’s offering: gold, silver, and bronze, ⁶blue, purple, and scarlet fabric, fine linen, goats’ *hair*;

⁷and rams' skins dyed red, and skins of porpoises, and acacia wood,

⁸and [olive] oil for the lighting, and balsam for the anointing oil, and for the fragrant incense,

⁹and onyx stones and other stones to be set for the ephod and the breastpiece.

¹⁰Let every skilled *and* talented man among you come, and make everything that the LORD has commanded: ¹¹the tabernacle (sacred dwelling of God), its tent and its covering, its hooks, its boards, its bars, its pillars, and its sockets;

¹²the ark [of the covenant] and its carrying poles, with the mercy seat and the veil (partition curtain) of the screen [to hang between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies]; ¹³the table and its carrying poles, and all its utensils, and the bread of the [divine] Presence (showbread);

¹⁴the lampstand also for the light and its utensils and its lamps, and the oil for the light;

¹⁵and the altar of incense and its carrying poles, the anointing oil and the fragrant incense, the screen (curtain) for the doorway at the entrance of the tabernacle; ¹⁶the altar of burnt offering with its bronze grating, its carrying poles, and all its utensils, the wash basin and its base (stand);

¹⁷the court's curtains, its support poles and their sockets, and the curtain for the gate of the courtyard;

¹⁸the pegs of the tabernacle and the pegs of the court and their cords;

¹⁹the finely-woven garments for ministering in the Holy Place, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments

for his sons, to minister as priests.”

²⁰Then all the congregation of the Israelites left Moses’ presence.

²¹Everyone whose heart stirred him and everyone whose spirit moved him came and brought the LORD’s offering to be used for the Tent of Meeting, for all its service, and for the holy garments.

²²Then all whose hearts moved them, both men and women, came and brought brooches, earrings *or* nose rings, signet rings, and necklaces, all jewels of gold; everyone bringing an offering of gold to the LORD.

²³Every man who had in his possession blue or purple or scarlet fabric, and fine linen, and goats’ *hair*, and rams’ skins dyed red and porpoise skins, brought them.

²⁴Everyone who could make an offering of silver or bronze brought it as the LORD’s offering; every man who had in his possession acacia wood for any work of the service brought it.

²⁵All the skilled *and* talented women spun thread with their hands, and brought what they had spun, blue and purple and scarlet fabric and fine linen.

²⁶All the women whose heart stirred with a skill spun the goats’ *hair*.

²⁷The leaders brought onyx stones and other stones to be put in settings for the ephod and for the breastpiece,

²⁸and spice and [olive] oil for the light and for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense.

²⁹The Israelites, all the men and women whose heart moved them to bring *material* for all the work which the LORD had commanded through Moses to be done, brought a freewill

(voluntary) offering to the LORD.

³⁰Then Moses said to the Israelites, “See, the LORD called by name Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; ³¹and He has filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom *and* skill, with intelligence *and* understanding, and with knowledge in all [areas of] craftsmanship, ³²to devise artistic designs to work in gold, silver, and bronze,

³³and in the cutting of stones for setting and in the carving of wood, for work in every skilled craft.

³⁴“He has also put in Bezalel’s heart [the willingness] to teach [others the same skills], both he and Oholiab, son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan.

³⁵“He has filled them with skill to do the work of an engraver, of a designer, and of an embroiderer, in blue, purple, and scarlet fabric, and in fine linen, and of a weaver; makers of every work and embroiderers of [excellent] designs.

36 “BEZALEL AND Oholiab, and every skilled person in whom the LORD has put ability and understanding to know how to do all the work in the construction of the sanctuary, shall work according to all that the LORD has commanded.”

²So Moses called Bezalel and Oholiab and every skilled person in whom the LORD had put ability, everyone whose heart stirred him, to come to do the work.

³They received from Moses all the offerings which the Israelites had brought for the construction of the sanctuary, to prepare it for service. And they continued to bring him freewill

(voluntary) offerings every morning.

⁴And all the skilled men who were doing all the work on the sanctuary came, each one from the work which he was doing,

⁵and they said to Moses, “The people are bringing much more than enough for the construction work which the LORD commanded us to do.”

⁶So Moses issued a command, and it was proclaimed throughout the camp, “Let neither man nor woman do any more work for the sanctuary offering.” So the people were restrained from bringing *anything more*;

⁷for the material they had was sufficient and more than enough to do all the work.

⁸All the skilled men among them who were doing the work on the tabernacle made ten curtains of fine twisted linen and blue, purple, and scarlet fabric, with cherubim [worked into them], the work of an embroiderer, Bezalel made them.

⁹Each curtain was twenty-eight cubits long and four cubits wide; all the curtains were one size.

¹⁰Bezalel joined five curtains one to another, and [the other] five curtains he joined one to another.

¹¹He made loops of blue on the edge of the outermost curtain in the first set; he also did this on the edge of the curtain that was outermost in the second set.

¹²He made fifty loops in the one curtain [of the first set] and fifty loops on the edge of the curtain which was in the second set; the loops were opposite one another.

¹³He made fifty gold hooks and joined the curtains together with the hooks, so that the tabernacle became a unit.

¹⁴Then he made curtains of goats' *hair* for a tent over the tabernacle; he made eleven curtains in all.

¹⁵Each curtain was thirty cubits long and four cubits wide; the eleven curtains were of equal size.

¹⁶Bezalel joined five curtains by themselves and [the other] six curtains by themselves.

¹⁷He made fifty loops on the edge of the outermost curtain in the *first* set, and he made fifty loops on the edge of the *outermost* curtain of the second set.

¹⁸He made fifty bronze hooks to join the tent together into a unit.

¹⁹He made a [third] covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and above it a [fourth] covering of porpoise skins.

²⁰Bezalel made boards of acacia wood for the upright framework of the tabernacle.

²¹Each board was ten cubits long and one and a half cubits wide.

²²Each board had two tenons (dovetails), fitted to one another; he did this for all the boards of the tabernacle.

²³And [this is how] he made the boards [for frames] for the tabernacle: twenty boards for the south side;

²⁴and he made under the twenty boards forty silver sockets; two sockets under one board for its two tenons (dovetails), and two sockets under another board for its two tenons.

²⁵For the other side of the tabernacle, the north side, he made twenty boards,

²⁶and their forty silver sockets; two sockets under [the end

of] each board.

²⁷And for the rear of the tabernacle, to the west, he made six [frame] boards.

²⁸And he made two boards for each corner of the tabernacle in the rear.

²⁹They were separate below, but linked together at the top with one ring; thus he made both of them in both corners.

³⁰There were eight boards with sixteen silver sockets, and under [the end of] each board two sockets.

³¹Bezalel made bars of acacia wood, five for the [frame] boards of the one side of the tabernacle,

³²and five bars for the boards of the tabernacle's other side, and five bars for the boards at the rear side to the west.

³³And he made the middle bar pass through [horizontally] halfway up the boards from one end to the other.

³⁴He overlaid the boards and the bars with gold and made their rings of gold as holders for the bars.

³⁵Further, Bezalel made the veil of blue and purple and scarlet fabric, and fine twisted linen; he made it with cherubim, the work of an embroiderer. [Matt 27:50, 51; Heb 10:19–22]

³⁶For the veil (partition curtain) he made four support poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold; their hooks were gold, and he cast for them four silver sockets.

³⁷He made a screen (curtain) for the doorway of the tent, of blue, purple, and scarlet fabric, and fine twisted linen, the work of an embroiderer;

³⁸and [he made] the five support poles with their hooks, and overlaid their [ornamental] tops and connecting rings with

gold; but their five sockets were bronze.

37 BEZALEL MADE the ark [of the covenant] of acacia wood—it was two and a half cubits long, and one and a half cubits wide, and one and a half cubits high.

²And he overlaid it with pure gold inside and out, and made a molding (border) of gold to go all around [the top of it].

³He cast four rings of gold for it on its four feet, two rings on one side and two rings on the other side.

⁴He made carrying poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold.

⁵He put the carrying poles through the rings at the sides of the ark, to carry it.

⁶Bezalel made the mercy seat of pure gold; it was two and a half cubits long, and one and a half cubits wide.

⁷He made two cherubim of hammered gold; he made them at the two ends of the mercy seat,

⁸one cherub at one end and one cherub at the other end; he made the cherubim [of one piece] with the mercy seat at the two ends.

⁹The cherubim spread out their wings upward, covering *and* protecting the mercy seat with their wings, with their faces toward each other; the faces of the cherubim were [looking downward] toward the mercy seat. [Heb 9:23–26]

POWERPOINT

When we see someone as gifted as Bezalel, we may think our own gifts are so insignificant that we stop exercising them. Or we try to copy someone else's ability rather than do what God has called us to do. It is important for us to see that God has given each person different gifts to be used for the benefit of everyone (see 1 Cor. 12:4-30) and that our own gifts are important.



¹⁰Bezalel made the table [for the bread] of acacia wood; it was two cubits long, a cubit wide, and one and a half cubits high.

¹¹He overlaid it with pure gold, and made a border of gold for it all around [its top].

¹²He made a rim for it [just under the top] a hand width

wide all around, and a border of gold around its rim.

¹³He cast four rings of gold for it and fastened the rings to the four corners that were at its four legs.

¹⁴Close by the rim were the rings, the holders for the poles [to pass through] to carry the table.

¹⁵Bezalel made the carrying poles of acacia wood to carry the table and overlaid them with gold.

¹⁶He made the utensils which were to be on the table, its dishes and its pans [for bread], its bowls and its jars for pouring drink offerings, of pure gold.

¹⁷Then he made the lampstand (menorah) of pure gold. He made the lampstand of hammered work, its base and its [center] shaft; its cups, its calyxes, and its flowers were *all of one piece* with it.

¹⁸There were six branches coming out of the sides of the lampstand, three branches from one side of *the center shaft* and three branches from the other side of it; ¹⁹three cups shaped like almond *blossoms*, a calyx and a flower in one branch, and three cups shaped like almond *blossoms*, a calyx and a flower in the opposite branch—so for the six branches coming out of *the center shaft* of the lampstand.

²⁰On *the center shaft* of the lampstand there were four cups shaped like almond *blossoms*, with calyxes and flowers [one at the top];

²¹and a calyx was under the *first* pair of branches *coming* out of it, and a calyx under the *second* pair of branches, *coming* out of it, and a calyx under the *third* pair of branches *coming* out of it, for the six branches coming out of the lampstand.

²²Their calyxes and their branches were *of one piece* with

it; all of it was a single hammered work of pure gold.

²³He made its seven lamps with its snuffers and its trays of pure gold.

²⁴He made the lampstand and all its utensils from a talent of pure gold. [John 1:4, 5, 9; 2 Cor 4:6]

²⁵Then Bezalel made the incense altar of acacia wood; its top was a cubit square and it was two cubits high; the horns were *of one piece* with it.

²⁶He overlaid it with pure gold, its top, its sides all around and its horns; he also made a rim of gold around it.

²⁷He made two rings of gold for it under its rim, on its two opposite sides, as holders for the poles [to pass through] to carry it.

²⁸He made the poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold.

²⁹He also made the holy anointing oil and the pure, fragrant incense of spices, the work of a perfumer.

38 THEN BEZALEL made the altar of burnt offering of acacia wood; its top was square, five cubits long and five cubits wide, and three cubits high.

²And he made its horns (horn-shaped projections) on the four corners of it; the horns were *of one piece* with it, and he overlaid it with bronze.

³He made all the utensils *and* vessels of the altar [of burnt offering], the pots, shovels, basins [to catch the blood of the sacrificed animal], meat hooks and the firepans [to store live coals]. He made all its utensils of bronze.

⁴He made for the altar a grating of bronze mesh under its rim, extending halfway up it.

⁵He cast four rings for the four corners of the bronze grating as holders for the carrying poles.

⁶And he made the carrying poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with bronze.

⁷He put the poles through the rings on the sides of the altar, with which to carry it; he made it hollow with planks.

⁸Bezalel made the basin and its base of bronze from the mirrors of the attending women who served *and* ministered at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting.

⁹Then he made the court: for the south side the curtains of the court were of fine twisted linen, a hundred cubits;

¹⁰their twenty support poles, and their twenty bronze sockets; the hooks of the support poles and their connecting rings were silver.

¹¹And for the north side [of the court the curtains were also] a hundred cubits; their twenty support poles and their twenty bronze sockets; the hooks of the support poles and their connecting rings were silver.

¹²For the west side [of the court] there were curtains of fifty cubits with their ten support poles and their ten sockets; the hooks of the support poles and their connecting rings were silver.

¹³For the east side [the front of the courtyard, there were curtains of] fifty cubits.

¹⁴The curtains for one side *of the court gate* were fifteen cubits, with their three support poles and their three sockets;

¹⁵and *the same* for the other side [of the court gate]. Left and right of the court gate there were curtains of fifteen cubits; with their three support poles and their three sockets.

¹⁶All the curtains around the court were of fine twisted linen.

¹⁷The sockets for the support poles were *made of* bronze, the hooks of the support poles and their connecting rings were *made of* silver; and silver overlaid their tops. All the support poles of the court had silver connecting rings.

¹⁸The screen (curtain) for the gate of the courtyard [on the east side] was the work of an embroiderer, in blue, purple, and scarlet fabric, and fine twisted linen; it was twenty cubits long and five cubits high, corresponding to the curtains of the court.

¹⁹Their four support poles and their four sockets were bronze; their hooks were silver, and silver overlaid their tops and their connecting rings.

²⁰All the pegs for the tabernacle and the court were bronze.

²¹This is the sum of the things for the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the Testimony, as counted according to the command of Moses, for the work of the Levites, under the direction of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.

²²Now Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made everything that the LORD commanded Moses.

²³With him was Oholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, an engraver and a skillful craftsman and an embroiderer in blue and in purple and in scarlet fabric, and in fine linen.

²⁴All the gold that was used for the work, in all the building *and* furnishing of the sanctuary, the gold from the wave

offering, was twenty-nine talents and seven hundred and thirty shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary.

²⁵The silver from those of the congregation who were assembled *and* counted was 100 talents and 1,775 shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary; ²⁶a beka for each man (that is, half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary) for everyone who was counted, from twenty years old and upward, for 603,550 men.

²⁷The hundred talents of silver were for casting the sockets of the sanctuary and the sockets of the veil (partition curtain); a hundred sockets for the hundred talents, a talent for a socket.

²⁸Of the 1,775 *shekels*, he made hooks for the support poles and overlaid their tops and made connecting rings for them.

²⁹The bronze of the wave offering was seventy talents and 2,400 shekels.

³⁰With it Bezalel made the sockets for the doorway of the Tent of Meeting, and the bronze altar and its bronze grating, and all the utensils of the altar, ³¹and the sockets of the court all around and the sockets of the court gate, and all the pegs of the tabernacle and all the pegs around the court.

39 MOREOVER, FROM the blue and purple and scarlet fabric, they made finely woven garments for serving *and* ministering in the Holy Place; they made the holy garments for Aaron, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

²Bezalel made the ephod of gold, and of blue, purple, and scarlet fabric, and fine twisted linen.

³Then Bezalel and Oholiab hammered the gold [into thin sheets] and cut it into threads to work into the blue, purple, and scarlet fabric, and into the fine linen, the work of a skilled craftsman.

⁴They made attaching shoulder pieces for the ephod; it was attached at its two [upper] edges.

⁵The skillfully woven sash with which to bind it, which was on the ephod [to hold it in place], was like its workmanship, of the same material: of gold and of blue, purple, and scarlet fabric, and fine twisted linen, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

⁶They made the onyx stones, set in settings of gold filigree; they were engraved as signets are engraved, with the names of [the twelve tribes of] the sons of Israel.

⁷And he put them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod to be memorial stones (a remembrance) for the sons of Israel (Jacob), just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

⁸Bezalel made the breastpiece, the work of a skillful craftsman, like the workmanship of the ephod: of gold and of blue, purple, and scarlet fabric, and fine twisted linen.

⁹It was square; they made the breastpiece folded double, a [hand's] span long and a [hand's] span wide when folded double.

¹⁰And they mounted four rows of stones on it. The first row was a row of ruby, topaz, and emerald;

¹¹and the second row, a turquoise, a sapphire, and a diamond;

¹²and the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst;

¹³and the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper; they were mounted in settings of gold filigree.

¹⁴The stones corresponded to the names of the sons of Israel; they were twelve [in all], corresponding to their names, engraved like a signet, each with its name, for the twelve tribes.

¹⁵And they made on the breastpiece twisted chains like cords of pure gold.

¹⁶They made two settings of gold filigree and two gold rings, and put the two rings on the two ends of the breastpiece.

¹⁷Then they put the two twisted cords of gold in the two rings on the ends of the breastpiece.

¹⁸They put the [other] two ends of the two cords on the two filigree settings, and put them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod at the front of it.

¹⁹They made two rings of gold and put them on the two ends of the breastpiece, on its inner edge which was next to the ephod.

²⁰Furthermore, they made two [other] gold rings and attached them to the bottom of the two shoulder pieces of the ephod, at the front of it, close to the place where it is joined, above the woven sash of the ephod.

²¹They bound the breastpiece by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a blue cord, so that it would lie on the woven sash of the ephod, and so that the breastpiece would not come loose from the ephod, just as the LORD commanded Moses.

²²Then Bezalel made the robe of the ephod of woven work, all of blue;

²³there was an opening [for the head] in the middle of the

robe, like the opening in a coat of armor, with a hem around it, so that it would not be frayed *or* torn.

²⁴On the hem of the robe they made pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet fabric, and fine twisted linen.

²⁵They also made bells of pure gold, and put the bells between the pomegranates around the hem of the robe;

²⁶a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate, all [the way] around the hem of the robe, for service *and* ministering, just as the LORD commanded Moses.

²⁷And they made tunics of finely woven linen for Aaron and his sons,

²⁸and the turban of fine linen, and the ornamental caps of fine linen, and the linen undergarments of fine twisted linen,

²⁹and the sash of fine twisted linen, and blue, purple, and scarlet fabric, the work of an embroiderer, just as the LORD commanded Moses.

³⁰They made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and wrote on it an inscription, like the engravings of a signet, "Holy to the LORD." [Ex 28:36]

³¹They tied a blue cord to it, to fasten it on the turban above, just as the LORD commanded Moses.

³²Thus all the work of the tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting was finished; and the Israelites did according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses; that is what they did.

³³They brought the tabernacle to Moses [for him to inspect]: the tent and all its furnishings, its hooks, its [frame] boards, its bars, its support poles, its sockets *or* bases; ³⁴and the covering of rams' skins dyed red, and the covering of

porpoise skins, and the veil (partition) of the screen (curtain);

³⁵the ark of the Testimony, its carrying poles and the mercy seat;

³⁶the table and all its utensils and the bread of the Presence (showbread);

³⁷the pure *gold* lampstand and its lamps, with the lamps placed in order, all its utensils, and the oil for the light;

³⁸the golden altar [of incense], the anointing oil and the fragrant incense, and the [hanging] veil for the doorway of the tent;

³⁹the bronze altar [of burnt offering] and its grating of bronze, its poles and all its utensils, the basin and its base;

⁴⁰the curtains of the courtyard, its support poles and sockets, and the screen (curtain) for the courtyard gate, its cords and pegs, and all the utensils for the service of the tabernacle, for the Tent of Meeting [of God with His people]; [Ex 29:42, 43]

⁴¹the [finely] woven garments for serving *and* ministering in the Holy Place, the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons to minister as priests.

⁴²So the Israelites did all the work according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses.

⁴³And Moses [carefully] inspected all the work, and behold, they had done it; just as the LORD had commanded, so had they done it. So Moses blessed them.

40 THEN THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“On the first day of the first month (Abib) you shall set up the tabernacle of

the Tent of Meeting [of God with you].

³“You shall place the ark of the Testimony there, and you shall screen off the ark [from the Holy Place of God’s Presence] with the veil (partition curtain). [Heb 10:19–23]

⁴“You shall bring in the table [for the bread] and arrange its setting; you shall bring in the lampstand and mount *and* light its lamps. [Rev 21:23–25]

⁵“You shall set the golden altar of incense in front of the ark of the Testimony [outside the veil], and put the [hanging] veil at the doorway of the tabernacle.

⁶“You shall set the [bronze] altar of burnt offering in front of the doorway of the tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting.

⁷“You shall set the basin between the Tent of Meeting and the altar [of burnt offering], and put water in it.

⁸“You shall set up the courtyard [curtains] all around and hang up the screen (curtain) for the gateway of the courtyard.

⁹“Then you shall take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it, and consecrate it and all its furniture; and it shall be holy (declared sacred, separated from secular use).

¹⁰“You shall anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar, and the altar shall be most holy.

¹¹“You shall anoint the basin and its base, and consecrate it.

¹²“Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the doorway of the Tent of Meeting and wash them with water. [John 17:17–19]

¹³“You shall put the holy garments on Aaron and anoint

him and consecrate him, that he may serve as a priest to Me.

¹⁴“You shall bring his sons and put tunics on them;

¹⁵you shall anoint them just as you anointed their father, so that they may serve as priests to Me; and their anointing shall qualify them for an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations.”

¹⁶Thus Moses did; in accordance with all that the LORD commanded him, so he did.

¹⁷Now it happened on the first day of the first month (Abib) in the second year [after the exodus from Egypt], that the tabernacle was erected.

¹⁸Moses erected the tabernacle, laid its sockets, set up its boards, put in its bars and erected its support poles.

¹⁹He spread the tent over the tabernacle and put the covering of the tent over it, just as the LORD had commanded him.

²⁰He took the Testimony [the stones inscribed with the Ten Commandments] and put it into the ark [of the covenant], and placed the poles [through the rings] on the ark, and put the mercy seat on top of the ark.

²¹Moses brought the ark into the tabernacle, and set up a veil (partition) for the screen (curtain), and screened off the ark of the Testimony, just as the LORD had commanded him.

²²Then he put the table in the Tent of Meeting on the north side of the tabernacle, outside the veil.

²³He set the bread [of the Presence] in order on it before the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded him. [John 6:32–35]

²⁴ Then he put the lampstand in the Tent of Meeting,

opposite the table, on the south side of the tabernacle.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Believe for God's Best

Christians often hear about the glory of God, as is mentioned in Exodus 40:34, but do we really know what it means? Let me begin to explain it by reminding you of a story in the New Testament.

When Jesus stood in front of the tomb of Lazarus, intending to raise him from death, Martha spoke out of her fear, saying, "Lord, by this time there will be an offensive odor, for he has been dead four days!" (John 11:39). Jesus responded with, "Did I not say to you that if you believe [in Me], you will see the glory of God [the expression of His excellence]?" (v. 40).

Seeing the glory of God, as Jesus promised Martha and as the Israelites did when the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle (see Ex. 40:34), does not necessarily mean we will receive things the way we want them, when we want them, all the time. But it does mean we can trust God for His best in every situation. God's glory is "the expression of His excellence." Will you believe today that you will see God's glory as He does what is best for you in the circumstances you currently face?

²⁵Moses mounted *and* lighted the lamps [on the lampstand] before the LORD, just as the LORD commanded him.

²⁶He put the golden altar [of incense] in the Tent of

Meeting in front of the veil;

²⁷he burned fragrant incense [as a symbol of prayer] on it, just as the LORD commanded him. [Ps 141:2; Rev 8:3]

²⁸Then he set up the screen (curtain) at the doorway of the tabernacle.

²⁹He set the altar of burnt offering before the doorway of the tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting, and offered on it the burnt offering and the grain offering, just as the LORD commanded him.

³⁰He placed the basin between the Tent of Meeting and the altar [of burnt offering], and put water in it for washing.

³¹Then from it Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet.

³²When they entered the Tent of Meeting, and when they approached the altar, they washed, just as the LORD commanded Moses.

³³And he erected the courtyard all around the tabernacle and the altar, and hung the screen (curtain) at the gateway of the courtyard. So Moses finished the work.

³⁴Then the cloud [the Shekinah, God's visible, dwelling presence] covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory *and* brilliance of the LORD filled the tabernacle. [Rev 15:8]

³⁵Moses was not able to enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud remained on it, and the glory *and* brilliance of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

³⁶In all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the Israelites would set out;

³⁷but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not

journey on until the day when it was taken up.

³⁸For throughout all their journeys, the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel.

Leviticus

Author: | Moses
Date: | About 1440
BC

People don't usually think of Leviticus as a fascinating book of the Bible, but it is very significant because it teaches us the importance of obedience. Throughout the book, we realize that obedience to God brings blessings, while disobedience brings curses, or trouble, into our lives. If we want to live a blessed life, the way to do it is to obey God and His Word.

One thought the enemy often plants in the minds of believers is that God does not really want us to be blessed—that perhaps He is angry with us or wants to punish us because of our sin. Leviticus refutes this lie of the enemy, emphasizing that God's purpose and intention for our lives is blessing and that the path to blessing is to know and obey what He says.

WINNING THOUGHT FROM LEVITICUS:

The life of the flesh is in the blood. Jesus' blood makes atonement for your sins because of the life it represents—His perfect, sinless life (see Leviticus 17:11). You are forgiven, and you can be free from every type of sin and stronghold!

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM LEVITICUS:

You shall not take revenge nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor (acquaintance, associate, companion) as yourself; I am the LORD. | Leviticus 19:18

I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject nor separate itself from you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt so that you would not be their slaves; and I broke the bars of your yoke and made you walk upright [with heads held high as free men]. | Leviticus 26:11–13

THE THIRD BOOK OF MOSES, CALLED LEVITICUS

1 THE LORD called to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying, ²“Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of [domestic] animals from the herd (cattle, oxen) or from the flock (sheep, goats).

³‘If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish; he shall offer it at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting so that he may be accepted before the LORD. [Rom 12:1; Phil 1:20]

⁴‘He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering [transferring symbolically his guilt to the sacrifice], that it may be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf. [Heb 13:15, 16; 1 Pet 1:2]

⁵‘He shall kill the young bull before the LORD; and Aaron’s sons the priests shall present the blood and sprinkle the blood around on the altar that is at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting.

⁶‘Then he shall skin the burnt offering and cut it into pieces.

⁷‘The sons of Aaron the [high] priest shall put fire on the

altar [of burnt offering] and arrange wood on the fire.

⁸‘Then Aaron’s sons the priests shall arrange the pieces, the head and the fat, on the wood which is on the fire that is on the altar.

⁹‘But he shall wash its entrails and its legs with water. The priest shall offer all of it up in smoke on the altar as a burnt offering. It is an offering by fire, a sweet *and* soothing aroma to the LORD. [Eph 5:2; Phil 4:18; 1 Pet 2:5]

¹⁰‘But if his offering is from the flock, of the sheep or of the goats, as a burnt offering, he shall offer a male without blemish.

¹¹‘He shall kill it on the north side of the altar before the LORD, and Aaron’s sons the priests shall sprinkle its blood around on the altar.

¹²‘He shall cut it into pieces, with its head and its fat, and the priest shall arrange them on the wood which is on the fire that is on the altar.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Jesus Atones for Sin

Throughout the book of Leviticus, the words guilt, guilty, and guilt offering are mentioned more than fifty-five times (see Lev. 1:4 for starters).

Obviously our goal should be not to sin and incur guilt. But if we do sin, God has already provided forgiveness for sin and freedom from guilt. As far back as the writing of Leviticus, God knew He would one day send Jesus—Who is perfect—to take our place and atone for our sin (see 1 John 2:1). People sometimes feel they are earning God's forgiveness by feeling guilty. But that is a fleshly way of trying to “pay” for our mistakes. Jesus did not die for us so we could feel guilty; He died for us so we could have an intimate relationship with God through Him. He gave His life so our sins could be forgiven and we could have right standing with God.

POWERPOINT

Leviticus provides many details on the service of the priest as he made sacrifices to atone for people's sin. During Old Testament times, the priestly system was the way through which God's people could receive forgiveness. But today, Jesus Christ is our High Priest (see Heb. 4:14–15), and His sacrifice on the cross guarantees believers the forgiveness of sin.



¹³‘But he shall wash the entrails and legs with water. The priest shall offer all of it, and offer it up in smoke on the altar. It is a burnt offering, an offering by fire, a sweet *and* soothing aroma to the LORD.

¹⁴‘But if his offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds, then he shall bring turtledoves or young pigeons as his offering.

¹⁵‘The priest shall bring it to the altar, and wring off its head, and offer it up in smoke on the altar; and its blood is to be drained out on the side of the altar.

¹⁶‘He shall remove its crop with its feathers and throw it next to the east side of the altar, in the place for ashes.

¹⁷‘Then he shall tear it open by its wings, but shall not sever it. And the priest shall offer it up in smoke on the altar, on the wood that is on the fire. It is a burnt offering, an offering by fire, a sweet *and* soothing aroma to the LORD.

2 ‘WHEN ANYONE presents a grain offering to the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour, and he shall pour [olive] oil over it and put frankincense on it.

²‘He shall bring it to Aaron’s sons the priests. Out of it he shall take a handful of the fine flour and oil, with all of its frankincense, and the priest shall offer this up in smoke on the altar [of burnt offering] as the memorial portion of it. It is an offering by fire, a sweet *and* soothing aroma to the LORD.

³‘What is left of the grain offering belongs to Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the offerings to the LORD by fire.

⁴‘When you bring an offering of grain baked in the oven, it shall be unleavened cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, or unleavened wafers spread with oil.

⁵‘If your offering is grain baked on a griddle, it shall be of fine unleavened flour, mixed with oil.

⁶‘You are to break it into pieces, and you shall pour oil on it; it is a grain offering.

⁷Now if your offering is grain cooked in a lidded pan, it shall be made of fine flour with oil.

⁸When you bring the grain offering that is made of these things to the LORD, it shall be presented to the priest, and he shall bring it to the altar [of burnt offering].

⁹The priest shall take from the grain offering its memorial portion and offer it up in smoke on the altar. It is an offering by fire, a sweet *and* soothing aroma to the LORD.

¹⁰What is left of the grain offering belongs to Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the offerings to the LORD by fire.

¹¹No grain offering that you bring to the LORD shall be made with leaven, for you shall not offer up in smoke any leaven [which symbolizes the spread of sin] or any honey [which, like leaven, is subject to fermentation] in any offering by fire to the LORD. [1 Cor 5:8]

¹²As an offering of first fruits you may offer them [leaven and honey] to the LORD, but they shall not go up [in smoke] on the altar as a sweet *and* soothing aroma.

¹³You shall season every grain offering with salt so that the salt (preservation) of the covenant of your God will not be missing from your grain offering. You shall offer salt with all your offerings. [Mark 9:49, 50]

¹⁴If you bring a grain offering of early ripened things to the LORD, you shall bring fresh heads of grain roasted in the fire, crushed grain of new growth, for the grain offering of your early ripened things.

¹⁵You shall put oil on it and lay incense on it; it is a grain offering.

¹⁶‘The priest shall offer up in smoke its memorial portion, part of the crushed grain and part of its oil with all its incense; it is an offering by fire to the LORD.

3 ‘IF A man’s offering is a sacrifice of peace offerings, if he offers an animal from the herd, whether male or female, he shall offer it without blemish before the LORD.

²‘He shall lay his hand on the head of his offering [transferring symbolically his guilt to the sacrifice] and kill it at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting; and Aaron’s sons the priests shall sprinkle the blood around on the altar.

³‘From the sacrifice of the peace offerings, an offering by fire to the LORD, he shall present the fat that covers the entrails, and all the fat which is on the entrails, ⁴and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the lobe of the liver which he shall remove with the kidneys.

⁵‘Aaron’s sons shall offer it up in smoke on the altar [placing it] on the burnt offering which is on the wood that is on the fire. It is an offering by fire, a sweet *and* soothing aroma to the LORD.

⁶‘If his peace offering to the LORD is an animal from the flock, male or female, he shall offer the animal without blemish.

⁷‘If he offers a lamb as his offering, then he shall present it before the LORD,

⁸and he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering and kill it before the Tent of Meeting, and Aaron’s sons shall sprinkle its blood around on the altar.

⁹From the sacrifice of peace offerings he shall bring as an offering by fire to the LORD, its fat, the entire fat tail which he shall remove close to the backbone, and the fat that covers the entrails, and all the fat which is on the entrails, ¹⁰and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the lobe of the liver, which he shall remove with the kidneys.

¹¹The priest shall offer it up in smoke on the altar as food, an offering by fire to the LORD.

¹²If his offering is a goat, he shall present it before the LORD,

¹³and he shall lay his hand on its head [transferring symbolically his guilt to the sacrifice], and kill it before the Tent of Meeting; and the sons of Aaron shall sprinkle its blood around on the altar.

¹⁴Then he shall present from it as his offering, an offering by fire to the LORD: the fat that covers the entrails, and all the fat that is on the entrails,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Choosing Peace

Leviticus 3 is a chapter about peace offerings. Making sacrifices as peace offerings is no longer necessary for God's people, but peace is still something we want and need, especially in situations that are difficult, frustrating, or frightening. Most of the time, finding peace is a mental battle. The main reason we lose our peace has more to do with how we think about the things that happen to us than with the circumstances themselves. Whether a situation concerns our finances, family, health, or something else, we become anxious and upset because we keep thinking about how bad it is, wondering what we will do about it, and worrying about what will happen to us. When we face difficulties, one of the first truths we should remember is that Jesus is our peace (see Eph. 2:14). Once we have received Him as our Savior, we have peace itself living inside us, and we can choose to think about and live in that peace every day.

¹⁵and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the lobe of the liver which he shall remove with the kidneys.

¹⁶“The priest shall offer them up in smoke on the altar as food. It is an offering by fire, a sweet *and* soothing aroma; all the fat is the LORD’S.

¹⁷“It is a permanent statute for your generations wherever you may be, that you shall not eat any fat or any blood.”

4 THEN THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Speak to the children of Israel, ‘If a person sins unintentionally in any of the things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, and commits any of them— ³if the anointed priest sins, bringing guilt on the people, then he shall offer to the LORD a young bull without blemish as a sin offering for the sin he has committed. [Heb 7:27, 28]

⁴‘He shall bring the bull to the doorway of the Tent of Meeting before the LORD, and shall lay his hand on the bull’s head [transferring symbolically his guilt to the sacrifice] and kill the bull before the LORD.

⁵‘Then the anointed priest is to take some of the bull’s blood and bring it into the Tent of Meeting;

⁶and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle some of it seven times before the LORD in front of the veil (curtain) of the sanctuary.

⁷‘The priest shall also put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense which is before the LORD in the Tent of Meeting. All the *rest of the* blood of the bull he shall pour out at the base of the altar of the burnt offering which is at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting.

⁸‘He shall remove all the fat from the bull of the sin offering—the fat that covers the entrails, and all the fat which is on the entrails,

⁹and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the lobe of the liver, which he shall remove with the kidneys

¹⁰(just as these are removed from the ox of the sacrifice of

peace offerings), and the priest is to offer them up in smoke on the altar of burnt offering.

¹¹‘But the hide of the bull and all its meat, with its head, its legs, its entrails, and its refuse,

¹²that is, *all the rest of* the bull, he is to bring outside the camp to a clean place where the ashes are poured out, and burn it on a fire of wood. Where the ashes are poured out it shall be burned. [Heb 13:11–13]

¹³‘Now if the whole congregation of Israel sins unintentionally, and the matter escapes the notice of the assembly, and they have done any one of the things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, and they become guilty; ¹⁴when the sin which they have committed becomes known, then the congregation shall offer a young bull of the herd as a sin offering and bring it before the Tent of Meeting.

¹⁵‘Then the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the LORD [to transfer symbolically the congregation’s guilt to the sacrifice], and they shall kill the bull before the LORD.

¹⁶‘The anointed priest is to bring some of the bull’s blood to the Tent of Meeting,

¹⁷and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle it seven times before the LORD, in front of the veil [which screens off the Holy of Holies and the ark of the covenant].

¹⁸‘He shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar [of incense] which is before the LORD in the Tent of Meeting; and he shall pour out all *the rest of* the blood at the base of the altar of burnt offering which is at the doorway of the Tent of

Meeting.

¹⁹‘He shall remove all its fat from the bull and offer it up in smoke on the altar.

²⁰‘He shall also do with the bull just as he did with the bull of the sin offering; that is what he shall do with this. So the priest shall make atonement for [the sin of] the people, and they will be forgiven.

²¹‘Then the priest is to bring the bull outside the camp and burn it as he burned the first bull; it is the sin offering for the congregation.

²²‘When a ruler *or* leader sins and unintentionally does any one of the things the LORD his God has commanded not to be done, and he becomes guilty, ²³if his sin which he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring a goat, a male without blemish as his offering.

²⁴‘He shall lay his hand on the head of the male goat [transferring symbolically his guilt to the sacrifice], and kill it in the place where they kill the burnt offering before the LORD; it is a sin offering.

²⁵‘Then the priest is to take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering; and *the rest of* its blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering.

²⁶‘And he shall offer all its fat up in smoke on the altar like the fat from the sacrifice of peace offerings; so the priest shall make atonement for him in regard to his sin, and he will be forgiven.

²⁷‘If anyone of the common people sins unintentionally by doing any of the things the LORD has commanded not to be

done, and becomes guilty,²⁸ if his sin which he has committed is made known to him, then he shall bring a goat, a female without blemish as his offering for the sin which he has committed.

²⁹‘He shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering [transferring symbolically his guilt to the sacrifice], and kill it at the place of the burnt offering.

³⁰‘The priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and shall pour out all *the rest of* its blood at the base of the altar.

³¹‘Then he shall remove all its fat, just as the fat was removed from the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall offer it up in smoke on the altar as a sweet *and* soothing aroma to the LORD. In this way the priest shall make atonement for him, and he will be forgiven.

³²‘If he brings a lamb as his offering for a sin offering, he shall bring a female without blemish.

³³‘He shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering [transferring symbolically his guilt to the sacrifice], and kill it as a sin offering in the place where they kill the burnt offering.

³⁴‘The priest is to take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and all *the rest of* the blood of the lamb he shall pour out at the base of the altar.

³⁵‘Then he shall remove all its fat, just as the fat of the lamb is removed from the sacrifice of the peace offerings, and the priest shall offer it up in smoke on the altar, on the offerings by fire to the LORD. In this way the priest shall make atonement for him in regard to the sin which he has committed, and he will be

forgiven. [Heb 9:13, 14]

5 ‘IF ANYONE sins after he hears a public adjuration (solemn command to testify) when he is a witness, whether he has seen or [otherwise] known [something]—if he fails to report it, then he will bear his guilt *and* be held responsible.

²‘Or if someone touches any [ceremonially] unclean thing—whether the carcass of an unclean wild animal or the carcass of an unclean domestic animal or the carcass of unclean creeping things—even if he is unaware of it, he has become unclean, and he will be guilty.

³‘Or if he touches human uncleanness—whatever kind it may be—and he becomes unclean, but he is unaware of it, when he recognizes it, he will be guilty.

⁴‘Or if anyone swears [an oath] thoughtlessly *or* impulsively aloud that he will do either evil or good, in whatever manner a person may speak thoughtlessly *or* impulsively with an oath, but he is unaware of it, when he recognizes it, he will be guilty in one of these. [Mark 6:23]

⁵‘So it shall be when a person is guilty in one of these, that he shall confess the sin he has committed.

⁶‘He shall bring his guilt offering to the LORD for the sin which he has committed, a female from the flock, a lamb or a goat as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement on his behalf for his sin.

⁷‘But if he cannot afford a lamb, then he shall bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons as his guilt offering for his sin to the LORD, one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt

offering.

⁸‘He shall bring them to the priest, who shall offer first the one for the sin offering, and shall nip its head at the front of its neck, but shall not sever it [completely].

⁹‘He shall also sprinkle some of the blood of the sin offering on the side of the altar, and the rest of the blood shall be drained out at the base of the altar; it is a sin offering.

¹⁰‘The second [bird] he shall prepare as a burnt offering, according to the ordinance. So the priest shall make atonement on his behalf for the sin which he has committed, and it will be forgiven him.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Choosing Your Thoughts and Words

Leviticus 5:4 teaches the people of Israel that if they speak an oath thoughtlessly or impulsively, they need to deal with it immediately when they become aware of their mistake. Similarly, we know from 2 Corinthians 10:5 that when we become aware of wrong thoughts in our mind, we can choose immediately not to think them. This will need to be done daily.

The opportunity to choose what we think and say is a privilege rather than a duty. Thank God that He has given us the ability to think for ourselves and not merely be stuck with whatever comes into our minds. We can learn to think according to God's Word. The more our thoughts are based on His Word, the more our words will also agree with His Word.

¹¹‘But if he cannot afford to bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons, then he shall bring as his offering for his sin the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour as a sin offering; he shall not put [olive] oil or incense on it, for it is a sin offering.

¹²‘He shall bring it to the priest, who shall take a handful of it as a memorial portion and offer it up in smoke on the altar, with the offerings by fire to the LORD; it is a sin offering.

¹³‘In this way the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin which he has committed in one of these things, and it will be forgiven him; then *the rest* shall be for the priest, like the

grain offering.”

¹⁴Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

¹⁵“If a person commits a breach of faith and sins unintentionally against the holy things of the LORD, then he shall bring his guilt offering to the LORD, a ram without blemish from the flock, valued by you in shekels of silver, that is, the shekel of the sanctuary, as a guilt offering.

¹⁶“He shall make restitution for the sin which he has committed against the holy thing, and shall add a fifth [of the ram’s value] to it, and give it to the priest. The priest shall then make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering, and he shall be forgiven.

¹⁷“Now if anyone sins and does any of the things which the LORD has forbidden, though he was not aware of it, still he is guilty and shall bear his punishment. [Luke 12:48]

¹⁸“He is then to bring to the priest a ram without blemish from the flock, according to your valuation, for a guilt offering. In this way the priest shall make atonement for him regarding the error which he committed unintentionally and did not know it, and he shall be forgiven.

¹⁹“It is a guilt offering; he was certainly guilty before the LORD.”

6 THEN THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“When anyone sins and acts unfaithfully against the LORD by deceiving his neighbor (companion, associate) in regard to a deposit or a security entrusted *to him*, or through robbery, or if he has extorted from his neighbor, ³or has found what was lost and

lied about it and sworn falsely, so that he sins in regard to any one of the things a man may do—⁴then if he has sinned and is guilty, he shall restore what he took by robbery, or what he got by extortion, or the deposit which was entrusted to him, or the lost thing which he found,⁵ or anything about which he has sworn falsely; he shall not only restore it in full, but shall add to it one-fifth more. He shall give it to the one to whom it belongs on the day of his guilt offering.

⁶“Then he shall bring to the priest his guilt offering to the LORD, a ram without blemish from the flock, as valued by you, as a guilt offering.

⁷“The priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD, and he will be forgiven for any one of the things which he may have done to incur guilt.”

⁸Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

⁹“Command Aaron and his sons, saying, ‘This is the law of the burnt offering: the burnt offering *shall remain* on the hearth *that is* on the altar all night until morning and the fire is to be kept burning on the altar.

¹⁰“The priest is to put on his linen robe, with his linen undergarments next to his body. Then he shall take up the ashes of the burnt offering which the fire has consumed on the altar and put them beside the altar.

¹¹“Then he shall take off his garments and put on something else, and take the ashes outside the camp to a (ceremonially) clean place.

¹²“The fire on the altar shall be kept burning; it shall not [be allowed to] go out. The priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and he shall arrange the burnt offering on it and offer

the fat portions of the peace offerings up in smoke on it.

¹³“The fire shall be burning continually on the altar; it shall not [be allowed to] go out.

¹⁴“Now this is the law of the grain offering: the sons of Aaron shall present it before the LORD in front of the altar.

¹⁵“One of them shall take up from it a handful of the fine flour of the grain offering with its oil and all the incense that is on the grain offering, and he shall offer it up in smoke on the altar, a sweet *and* soothing aroma, as the memorial offering to the LORD.

¹⁶“What is left of it Aaron and his sons are to eat. It shall be eaten as unleavened bread in a holy place; they are to eat it in the courtyard of the Tent of Meeting. [1 Cor 9:13, 14]

¹⁷“It shall not be baked with leaven [which represents corruption or sin]. I have given it as their share of My offerings by fire; it is most holy, like the sin offering and the guilt offering.

¹⁸“Every male among the sons of Aaron may eat it [as his share]; it is a permanent ordinance throughout your generations, from offerings by fire to the LORD. Whatever touches them will become consecrated (ceremonially clean).”

¹⁹Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

²⁰“This is the offering which Aaron and his sons are to present to the LORD on the day when he is anointed: the tenth of an ephah of fine flour as a regular grain offering, half of it in the morning and half of it in the evening.

²¹“It shall be prepared with oil on a griddle. When it is well stirred, you shall bring it. You shall present the grain offering in baked pieces as a sweet *and* soothing aroma to the LORD.

²²“The priest from among the sons of Aaron who is anointed in his place shall offer it. By a permanent statute it shall be entirely offered up in smoke to the LORD.

²³“So every grain offering of the priest shall be burned entirely. It shall not be eaten.”

²⁴Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

²⁵“Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, ‘This is the law of the sin offering: the sin offering shall be killed before the LORD in the [same] place where the burnt offering is killed; it is most holy.

²⁶‘The priest who offers it for sin shall eat it. It shall be eaten in a holy place, in the courtyard of the Tent of Meeting.

²⁷‘Whatever touches its meat will become consecrated (ceremonially clean). When any of its blood splashes on a garment, you shall wash what was splashed on in a holy place.

²⁸‘Also the earthenware vessel in which it was boiled shall be broken; and if it was boiled in a bronze vessel, then that vessel shall be scoured and rinsed in water.

²⁹‘Every male among the priests may eat this offering; it is most holy.

³⁰‘But no sin offering from which any of the blood is brought into the Tent of Meeting to make atonement in the Holy Place shall be eaten; it shall be [completely] burned in the fire. [Heb 13:11–13]

7 ‘THIS IS the law of the guilt offering; it is most holy.

²‘In the place where they kill the burnt offering they are to

kill the guilt offering, and he shall sprinkle its blood around on the altar.

³‘Then he shall offer all its fat, the fat tail and the fat that covers the entrails,

⁴and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the lobe of the liver, which he shall remove with the kidneys.

⁵‘The priest shall offer them up in smoke on the altar as an offering by fire to the LORD; it is a guilt offering.

⁶‘Every male among the priests may eat it; it shall be eaten in a holy place; it is most holy.

⁷‘The guilt offering is like the sin offering, there is one law for [both of] them: the priest who makes atonement with it shall have it for himself.

⁸‘The priest who presents any man’s burnt offering shall have for himself the hide of the burnt offering which he has presented.

⁹‘Likewise, every grain offering that is baked in the oven and everything that is prepared in a pan or on a griddle shall belong to the priest who presents it.

¹⁰‘Every grain offering, mixed with [olive] oil or dry, all the sons of Aaron may have, one as well as another.

¹¹‘Now this is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings which shall be presented to the LORD:

¹²‘If one offers it as a *sacrificial meal* of thanksgiving, then along with the sacrifice of thanksgiving he shall offer unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil, and cakes of fine flour mixed with oil.

¹³‘With the sacrifice of his peace offerings for

thanksgiving, he shall present his offering with cakes of leavened bread.

¹⁴‘Of this he shall present one [cake] from each offering as a contribution to the LORD; it shall belong to the priest who sprinkles the blood of the peace offerings.

¹⁵‘The meat of the sacrifice of thanksgiving presented as a peace offering shall be eaten on the day that it is offered; none of it shall be left until morning.

¹⁶‘But if the sacrifice of his offering is a vow or a freewill offering, it shall be eaten on the day that he offers his sacrifice, and on the next day that which remains of it may be eaten;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Thanksgiving

Leviticus 7:13 mentions “the sacrifice of thanksgiving.” The Bible encourages us to always be thankful (see 1 Thess. 5:18). That’s easy when God answers prayers and delivers us from problems, but it isn’t always easy when things go wrong. So how can we remain thankful in the midst of suffering?

We can remember times when God has delivered us from problems and trust Him to do the same again. We can also rejoice over things that are not wrong in our lives. We are all very blessed, and it is easy to be thankful when we remember our blessings.

As a part of the Old Testament sacrificial system, the people brought a “sacrifice of thanksgiving.” We don’t have to wait to feel thankful in order to give thanks. We can do it by faith and you will not only see God’s deliverance, but you will be happier while you wait.

¹⁷but what is left over from the meat of the sacrifice on the third day shall be [completely] burned in the fire.

¹⁸‘If any of the meat of the sacrifice of his peace offerings is ever eaten on the third day, then it will not be accepted, and the one who brought it will not be credited with it. It shall be an abhorred (offensive) thing; the one who eats it shall bear his own guilt.

¹⁹‘The meat that comes in contact with anything that is unclean shall not be eaten; it shall be burned in the fire. As for

other meat, everyone who is [ceremonially] clean may eat it.

²⁰“But the one who eats meat from the sacrifice of peace offerings which belong to the LORD, in his uncleanness, that person shall be cut off from his people [excluding him from the atonement made for them].

²¹“When anyone touches any unclean thing—human uncleanness, or an unclean animal, or any unclean detestable thing—and then eats the meat of the sacrifice of the LORD’s peace offerings, that person shall be cut off from his people [excluding him from the atonement made for them].”

²²Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

²³“Speak to the children of Israel, saying, ‘You shall not eat any fat from an ox, a sheep, or a goat.

²⁴‘The fat of an animal which dies [of natural causes] and the fat of one which is torn [to pieces by a predator] may be put to any other use, but under no circumstances are you to eat it.

²⁵‘For whoever eats the fat of the animal from which an offering by fire is presented to the LORD, that person who eats shall be cut off from his people [excluding him from the atonement made for them].

²⁶‘Moreover, you are not to eat any blood [of any kind], whether of bird or animal, in any of your dwelling places.

²⁷‘Whoever eats any blood, that person shall be cut off from his people.”

²⁸Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

²⁹“Speak to the children of Israel, saying, ‘He who offers the sacrifice of his peace offerings to the LORD shall bring his

offering to the LORD from the sacrifice of his peace offerings.

³⁰“With his own hands he is to bring offerings by fire to the LORD; he shall bring the fat with the breast, so that the breast may be presented as a wave offering before the LORD.

³¹“The priest shall offer up the fat in smoke on the altar, but the breast shall be for Aaron and his sons.

³²“You shall give the right thigh to the priest as a contribution from the sacrifices of your peace offerings.

³³“The son of Aaron who offers the blood of the peace offerings and the fat shall have the right thigh as his portion.

³⁴“For I have taken the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering from the Israelites, from the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and I have given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons as their perpetual portion from the Israelites.

³⁵“This is the *consecrated* portion from the offerings by fire to the LORD that was designated for Aaron and his sons on the day he presented them to serve as priests to the LORD.

³⁶“The LORD commanded this to be given to the priests by the Israelites on the day that He anointed them. It is *their* portion perpetually throughout their generations.”

³⁷This is the law of the burnt offering, the grain offering, the sin offering, the guilt offering, the consecration (ordination) offering, and the sacrifice of peace offerings, ³⁸which the LORD commanded Moses at Mount Sinai on the day He commanded the Israelites to present their offerings to the LORD, in the Wilderness of Sinai.

8 THEN THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments [which are symbols of their office], and the anointing oil, and the bull for the sin offering, and the two rams, and the basket of unleavened bread; ³and assemble the entire congregation at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting.”

⁴Moses did as the LORD commanded him, and the congregation was assembled at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting.

⁵Moses said to the congregation, “This is what the LORD has commanded us to do.”

⁶Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons and washed them with water.

⁷He put the undertunic on Aaron, tied the sash around him, clothed him in the robe, and put the ephod (an upper vestment) on him. He tied the [skillfully woven] band of the ephod around him, with which he secured it to Aaron.

POWERPOINT

In Leviticus 8:3, God tells Moses to “assemble the entire congregation at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting.” This is a good reminder of the importance of surrounding ourselves with friends who know and live by God’s Word. A good way to stay mentally and spiritually healthy is to gather often with people who will encourage you in your faith and who can offer biblical perspectives on the situations you face in life.



⁸Moses then put the breastpiece on Aaron, and he put in the breastpiece the Urim and the Thummim [the sacred articles the high priest used when seeking God’s will concerning the nation].

⁹He also put the turban on Aaron’s head, and on it, in the

front, Moses placed the golden plate, the holy crown, just as the LORD had commanded him.

¹⁰Then Moses took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it, and consecrated them.

¹¹He sprinkled some of the oil on the altar seven times and anointed the altar and all its utensils, and the basin and its stand, to consecrate them.

¹²Then he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him, to consecrate him.

¹³Next Moses brought Aaron's sons forward, put undertunics on them, belted them with sashes, and bound caps on them, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

¹⁴Then he brought the bull for the sin offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the bull.

¹⁵Next Moses killed it and took the blood and with his finger put *some of it* around on the horns of the altar and purified it [from sin]. Then he poured out the *rest of the* blood at the base of the altar and consecrated it, to make atonement for it.

¹⁶He took all the fat that was on the entrails, and the lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys with their fat, and Moses offered them up in smoke on the altar.

¹⁷But the bull (the sin offering) and its hide, its meat, and its refuse he burned in the fire outside the camp, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

¹⁸He brought the ram for the burnt offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram.

¹⁹Moses killed it and sprinkled the blood around on the altar.

²⁰When he had cut the ram into pieces, Moses offered up the head, the pieces, and the fat in smoke.

²¹After he had washed the entrails and the legs in water, Moses offered up the whole ram in smoke on the altar. It was a burnt offering for a sweet *and* soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

²²Then he brought the second ram, the ram of consecration (ordination), and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram.

²³Moses killed it and took some of its blood and put it on the lobe of Aaron's right ear, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot.

²⁴He also brought Aaron's sons forward and put some of the blood on the lobes of their right ears, and the thumbs of their right hands, and the big toes of their right feet; and Moses sprinkled the *rest of the* blood around on the altar.

²⁵He took the fat, the fat tail, all the fat that was on the entrails, the lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys and their fat, and the right thigh;

²⁶and from the basket of unleavened bread that was before the LORD, he took one unleavened cake, a cake of oiled bread, and one wafer and put them on the fat and on the right thigh;

²⁷and he put all *these things* in Aaron's hands and his sons' hands and presented them as a wave offering before the LORD.

²⁸Then Moses took these things from their hands and offered them up in smoke on the altar with the burnt offering. They were a consecration (ordination) offering for a sweet *and* soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the LORD.

²⁹Moses also took the breast and presented it as a wave

offering before the LORD; it was Moses' portion of the ram of consecration (ordination), just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

³⁰So Moses took some of the anointing oil and some of the blood which was on the altar and sprinkled it on Aaron and his garments, and also on his sons and their garments with him; so Moses consecrated Aaron and his garments, and his sons and his sons' garments with him.

³¹Then Moses said to Aaron and to his sons, "Boil the meat at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting and eat it there together with the bread that is in the basket of the consecration (ordination) offering, just as I commanded, saying, 'Aaron and his sons shall eat it.'

³²"And what remains of the meat and of the bread you shall burn in the fire.

³³"You shall not go outside the doorway of the Tent of Meeting for seven days, until the days of your consecration (ordination) are ended; for it will take seven days to consecrate you.

³⁴"As has been done this day, so the LORD has commanded to do for your atonement.

³⁵"You shall remain day and night for seven days at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting, doing what the Lord has required you to do, so that you will not die; for so I (Moses) have been commanded."

³⁶So Aaron and his sons did all the things which the LORD had commanded through Moses.

9 AND IT happened on the eighth day that Moses called Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel; ²and he said to Aaron, “Take a bull calf as a sin offering and a ram as a burnt offering, [each] without blemish, and offer *both* before the LORD. [Heb 10:10–12]

³“Then say to the Israelites, ‘Take a male goat as a sin offering, and a calf and a lamb, both one year old, without blemish, as a burnt offering,

⁴and a bull and a ram as peace offerings to sacrifice before the LORD, and a grain offering mixed with [olive] oil, for today the LORD will appear to you.’”

⁵So they took what Moses had commanded to the front of the Tent of Meeting, and all the congregation approached and stood before the LORD.

⁶Moses said, “This is the thing which the LORD has commanded you to do, so that the glory of the LORD may appear to you.”

⁷Moses said to Aaron, “Approach the altar and present your sin offering and your burnt offering and make atonement for yourself and for the people; and present the offering of the people and make atonement for them, just as the LORD has commanded.” [Heb 5:1–5; 7:27]

⁸So Aaron approached the altar and killed the calf as the sin offering, which was *designated* for himself.

⁹The sons of Aaron presented the blood to him; he dipped his finger in the blood and put *some of it* on the horns of the altar, and poured out the *rest of the* blood at the altar’s base; ¹⁰but the fat, the kidneys, and the lobe of the liver from the sin

offering he offered up in smoke on the altar, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

¹¹And Aaron burned the meat and the hide in the fire outside the camp.

¹²Then he killed the burnt offering; and Aaron's sons handed the blood to him and he sprinkled it around on the altar.

¹³They brought the burnt offering to him piece by piece, with the head, and Aaron offered them up in smoke on the altar.

¹⁴He also washed the entrails and the legs, and offered them up in smoke with the burnt offering on the altar.

¹⁵Then Aaron presented the people's offering. He took the goat for the sin offering of the people, and killed it and offered it for sin, as *he did* the first. [Heb 2:16, 17]

¹⁶He also presented the burnt offering and offered it according to the ordinance.

¹⁷Next Aaron presented the grain offering and took a handful of it and offered it up in smoke on the altar in addition to the burnt offering of the morning.

¹⁸He also killed the bull and the ram, the sacrifice of peace offerings which was for the people; and Aaron's sons handed the blood to him and he sprinkled it around on the altar, ¹⁹As for the portions of fat from the bull and from the ram—the fat tail, and the fat covering the internal organs, and the kidneys, and the lobe of the liver—²⁰they now put the portions of fat on the breasts; and Aaron offered the fat up in smoke on the altar.

²¹But the breasts and the right thigh Aaron presented as a wave offering before the LORD, just as Moses had commanded.

²²Then Aaron lifted his hands toward the people and blessed them, and came down [from the altar of burnt offering] after presenting the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offerings.

²³Moses and Aaron went into the Tent of Meeting, and when they came out they blessed the people, and the glory *and* brilliance of the LORD [the Shekinah cloud] appeared to all the people [as promised]. [Lev 9:6]

²⁴Then fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the portions of fat on the altar; and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell face downward [in awe and worship].

10 NOW NADAB and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective [ceremonial] censers, put fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange (unauthorized, unacceptable) fire before the LORD, [an act] which He had not commanded them to do.

²And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

³Then Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the LORD said:

‘I will be treated as holy by those who approach Me,
And before all the people I will be honored.’”

So Aaron, therefore, said nothing.

⁴Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel who was Aaron’s uncle, and said to them, “Come here, carry your relatives away from the front of the sanctuary and *take*

them outside the camp.”

⁵So they came forward and carried them, still in their undertunics, outside the camp, as Moses had said.

⁶Then Moses said to Aaron and to his [younger] sons Eleazar and Ithamar, “Do not uncover your heads *nor* let your hair hang loose nor tear your clothes [as expressions of mourning], so that you will not die [also] and so that He will not express His wrath *and* anger toward all the congregation. But your relatives, the whole house of Israel, may mourn the burning which the LORD has brought about.

⁷“You shall not even go out of the doorway of the Tent of Meeting, or you will die; for the LORD’s anointing oil is upon you.” So they did [everything] according to the word of Moses.

⁸Then the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying,

⁹“Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, neither you nor your sons with you, when you come into the Tent of Meeting, so that you will not die—it is a permanent statute throughout your generations—¹⁰and to make a distinction *and* recognize a difference between the holy (sacred) and the common (profane), and between the [ceremonially] unclean and the clean; [Ezek 44:23]

¹¹and *you are* to teach the Israelites all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them through Moses.”

¹²Then Moses said to Aaron, and to his surviving sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, “Take the grain offering that is left over from the offerings by fire to the LORD, and eat it unleavened beside the altar, for it is most holy.

¹³“You shall eat it in a holy place, because it is your portion

and your sons' portion, from the offerings by fire to the LORD;
for so I have been commanded.

POWERPOINT

Leviticus 10:10 is basically a verse about discernment. The

Holy Spirit is the One who helps us discern between what is good or bad and what is right or wrong. I encourage you to ask Him today to help you discern thoughts that are good and right and choose to think those kinds of thoughts.



¹⁴“But the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering you may eat in a clean place, you and your sons and daughters with you; for the breast and the thigh are your portion and your sons’ portion, given out of the sacrifices of the peace offerings of the Israelites.

¹⁵“They shall bring the thigh presented by lifting up and the breast presented by waving, along with the offerings by fire of the fat, to present as a wave offering before the LORD. This shall be yours and your sons’ with you, as your perpetual portion, just as the LORD has commanded.”

¹⁶But Moses diligently tried to find the goat [that had been offered] as the sin offering, and discovered that it had been burned up [as waste, not eaten]! So he was angry with Aaron's surviving sons Eleazar and Ithamar, saying, ¹⁷"Why did you not eat the sin offering in the holy place? For it is most holy; and God gave it to you to remove the guilt of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD.

¹⁸"Behold, its blood was not brought into the Holy Place; you certainly should have eaten the goat in the sanctuary, just as I commanded."

¹⁹Then Aaron said to Moses, "This very day they have [obediently] presented their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD, but [such terrible things] as these have happened to me [and to them]; if I [and my sons] had eaten a sin offering today would it have been acceptable *and* pleasing in the sight of the LORD?" [Hos 9:4]

²⁰When Moses heard that, he was satisfied.

11 THE LORD spoke again to Moses and Aaron, saying to them, ²"Speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'Among all the animals which are on the earth, these are the animals which you may eat. [Mark 7:15–19]

³'You may eat any animal that has a divided hoof [that is, a hoof split into two parts especially at its distal extremity] and chews the cud.

⁴'Nevertheless, you are not to eat these, among those which chew the cud or divide the hoof: the camel, because it chews the cud but does not divide the hoof; it is [ceremonially]

unclean to you.

⁵‘And the shaphan, because it chews the cud but does not divide the hoof; it is unclean to you.

⁶‘And the hare, because it chews the cud but does not divide the hoof; it is unclean to you.

⁷‘And the swine, because it divides the hoof and makes a split hoof, but does not chew the cud; it is unclean to you.

⁸‘You shall not eat their meat nor touch their carcasses; they are unclean to you.

⁹‘These you may eat, whatever is in the water: whatever has fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, these you may eat;

¹⁰but whatever does not have fins and scales in the seas and in the rivers, of all the teeming life in the waters, and of all the living creatures that are in the waters, they are [to be considered] detestable to you. [1 Cor 8:8–13]

¹¹‘They shall be hated things to you. You may not eat their meat; you shall detest their carcasses.

¹²‘Everything in the water that does not have fins and scales is detestable to you.

¹³‘These you shall detest among the birds; they are not to be eaten, for they are hated things: the eagle and the vulture and the buzzard,

¹⁴the kite, every kind of falcon,

¹⁵every kind of raven,

¹⁶the ostrich, the nighthawk, the sea gull, every species of hawk,

¹⁷the little owl and the cormorant and the great owl,

¹⁸the white owl, the pelican, the carrion vulture,

¹⁹the stork, all kinds of heron, the hoopoe, and the bat.

²⁰‘All winged insects that walk on all fours are detestable to you;

²¹yet of all winged insects that walk on all fours you may eat those which have legs above their feet with which to leap on the ground.

²²‘Of these you may eat: the whole species of migratory locust, of bald locust, of cricket, and of grasshopper. [Matt 3:4]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Jesus Makes You Blameless

When God told the people of Israel, “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (Lev. 11:45), they may have felt it was impossible to ever perform to His standards. The good news is that although God wants us to learn proper behavior, He accepts and loves us first.

Not only does God love us, but He chooses to view us as being right with Him, holy and blameless in His sight, set apart for Him in Christ (see Eph. 1:4). This is our inherited position with God because of faith in Jesus, who is our holy and blameless High Priest (see Heb. 7:26); it is not based on our own works of right or wrong, but entirely on faith. If you have ever thought God focuses on your sins or shortcomings, are you willing to change your mind and begin to believe the truth: Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross takes away your sin, makes you blameless before God, and declares you “not guilty”? When God looks at you, He sees you pure and without fault because you are in Christ.

²³But all other winged insects which are four footed are detestable to you.

²⁴By [contact with] these you will become unclean; whoever touches their carcasses becomes unclean until the evening (dusk),

²⁵and whoever picks up any of their carcasses shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening.

²⁶‘Concerning all the animals which divide the hoof, but do not have a split hoof, or which do not chew the cud, they are unclean to you; whoever touches them becomes unclean.

²⁷‘Also all *animals* that walk on their paws, among all *kinds of* animals that walk on four *legs*, are unclean to you; whoever touches their carcasses becomes unclean until the evening, ²⁸and the one who picks up their carcasses shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening; they are unclean to you.

²⁹‘These also are unclean to you among the swarming things that crawl around on the ground [and multiply profusely]: the mole, the mouse, and any kind of great lizard, ³⁰the gecko, the crocodile, the lizard, the sand reptile, and the chameleon.

³¹‘These [creatures] are unclean to you among all that swarm; whoever touches them when they are dead becomes unclean until evening.

³²‘Also anything on which one of them falls after dying becomes unclean, whether it is an article of wood or clothing, or a skin, or a sack—any article that is used—it must be put in water, and will be unclean until the evening; then it becomes clean.

³³‘As for any earthenware container into which any of these [crawling things] falls, whatever is in it becomes unclean, and you shall break the container.

³⁴‘Any of the food which may be eaten, but on which [unclean] water falls, shall become unclean, and any liquid that

may be drunk in every container shall become unclean.

³⁵‘Everything that part of their carcass falls on becomes unclean; an oven, or a small stove shall be smashed; they are unclean, and shall be unclean to you.

³⁶‘Nevertheless a spring or a cistern (reservoir) collecting water shall be clean; but whoever touches one of these carcasses shall be unclean.

³⁷‘If a part of their carcass falls on any seed for sowing which is to be sown, it is clean;

³⁸but if water is put on the seed and a part of their carcass falls on it, it is unclean to you.

³⁹‘If one of the animals that you may eat dies [of natural causes], whoever touches its carcass becomes unclean until the evening.

⁴⁰‘And whoever eats some of its meat shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until evening; also whoever picks up its carcass shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the evening.

⁴¹‘Now everything that swarms on the ground is detestable; it is not to be eaten.

⁴²‘Whatever crawls on its belly, and whatever walks on all fours, and whatever has many feet among all things that swarm on the ground, you shall not eat; for they are detestable.

⁴³‘Do not make yourselves loathsome (impure, repulsive) by [eating] any swarming thing; you shall not make yourselves unclean by them so as to defile yourselves.

⁴⁴‘For I am the LORD your God; so consecrate yourselves and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm *or* crawl

on the ground. [1 Thess 4:7, 8]

⁴⁵“For I am the LORD who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God; therefore you shall be holy, for I am holy.” [1 Pet 1:14–16]

⁴⁶This is the law regarding the animal and the bird and every living thing that moves in the waters and everything that swarms on the earth,

⁴⁷to make a distinction between the [ceremonially] unclean and the [ceremonially] clean, and between the animal that may be eaten and the animal that may not be eaten.

12 THEN THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Speak to the children of Israel, saying,

“If a woman conceives and gives birth to a male child, she shall be [ceremonially] unclean for seven days, unclean as during her monthly period.

³“On the eighth day the flesh of the male child’s foreskin shall be circumcised.

⁴“Then she shall remain [intimately separated] thirty-three days to be purified from the blood; she shall not touch any consecrated thing nor enter the [courtyard of the] sanctuary until the days of her purification are over.

⁵“But if she gives birth to a female child, then she shall be unclean for two weeks, as during her monthly period, and she shall remain [intimately separated] sixty-six days to be purified from the blood.

⁶“When the days of her purification are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the

doorway of the Tent of Meeting a one year old lamb as a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a turtledove as a sin offering;
7 and he shall offer it before the LORD and make atonement for her, and she shall be cleansed from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who gives birth to a child, whether a male or a female child.

8 “If she cannot afford a lamb then she shall take two turtledoves or young pigeons, one as a burnt offering, the other as a sin offering; the priest shall make atonement for her, and she will be clean.” [Luke 2:22, 24]

13 THEN THE LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying,

2 “When a man has a swelling on the skin of his body, a scab, or a bright spot, and it becomes the infection of leprosy on the skin of his body, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest, or to one of his sons the priests.

3 “The priest shall look at the diseased spot on the skin of his body, and if the hair in the infection has turned white and the infection appears deeper than the skin of his body, it is an infection of leprosy; when the priest has looked at him, he shall pronounce him [ceremonially] unclean.

4 “If the bright spot is white on the skin of his body and does not appear to be deeper than the skin, and the hair on it has not turned white, the priest shall isolate *the person who has* the infection for seven days.

5 “The priest shall examine it on the seventh day, and if in his estimation the infection has not changed and has not spread on the skin, then the priest shall isolate him for seven

more days.

⁶“The priest shall examine him again on the seventh day, and if the infection has a more normal color and the spot has not spread on the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is *only* a scab; and he shall wash his clothes and be clean.

⁷“But if the scab spreads farther on the skin after he has shown himself to the priest for his [ceremonial] cleansing, he shall show himself to the priest again.

⁸“The priest shall look, and if the scab has spread on the skin, then he shall pronounce him unclean; it is leprosy.

⁹“When a leprous infection is on a person, he shall be brought to the priest.

¹⁰“The priest shall examine him, and if there is a white swelling on the skin and it has turned the hair white and there is new raw flesh in the swelling, ¹¹it is a chronic leprosy on the skin of his body, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean; he shall not isolate him because he is [clearly] unclean.

¹²“But if the [suspected] leprosy breaks out farther on the skin, and it covers all of the skin of the *one who has the* outbreak—from his head to his foot—wherever the priest looks, ¹³the priest shall examine him. If the [suspected] leprosy has covered his entire body, he shall pronounce him clean of the disease; it has all turned white, and he is clean.

¹⁴“But whenever raw flesh appears on him, he shall be unclean.

¹⁵“The priest shall examine the raw flesh, and he shall pronounce him unclean; the raw flesh is unclean, it is leprosy.

¹⁶“But if the raw flesh turns again and is changed to white, then he shall come to the priest,

¹⁷and the priest shall examine him, and if the diseased part is changed to white, then the priest shall pronounce *him who had* the disease to be clean; he is clean.

¹⁸“And when there is on the skin of the body [the scar of] a boil that is healed,

¹⁹and in the place of the boil there is a white swelling or a bright spot, reddish white, then it shall be shown to the priest;

²⁰and the priest shall look, and if it looks deeper than the skin and the hair on it has turned white, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is the disease of leprosy; it has broken out in the boil.

²¹“But if the priest examines it and finds no white hair in it and it is not deeper than the skin and is dull in color, then the priest shall isolate him for seven days.

²²“If it spreads farther on the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is a disease.

²³“But if the bright spot remains where it is and does not spread, it is the scar of the boil, and the priest shall pronounce him clean.

²⁴“Or if the body has on its skin a burn from fire and the new flesh of the burn becomes a bright spot, reddish white or white,

²⁵then the priest shall examine it, and if the hair in the bright spot has turned white, and it appears deeper than the skin, then leprosy has broken out in the burn. So the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is the disease of leprosy.

²⁶“But if the priest examines it and there is no white hair in the bright spot and it is not deeper than [the rest of] the skin but is dull in color, then the priest shall isolate him for seven

days.

²⁷“And the priest shall examine him on the seventh day; if it is spreading farther on the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is leprosy.

²⁸“But if the bright spot remains in its place and has not spread in the skin, but is dull in color, it is a swelling from the burn, and the priest shall pronounce him clean; for it is the scar of the burn.

²⁹“When a man or woman has a disease on the head or in the beard (face),

³⁰the priest shall examine the diseased place; if it appears to be deeper than the skin, with yellow, thin hair in it, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is a scale, it is leprosy of the head or beard.

³¹“But if the priest examines the spot infected by the scale, and it does not appear deeper than the skin and there is no black hair in it, the priest shall isolate the *person with the scaly* infection for seven days.

³²“On the seventh day the priest shall examine the diseased spot; if the scale has not spread and has no yellow hair in it, and the scale does not look deeper than the skin,
³³then he shall shave himself, but he shall not shave the scale; and the priest shall isolate the *person with the scale* for seven more days.

³⁴“Then on the seventh day the priest shall look at the scale; if the scale has not spread on the skin and appears to be no deeper than the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean; he shall wash his clothes and be clean.

³⁵“But if the scale spreads farther on the skin after his

cleansing,

³⁶then the priest shall examine him, and if the scale has spread on the skin, the priest need not look for the yellowish hair; he is unclean.

³⁷“If, in the priest’s estimation, the scale has remained [without spreading], and black hair has grown in it, the scale is healed; he is clean, and the priest shall pronounce him clean.

³⁸“When a man or a woman has bright spots on the skin of the body, *even* white bright spots,

³⁹then the priest shall look, and if the bright spots on the skin of their bodies is a dull white, it is [only] a rash that has broken out on the skin; he is clean.

⁴⁰“If a man loses the hair on his head, he is bald, but he is clean.

⁴¹“And if he loses the hair on front of his head, he is bald on the forehead, but he is clean.

⁴²“But if there is a reddish-white infection on the bald head or forehead, it is leprosy breaking out on his bald head or forehead.

⁴³“Then the priest shall examine him, and if the diseased swelling is reddish-white on his bald head or forehead like the appearance of leprosy on the skin of the body, ⁴⁴he is a leprous man; he is unclean; the priest shall most certainly pronounce him unclean; his disease is on his head.

⁴⁵“As for the leper who has the infection, his clothes shall be torn, and the hair of his head shall be uncovered (disheveled), and he shall cover his mustache and call out, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’

⁴⁶“He shall remain [ceremonially] unclean as long as the

disease is on him; he is unclean. He shall live alone; he shall live outside the camp.

⁴⁷“When a garment has a mark of leprosy in it, whether it is a wool garment or a linen garment, [Jude 23; Rev 3:4]

⁴⁸whether in woven or knitted material or in the warp (lengthwise strands) or woof (crosswise strands) of linen or of wool, or in a skin or on anything made of leather, ⁴⁹if the mark is greenish or reddish in the garment or in the leather or in the warp or woof or in any article made of leather, it is an infestation of leprosy and shall be shown to the priest.

⁵⁰“The priest shall examine the mark and shall quarantine the article with the mark for seven days.

⁵¹“He shall examine the mark on the seventh day; if it has spread in the garment, whether in the warp or the woof, or in the leather, whatever the leather’s purpose, the mark is a malignant leprosy; it is unclean.

⁵²“So he shall burn the garment, whether the warp or woof, in wool or linen, or on anything made of leather in which the mark occurs; for it is a malignant leprosy; it shall be burned in the fire.

⁵³“But if the priest sees that the mark has not spread in the garment, either in the warp or the woof, or on anything made of leather,

⁵⁴then the priest shall order that they wash the thing in which the mark occurs, and he shall quarantine it for seven more days.

⁵⁵“The priest shall examine the article with the mark after it has been washed, and if the mark has not changed color, even though the mark has not spread, it is unclean; you shall burn it

in the fire; it is a corroding mildew, whether on the top or on the front of it.

⁵⁶“If the priest looks and the mark has faded after it is washed, he shall tear it out of the garment, or the leather, or out of the warp or woof.

⁵⁷“If it still appears in the garment, either in the warp or in the woof, or on anything made of leather, it is an outbreak; you shall burn the marked part in the fire.

⁵⁸“The garment, whether the warp or the woof, or anything made of leather from which the mildew has departed after washing, shall then be washed a second time and it will be [ceremonially] clean.”

⁵⁹This is the law for a leprous disease in a garment of wool or linen, either in the warp or woof, or on anything made of leather, to pronounce it clean or unclean.

14 THEN THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“This shall be the law of the leper on the day of his [ceremonial] cleansing. He shall be brought to the priest [at a meeting place outside the camp];

POWERPOINT

Throughout the book of Leviticus, God speaks to Moses and tells Him what to do. Whenever you are confused about what to do in a situation in your life, pray and ask God to speak to you. He is “the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8), and He still provides His people with the guidance and instruction we need.



³the priest shall go out of the camp [to meet him]; and the priest shall examine him, and if the leper has been healed of the infection of leprosy,

⁴then the priest shall give orders to take two live clean birds and cedar wood and scarlet string and hyssop for the one to be cleansed. [Heb 9:19–22]

⁵“Next the priest shall order that one of the birds be killed [as a sacrifice] in an earthenware container over [fresh] running

water.

⁶“As for the live bird, he shall take it together with the cedar wood and the scarlet string and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the live bird in the blood of the bird sacrificed over the running water.

⁷“He shall sprinkle [the blood] seven times on the one to be cleansed from the leprosy and shall pronounce him [ceremonially] clean. Then he shall let the live bird go free over the open field. [Heb 9:13–15]

⁸“The one to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and bathe in water; and he shall be clean. After that he may come into the camp, but he shall stay outside of his tent for seven days.

⁹“On the seventh day he shall shave off all his hair: he shall shave his head and his beard and his eyebrows, even all his hair [on his body]. Then he shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and be clean.

¹⁰“Now on the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, and a yearling ewe lamb without blemish, and three-tenths *of an ephah* of fine flour mixed with [olive] oil as a grain offering, and one log (about a pint) of oil; ¹¹and the priest who cleanses him shall present the man to be cleansed and his offerings before the LORD at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting.

¹²“Then the priest shall take one of the male lambs and offer it as a guilt offering, with the log of oil, and present them as a wave offering before the LORD.

¹³“He shall kill the male lamb in the place where they kill the sin offering and the burnt offering, in the sacred place [the

courtyard of the tabernacle]; for the guilt offering, like the sin offering, belongs to the priest; it is most holy.

¹⁴“The priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering and put it on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot.

¹⁵“The priest shall also take some of the log of oil, and pour it into the palm of his own left hand;

¹⁶and the priest shall dip his right finger in the oil that is in his left palm, and with his finger sprinkle some of the oil seven times before the LORD.

¹⁷“Of the rest of the oil which is in his palm, the priest shall put some on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, on top of the blood of the guilt offering.

¹⁸“The remaining oil that is in the priest’s palm shall be put on the head of the one to be cleansed. The priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD.

¹⁹“Next the priest shall offer the sin offering and make atonement for the one to be cleansed from his uncleanness, and afterward kill the burnt offering.

²⁰“The priest shall offer the burnt offering and the grain offering on the altar; and the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be clean.

²¹“But if the cleansed leper is poor and his means are insufficient, then he is to take one lamb as a guilt offering to be waved to make atonement for him, and one tenth *of an ephah* of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, and a log of oil,

²²and two turtledoves or two young pigeons, such as he can

afford, one shall be a sin offering, the other a burnt offering.

²³“He shall bring them on the eighth day for his [ceremonial] cleansing to the priest at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting, before the LORD.

²⁴“The priest shall take the lamb of the guilt offering, and the log of oil, and shall present them as a wave offering before the LORD.

²⁵“Next he shall kill the lamb of the guilt offering; and the priest is to take some of the blood of the guilt offering and put it on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot.

²⁶“The priest shall pour some of the oil into his left palm,

²⁷and with his right finger the priest shall sprinkle some of the oil that is in his left palm seven times before the LORD.

²⁸“The priest shall put some of the oil in his palm on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, on the places where he has put the blood of the guilt offering.

²⁹“The rest of the oil that is in the priest’s palm shall be put on the head of the one to be cleansed, to make atonement for him before the LORD.

³⁰“Then he shall offer one of the turtledoves or young pigeons, which are within his means.

³¹“*He shall offer* what he can afford, one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering, together with the grain offering. The priest shall make atonement before the LORD on behalf of the one to be cleansed.

³²“This is the law for the one in whom there is an infection of leprosy, whose means are limited for his [ceremonial]

cleansing.”

³³The LORD further spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,

³⁴“When you come into the land of Canaan, which I am giving you as a possession, and I put a mark of leprosy on a house in your land,

³⁵then the one who owns the house shall come and tell the priest, ‘I have seen *something that looks like a mark of leprosy* in my house.’

³⁶“The priest shall order that they empty the house before he goes in to examine the mark, so that everything in the house will not have to be declared unclean; afterward he shall go in to see the house.

³⁷“He shall examine the mark, and if the mark on the walls of the house has greenish or reddish depressions and appears deeper than the surface,

³⁸the priest shall go out of the house, to the doorway, and quarantine the house for seven days.

³⁹“The priest shall return on the seventh day and look; and if the mark has spread on the walls of the house,

⁴⁰he shall order them to tear out the contaminated stones and throw them into an unclean place outside the city.

⁴¹“He shall have the entire inside area of the house scraped, and the plaster that is scraped off shall be dumped in an unclean place outside the city.

⁴²“Then they shall take new stones and replace the [contaminated] stones, and he shall take plaster and replaster the house.

⁴³“If, however, the mark breaks out again in the house after he has removed the stones and has scraped and replastered

the house,

⁴⁴then the priest shall come and look *again*, and if the mark has spread in the house, it is a malignant leprosy in the house; it is [ceremonially] unclean.

⁴⁵“He shall tear down the house—its stones and its timber and all the plaster of the house—and shall take *everything* outside the city to an unclean place.

⁴⁶“Moreover, whoever goes into the house during the time that it is quarantined becomes unclean until evening.

⁴⁷“And whoever lies down in the house [to rest] shall wash his clothes, and whoever eats in the house shall wash his clothes.

⁴⁸“But if the priest comes in and inspects it and the mark has not spread in the house after the house has been replastered, he shall pronounce the house clean because the mark has not reappeared.

⁴⁹“To cleanse the house then, he shall take two birds and cedar wood and scarlet string and hyssop;

⁵⁰and he shall kill one of the birds in an earthenware container over running water,

⁵¹and he shall take the cedar wood and the hyssop and the scarlet string, and the living bird, and dip them in the blood of the slain bird as well as in the running water, and sprinkle the house seven times.

⁵²“So he shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird and with the running water, along with the live bird and the cedar wood and the hyssop and the scarlet string.

⁵³“But he shall let the live bird go free outside the city into the open field. So he shall make atonement for the house, and it

will be clean.”

⁵⁴This is the law for any mark of leprosy—even for a scale,

⁵⁵and for the leprous garment or house,

⁵⁶and for a swelling, and for a scab, and for a bright spot on the skin—

⁵⁷to teach when they are unclean and when they are clean.

This is the law of leprosy [in regard to both persons and property].

15 THE LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, ²“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, ‘When any man has a bodily discharge, his discharge is unclean.

³‘This shall be [the law concerning] his uncleanness in his discharge: whether his body allows its discharge to flow or obstructs its flow; it is uncleanness in him.

⁴‘Every bed on which the one who has the discharge lies becomes unclean, and everything on which he sits becomes unclean.

⁵‘Whoever touches his bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening;

⁶and whoever sits on anything on which the man with the discharge has been sitting shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening.

⁷‘Also whoever touches the man with the discharge shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening.

⁸‘And if he who has the discharge spits on one who is

clean, then he shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening.

⁹Any saddle on which the man with the discharge rides becomes unclean.

¹⁰Whoever touches anything that has been under him shall be unclean until evening; and whoever carries those things shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening.

¹¹Whomever the one with the discharge touches without rinsing his hands in water shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening.

¹²An earthenware container that the one with the discharge touches shall be broken, and every wooden container shall be rinsed in water.

¹³When the man with the discharge becomes cleansed from his discharge, he shall count off seven days for his purification; he shall then wash his clothes and bathe his body in running water and will become clean.

¹⁴On the eighth day he shall take two turtledoves or two young pigeons and come before the LORD to the doorway of the Tent of Meeting, and give them to the priest; ¹⁵and the priest shall offer them, one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering. So the priest shall make atonement for the man before the LORD because of his discharge.

¹⁶Now if any man has a seminal emission, he shall wash all his body in water, and be unclean until evening.

¹⁷Every garment and every leather on which there is semen shall be washed with water, and shall be unclean until evening.

18‘If a man lies with a woman so that there is a seminal emission, they shall both bathe in water and be unclean until evening.

19‘When a woman has a discharge, if her bodily discharge is blood, she shall continue in her menstrual impurity for seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean until evening.

20‘Everything on which she lies during her menstrual impurity shall be unclean; and everything on which she sits shall be unclean.

21‘Anyone who touches her bed shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening.

22‘Whoever touches anything on which she sits shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening.

23‘And if it is on her bed or on the thing on which she is sitting, when he touches it, he shall be unclean until evening.

24‘If a man actually lies with her so that her menstrual impurity is on him, he shall be unclean for seven days; and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean.

25‘Now if a woman has a flow of blood for many days, not during the time of her menstruation, or if she has a discharge beyond that period, as long as the impure discharge continues she shall be as she is in the days of her [normal] menstrual impurity; she is unclean. [Matt 9:20]

26‘Every bed on which she lies during the time of her discharge shall be to her like the bed of her menstrual impurity, and whatever she sits on shall be unclean, like the uncleanness of her monthly period.

27‘And whoever touches those things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean

until evening.

²⁸“When she is cleansed from her discharge, then she shall count off for herself seven days, and after that she will be clean.

²⁹“Then on the eighth day she shall take for herself two turtledoves or two young pigeons and bring them to the priest at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting; ³⁰and the priest shall offer one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering; and he shall make atonement for her before the LORD for her unclean discharge.’

³¹“Thus you shall separate the Israelites from their uncleanness, so that they do not die in their uncleanness by their defiling My tabernacle that is among them.”

³²This is the law for the one who has a discharge and for the one who has a seminal emission, so that he is unclean by it;

³³and for the woman who is ill because of her monthly period, and for the one who has a discharge, whether man or woman, or for a man who lies with a woman who is [ceremonially] unclean.

16 THEN THE LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who had died when they [irreverently] approached the presence of the LORD. [Lev 10:1, 2]

²The LORD said to Moses,

“Tell Aaron your brother that he must not enter at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil (the Holy of Holies), before the mercy seat which is on the ark, or he will die, for I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat. [Heb 9:7–15, 25–28]

³“Aaron [as high priest] shall enter the Holy Place in this way: with [the blood of] a young bull as a sin offering and [the blood of] a ram as a burnt offering.

⁴“He shall put on the holy linen tunic, and the linen undergarments shall be next to his body, and he shall be belted with the linen sash, and dressed with the linen turban (these are the holy garments). He shall bathe his body in water and put them on.

⁵“He shall take from the congregation of the Israelites [at their expense] two male goats as a sin offering and one ram as a burnt offering.

⁶“Then Aaron shall present the bull as the sin offering for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house.

⁷“He shall take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting.

⁸“Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats—one lot for the LORD, the other lot for the scapegoat.

⁹“Then Aaron shall bring the goat on which the LORD’s lot fell and offer it as a sin offering.

¹⁰“But the goat on which the lot fell for the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement on it; it shall be sent into the wilderness as the scapegoat.

¹¹“Aaron shall present the bull as the sin offering for himself and make atonement for himself and for his household (the other priests), and he shall kill the bull as the sin offering for himself.

¹²“He shall take a censer full of burning coals from the [bronze] altar before the LORD, and two handfuls of finely

ground sweet incense, and bring it inside the veil [into the Most Holy Place], ¹³and put the incense on the fire [in the censer] before the LORD, so that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is on [the ark of] the Testimony, otherwise he will die.

¹⁴“He shall take some of the bull’s blood and sprinkle it with his finger on the east side of the mercy seat; also in front of the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times.

¹⁵“Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering that is for [the sins of] the people and bring its blood within the veil [into the Most Holy Place] and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat. [Heb 2:17]

¹⁶“So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place (Holy of Holies) because of the uncleanness and transgressions of the Israelites, for all their sins. He shall also do this for the Tent of Meeting which is among them in the midst of their uncleanness (impurities). [Heb 9:22–24]

¹⁷“There shall be no person in the Tent of Meeting when the high priest goes in to make atonement in the Holy Place [within the veil] until he comes out, so that he may make atonement for himself (his own sins) and for his household and for all the congregation of Israel.

¹⁸“Then he shall go out to the altar [of burnt offering in the court] which is before the LORD and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and of the goat and put it on the horns of the altar on all sides.

¹⁹“With his finger he shall sprinkle some of the blood on

the altar of burnt offering seven times and cleanse it and consecrate it from the uncleanness of the Israelites.

²⁰“When he has finished atoning for the Holy Place and the Tent of Meeting and the altar, he shall present the live goat.

²¹“Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the wickedness of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall lay them on the head of the goat [the scapegoat, the sin-bearer], and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is prepared [for the task].

²²“The goat shall carry on itself all their (the Israelites) wickedness, carrying them to a solitary (infertile) land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness. [Ps 103:12; Is 53:11, 12; John 1:29]

²³“Then Aaron shall come into the Tent of Meeting and take off the linen garments which he put on when he went into the Holy Place (Holy of Holies), and shall leave them there.

²⁴“He shall bathe his body with water in a holy place and put on his clothes, and come out and offer his burnt offering and that of the people, and make atonement for himself and for the people.

²⁵“And he shall offer up in smoke the fat of the sin offering on the altar.

²⁶“The man who released the goat as the [sin-bearing] scapegoat shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp.

²⁷“The bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy Place (Holy of Holies), shall be taken outside the camp;

their skins, their meat, and their waste shall be burned in the fire. [Heb 13:11–13]

²⁸“Then he who burns them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body with water, and afterward he may come into the camp.

²⁹“This shall be a permanent statute for you: in the seventh month (nearly October) on the tenth day of the month you shall humble yourselves [by fasting] and not do any work, whether the native-born or the stranger who lives temporarily among you; ³⁰for it is on this day that atonement shall be made for you, to cleanse you; you will be clean from all your sins before the LORD. [Heb 10:1, 2; 1 John 1:7, 9]

³¹“It is a Sabbath of solemn rest for you, and you shall humble yourselves; it is a permanent statute.

³²“So the priest who is anointed and ordained to serve *and* minister as priest in his father’s place shall make atonement: he shall wear the holy linen garments, ³³and make atonement for the Holy Sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the Tent of Meeting, and for the altar [of burnt offering in the court]. He shall also make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly.

³⁴“This shall be a permanent statute for you, so that atonement may be made for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year.” So he did just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

**A Prayer To
Renew Your**

Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that through
Jesus Christ atonement has
been made for me, to cleanse
me from all my sins and make
me clean before You.*

• adapted from Leviticus 16:30

17 THEN THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Speak to Aaron and his sons and all the children of Israel, and say to them, ‘This is what the LORD has commanded, saying, ³“Any man from the house of Israel who kills an ox or lamb or goat in the camp, or kills it outside the camp

⁴and has not brought it to the doorway of the Tent of Meeting to offer it as an offering to the LORD before the tabernacle of the LORD, that man shall be guilty of bloodshed. He has shed blood and shall be cut off from his people [excluding him from the atonement made for them].

⁵“This is so that the sons of Israel may bring their sacrifices which they were sacrificing [to idols] in the open field [where they killed them], that they may bring them in to the LORD, at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting to the priest,

and sacrifice them as sacrifices of peace offerings to the LORD.

⁶“The priest shall sprinkle the blood on the altar of the LORD at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting and offer the fat up in smoke as a sweet *and* soothing aroma to the LORD.

⁷“So they shall no longer offer their sacrifices to goat-idols *or* demons *or* field spirits with which they have played the prostitute. This shall be a permanent statute for them throughout their generations.” ’

⁸“Then you shall say to them, ‘Any man from the house of Israel or any of the strangers living temporarily among you, who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice ⁹and does not bring it to the doorway of the Tent of Meeting to offer it to the LORD shall be cut off from his people [excluding him from the atonement made for them].

¹⁰‘Any man from the house of Israel, or any stranger living temporarily among you, who eats any blood, against that person I shall set My face and I will cut him off from his people [excluding him from the atonement made for them]. [Ezek 33:25]

¹¹‘For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life [which it represents].’ [Rom 3:24–26]

¹²“Therefore I have said to the sons of Israel, ‘No person among you may eat blood, nor may any stranger living temporarily among you eat blood.’

POWERPOINT

From Abel's blood crying out to God (see Gen. 4:16) to Jesus' robe that was dyed when dipped in blood (see Rev. 19:13), the Bible speaks of blood. Why? Because the life is in the blood, and it is through blood that atonement is made for our souls. Christ's blood was shed for us to permanently atone for our sins. That is good news!



¹³“So when any Israelite or any stranger living temporarily among them, catches any ceremonially clean animal or bird when hunting, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth.

¹⁴“For in regard to the life of all flesh, its blood is [the same] as its life; therefore I said to the Israelites, ‘You are not to eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off [excluding him from the

atonement made for them].’

¹⁵“Every person who eats an animal which dies [of natural causes] or was torn by a predator, whether he is native-born or a stranger, he shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be [ceremonially] unclean until evening; then he will become clean. [Acts 15:20]

¹⁶“But if he does not wash *his clothes* or bathe his body, he shall bear his guilt [for it will not be borne by the sacrifice of atonement].”

18 THEN THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘I am the LORD your God.

³‘You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you lived, and you shall not do what is done in the land of Canaan where I am bringing you. You shall not follow their statutes (practices, customs).

⁴‘You are to follow My judgments (precepts, ordinances) and keep My statutes and live by them. I am the LORD your God.

⁵‘So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which, if a person keeps them, he shall live; I am the LORD. [Luke 10:25–28; Rom 10:4, 5; Gal 3:12]

⁶‘No one shall approach any blood relative of his to uncover nakedness (have intimate relations). I am the LORD.

⁷‘You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, that is, the nakedness of your mother. She is your mother. You shall not uncover her nakedness.

⁸‘You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father’s

wife; it is your father's nakedness.

⁹‘You shall not uncover the nakedness of your sister, *either* the daughter of your father or of your mother, whether born at home or born elsewhere.

¹⁰‘You shall not uncover the nakedness of your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter; their nakedness you shall not uncover, for they are your own nakedness [that is, your own descendants].

¹¹‘You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife's daughter; born to your father, she is your sister.

¹²‘You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's sister; she is your father's blood relative.

¹³‘You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister, for she is your mother's blood relative.

¹⁴‘You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's brother's wife; you shall not approach his wife; she is your aunt.

¹⁵‘You shall not uncover the nakedness of your daughter-in-law; she is your son's wife. You shall not uncover her nakedness.

¹⁶‘You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is your brother's nakedness.

¹⁷‘You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, nor shall you take her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter to uncover their nakedness (have intimate relations with them); they are [her] blood relatives; it is an outrageous offense.

¹⁸‘You shall not marry a woman in addition to her sister as a rival while she is alive, to uncover her nakedness.

19^cAlso you shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness during her menstrual impurity *and* ceremonial uncleanness.

20^cYou shall not have intimate relations with your neighbor's wife, to be defiled with her.

21^cYou shall not give any of your children to offer them [by fire as a sacrifice] to Molech [the god of the Ammonites], nor shall you profane the name of your God [by honoring idols as gods]. I am the LORD.

22^cYou shall not lie [intimately] with a male as one lies with a female; it is repulsive. [1 Cor 6:9, 10]

23^cYou shall not have intimate relations with any animal to be defiled with it; nor shall a woman stand before an animal to mate with it; it is a perversion.

24^cDo not defile yourselves by any of these things; for by all these the nations which I am casting out before you have become defiled.

25^cFor the land has become defiled; therefore I have brought its punishment upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants.

26^cBut as for you, you are to keep My statutes and My judgments (precepts) and shall not commit any of these repulsive acts, neither the native-born, nor the stranger who lives temporarily among you ²⁷(for all these repulsive acts have been done by the men who lived in the land before you, and the land has become defiled);

28^c[do none of these things] so that the land will not vomit you out, should you defile it, as it has vomited out the nation which has been before you.

²⁹‘For whoever commits any of these repulsive acts, those persons who do so shall be cut off from among their people [excluding them from the atonement made for them].

³⁰‘So keep My command: do not practice any of the repulsive customs which have been practiced before you, so as not to defile yourselves by them; I am the LORD your God.’”

19 THEN THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Say to all the congregation of the children of Israel, ‘You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. [1 Pet 1:15]

³‘Each of you shall respect his mother and his father, and you shall keep My Sabbaths; I am the LORD your God.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Give People a Chance

We spend more time focusing on what people might be thinking about us than we do realizing what we are thinking about them. This arena of our thoughts is so important but often overlooked.

Have you ever met anyone you immediately disliked? We all have, but how could we honestly dislike someone we may not really know at all? It happens because we let attitudes or mind-sets affect our opinions without examining where those thoughts came from. It is important that we get to the root of these problems because God's Word teaches us not to judge at a glance, or superficially (see John 7:24), but rather to "judge your neighbor fairly" (Lev. 19:15).

There are many reasons we decide too quickly that we don't like someone, but none of them is valid. Perhaps someone's personality is a type we don't enjoy or reminds us of someone who has hurt us in the past. Or perhaps we make decisions about people based on the way they look or dress. Sadly, people usually feel our dislike or rejection. If we don't

reveal it in what we say, we do so with voice tones, facial expressions, or body language.

If we take time to get to know people a little more intimately, we may find that we like them more. Jesus was rejected by lots of people because He was misunderstood. Dressed in camel's hair and eating locusts, John the Baptist probably wouldn't be our first choice to pastor our church. Truthfully, many of God's choice servants are people we would not have chosen for the job God assigns them. Lots of amazing people don't fit into our "thought mold."

I can think of numerous people I was initially unimpressed with, and now I wonder why. I want people to give me a chance and take time to get to know the real me. I decided long ago to try harder to do the same thing for them.

Is there anyone you have decided you just don't like and have kept your distance from without ever really taking time to know that person? There is a lot more to everyone than meets the eye. Everyone has a story, and if you would take time to know people better, you might be blessed beyond measure by what you discover.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Gracious Father, forgive me for judging others superficially and for shutting people out of my life unfairly. Help me to see people through Your eyes and with Your heart of love. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

POWERPOINT

The words we speak are powerful—not only the ones we speak about ourselves and our lives, but also the ones we speak about other people.

Leviticus 19:16 teaches us not to gossip. When you talk about other people, be careful to say positive, encouraging, uplifting words. Speak well of others and resist the temptation to gossip.



⁴‘Do not turn to idols or make for yourselves molten gods (images cast in metal); I am the LORD your God.

⁵‘Now when you offer a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD, you shall offer it so that you may be accepted.

⁶‘It shall be eaten the same day you offer it and on the day following; and if anything remains until the third day, it shall be burned in the fire.

⁷‘But if it is eaten at all on the third day, it is repulsive; it will not be accepted [by God as an offering].

⁸‘Everyone who eats it will bear [the responsibility for] his wickedness, for he has profaned a holy thing of the LORD; and that person shall be cut off from his people [excluding him from the atonement made for them].

⁹‘Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings (grain left after reaping) of your harvest.

¹⁰‘And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather its fallen grapes; you shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger. I am the LORD your God.

¹¹‘You shall not steal, nor deal deceptively, nor lie to one another. [Col 3:9, 10]

¹²‘You shall not swear [an oath] falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am the LORD.

¹³‘You shall not oppress *or* exploit your neighbor, nor rob him. You shall not withhold the wages of a hired man overnight until morning.

¹⁴‘You shall not curse a deaf man nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God [with profound reverence]; I am the LORD.

¹⁵‘You shall not do injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor show a preference for the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.

¹⁶‘You shall not go around as a gossip among your people, and you are not to act against the life of your neighbor [with slander or false testimony]; I am the LORD.

¹⁷‘You shall not hate your brother in your heart; you may most certainly rebuke your neighbor, but shall not incur sin

because of him. [Gal 6:1; 1 John 2:9, 11; 3:15]

¹⁸‘You shall not take revenge nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor (acquaintance, associate, companion) as yourself; I am the LORD. [Matt 5:43–46; Rom 12:17, 19]

¹⁹‘You are to keep My statutes. You shall not breed together two kinds of your cattle; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed, nor wear clothing of two kinds of material mixed together.

²⁰‘Now if a man has intimate relations with a woman who is a slave acquired for [marriage to] *another* man, but who has not been redeemed nor given her freedom, there shall be punishment [after an investigation]; they shall not be put to death, because she was not free; ²¹but he shall bring his guilt offering to the LORD to the doorway of the Tent of Meeting, a ram as a guilt offering.

²²‘The priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering before the LORD for his sin which he has committed; and he shall be forgiven for his sin.

²³‘When you enter the land and plant all kinds of trees for food, then you shall consider their fruit forbidden. For three years the fruit shall be forbidden to you; it shall not be eaten.

²⁴‘In the fourth year all the fruit shall be holy, an offering of praise to the LORD.

²⁵‘In the fifth year you may eat the fruit [of the trees], this is so that their yield may increase for you; I am the LORD your God.

²⁶‘You shall not eat *anything* with the blood, nor practice divination [using omens or witchcraft] or soothsaying.

27^c You shall not trim *and* round off the side-growth of [the hair on] your heads, nor mar the edges of your beard.

28^c You shall not make any cuts on your body [in mourning] for the dead, nor make any tattoo marks on yourselves; I am the LORD.

29^c Do not profane your daughter by making her a prostitute, so that the land will not fall to prostitution and become full of wickedness.

30^c You shall keep My Sabbaths and revere My sanctuary. I am the LORD.

31^c Do not turn to mediums [who pretend to consult the dead] or to spiritists [who have spirits of divination]; do not seek them out to be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God.

32^c You shall rise before the gray-headed and honor the aged, and you shall fear your God [with profound reverence]; I am the LORD.

33^c When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress *or* mistreat him.

34^c But the stranger who resides with you shall be to you like someone native-born among you; and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.

35^c You shall do no wrong in judgment, in measurement of weight or quantity.

36^c You shall have just *and* accurate balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

37^c You shall observe *and* keep all My statutes and all My

ordinances and do them. I am the LORD.”

20 THEN THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Moreover, you shall say to the children of Israel,

‘Any Israelite or any stranger residing in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech (the god of the Ammonites) [as a human sacrifice] shall most certainly be put to death; the people of the land shall stone him with stones.

³‘I will also set My face against that man [opposing him, withdrawing My protection from him] and will cut him off from his people [excluding him from the atonement made for them], because he has given some of his children to Molech, so as to defile My sanctuary and profane My holy name.

⁴‘If the people of the land should ever tolerate that man when he gives any of his children [as a burnt offering] to Molech, and fail to put him to death [as My law requires],

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Loving Others as Yourself

We often treat others the same way we treat ourselves. It's the principle of "you shall love your neighbor (acquaintance, associate, companion) as yourself" (Lev. 19:18). For example, if you receive God's mercy, you will be able to give mercy to others, but if you are demanding and never satisfied with yourself, you will treat others likewise.

We need to learn to be good to ourselves and yet not be self-centered. It's important to respect and value yourself; it's also important to know what your strengths are and what your weaknesses are, and to remember that God's strength is perfected in your weaknesses (see 2 Cor. 12:9). We stress over our faults and yet everyone has them. If you had no faults, you would not need Jesus, and that is never going to happen! You will always need Him and He will always be there for you.

Speak God's Word

*I consecrate myself therefore,
and I will be holy; for He is
the Lord my God.*

| adapted from LEVITICUS 20:7 |

⁵then I shall set My face against that man and against his [extended] family, and I will cut off from their people both him and all who follow him in playing the prostitute (commit apostasy) with Molech.

⁶‘As for the person who turns to mediums [who consult the dead] or to spiritists, to play the prostitute after them, I shall set My face against that person and will cut him off from his people [excluding him from the atonement made for them]. [Is 54:5]

⁷‘You shall consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am the LORD your God.

⁸‘You shall keep My statutes and do them. I am the LORD who sanctifies you.

⁹‘If anyone curses his father or mother, he shall most certainly be put to death; he has cursed his father or mother; his blood is on him [that is, he bears full responsibility for the consequences].

¹⁰‘The man who commits adultery with another’s wife, even his neighbor’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall most certainly be put to death. [John 8:4–11]

¹¹‘The man who lies [intimately] with his father’s wife has uncovered his father’s nakedness; both of them shall most certainly be put to death; their blood is on them.

¹²‘If a man lies [intimately] with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall most certainly be put to death; they have committed incest; their blood is on them.

¹³‘If a man lies [intimately] with a male as if he were a woman, both men have committed a detestable (perverse, unnatural) act; they shall most certainly be put to death; their blood is on them.

¹⁴‘It is immoral *and* shameful if a man marries a woman and her mother; all three shall be burned in fire, so that there will be no immorality among you. [Josh 7:15, 25]

¹⁵‘If a man has intimate relations with an animal, he shall most certainly be put to death; you shall kill the animal also.

¹⁶‘If a woman approaches any animal to mate with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal; they shall most certainly be put to death; their blood is on them.

¹⁷‘If a man takes his sister, his father’s daughter or his mother’s daughter, so that he sees her nakedness and she sees his nakedness, it is a disgrace; and they shall be cut off in the sight of the sons of their people. He has uncovered his sister’s nakedness; he bears [responsibility for] his guilt.

¹⁸‘If a man lies [intimately] with a woman during her menstrual cycle and uncovers her nakedness, he has exposed her flow, and she has uncovered the flow of her blood; both of

them shall be cut off from their people [excluding them from the atonement made for them].

¹⁹“You shall not uncover the nakedness of (have intimate relations with) your mother’s sister or your father’s sister, for such a one has uncovered his blood relative; they will bear their guilt.

²⁰“If *there is* a man who lies [intimately] with his uncle’s wife, he has uncovered his uncle’s nakedness; they will bear their sin. They will die childless.

²¹“If a man takes his brother’s wife, it is a hated *and* unclean thing; he has uncovered his brother’s nakedness. They will be childless.

²²“Therefore keep all My statutes and all My ordinances and do them, so that the land where I am bringing you to live may not vomit you out [as it did those before you]. [Lev 18:28]

²³“You shall not follow the statutes (laws, practices, customs) of the nation which I am driving out before you; for they did all these things, and therefore I have loathed them.

²⁴“But I have said to you, “You are to inherit *and* take possession of their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land [of plenty] flowing with milk and honey.” I am the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples (pagan nations).

²⁵“You are therefore to make a distinction between the [ceremonially] clean animal and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean; and you shall not make yourselves detestable by animal or by bird or by anything that crawls on the ground, which I have set apart from you as unclean.

²⁶“You are to be holy to Me; for I the LORD am holy, and

have set you apart from the peoples (nations) to be Mine.

²⁷‘A man or woman who is a medium [who pretends to consults the dead] or who is a spiritist shall most certainly be put to death, and be stoned with stones; their blood is on them.’”

21 THEN THE LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them: ‘No one shall defile himself [that is, become ceremonially unclean] for the dead among his people [by touching a corpse or assisting in preparing it for burial], ²except for his relatives who are nearest to him, his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, and his brother,

³also his virgin sister, who is near to him because she has had no husband; for her he may become unclean.

⁴‘He shall not become unclean as a relative by marriage among his people, and so profane himself.

⁵‘The priests shall not shave their heads, nor shave off the edges of their beards, nor make any cuts in their body.

⁶‘They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God; for they present the offerings by fire to the LORD, the food of their God; so they shall be holy.

⁷‘They shall not take [as a wife] a woman who is a prostitute, nor a woman who is divorced from her husband; for the priest is holy to his God.

⁸‘You shall consecrate him, therefore, for he offers the food of your God; he shall be holy to you; for I the LORD, who sanctifies you, am holy.

⁹“The daughter of any priest who profanes herself by prostitution profanes her father; she shall be burned in fire.
[Josh 7:15, 25]

¹⁰“But he who is the high priest among his brothers, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured and who has been consecrated to wear the [sacred] garments, shall not uncover his head nor tear his clothes [in mourning], ¹¹nor shall he approach any dead person, nor defile himself [by doing so, even] for his father or for his mother;

¹²nor shall he go out of the sanctuary nor profane (make ceremonially unclean) the sanctuary of his God, for the consecration of the anointing oil of his God is on him; I am the LORD.

¹³“He shall take a wife in her virginity.

¹⁴“He may not marry a widow or a divorced woman or one who is profaned by prostitution, but he is to marry a virgin from his own people, [1 Tim 3:2–7; Titus 1:7–9]

¹⁵so that he will not profane *or* dishonor his children among his people; for I am the LORD who sanctifies the high priest.”

¹⁶Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

¹⁷“Say to Aaron, ‘Throughout their generations none of your descendants who has any [physical] defect shall approach [the altar] to present the food of his God.

¹⁸‘For no man who has a defect shall approach [God’s altar as a priest]: no man who is blind or lame, or who has a disfigured face, or any deformed *limb*,

¹⁹or a man who has a broken foot or a broken hand,

²⁰or a hunchback or a dwarf, or one who has a defect in his eye or eczema or scabs or crushed testicles.

²¹“No man among the descendants of Aaron the priest who has a [physical] defect *and* is disfigured *or* deformed is to approach [the altar] to present the offerings of the LORD by fire. He has a defect; he shall not approach [the altar] to present the food of his God.

²²“He may eat the food of his God, both of the most holy and of the holy things,

²³but he shall not go within the veil or approach the altar [of incense], because he has a defect, so that he will not profane My sanctuaries; for I am the LORD who sanctifies them.” [Heb 7:28]

²⁴So Moses spoke to Aaron and to his sons, and to all the Israelites.

22 THEN THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Tell Aaron and his sons to be careful with the holy things (offerings, gifts) which the children of Israel dedicate to Me, so that they do not profane My holy name; I am the LORD.

³“Say to them, ‘Any one of your descendants throughout your generations who approaches the holy things which the Israelites dedicate to the LORD, while he is [ceremonially] unclean, that person shall be cut off from My presence *and* excluded from the sanctuary; I am the LORD.

⁴“No man of the descendants of Aaron who is a leper or has a discharge may eat the holy things [the offerings and the showbread] until he is clean. And whoever touches any person

or thing made unclean by *contact with* a corpse or a man who has had a seminal emission, ⁵or whoever touches any crawling thing by which he is made unclean, or any person by whom he is made unclean, whatever it may be, [Lev 11:24–28]

⁶the person who touches any such thing shall be unclean until evening and shall not eat the holy things unless he has bathed his body in water. [Heb 10:22]

⁷‘When the sun sets, he will be clean, and afterward he may eat the holy things, for it is his food.

⁸‘He shall not eat that which dies [of natural causes] or is torn by a predator, becoming unclean by it; I am the LORD.

⁹‘Therefore the priests shall observe My ordinance, so that they will not bear sin because of it and die if they profane it; I am the LORD who sanctifies them.

¹⁰‘No layman [that is, someone outside of Aaron’s family] is to eat the holy *gift* [which has been offered to God]; a foreigner residing with the priest or a hired man shall not eat the holy thing.

¹¹‘But if a priest buys a slave as his property with his money, the slave may eat the holy thing, and those who are born in the priest’s house; they may eat his food.

¹²‘If a priest’s daughter is married to a layman [one not part of the priestly tribe], she shall not eat the offering of the holy things.

¹³‘But if a priest’s daughter is a widow or divorced, and has no child, and returns to her father’s house as in her youth, she shall eat her father’s food; but no layman shall eat it.

¹⁴‘But if a person unknowingly eats a holy *gift* [which has been offered to God], then he shall add one-fifth of its value to

it and give the holy *gift* to the priest.

¹⁵“The priests shall not profane the holy things the Israelites offer to the LORD,

¹⁶and so cause them [by neglect of any essential observance] to bear the punishment of guilt when they eat their holy things; for I am the LORD who sanctifies them.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Praying with Praise and Gratitude

God's Word teaches us not to worry, but to come to Him in every circumstance with thanksgiving (see Phil. 4:6). Psalm 100:4 says that we cannot even enter the presence of God unless we come with gratitude. The people of Israel were told to "sacrifice an offering of thanksgiving to the LORD... so that you may be accepted" (Lev. 22:29).

If we want assurance of answered prayer, we should pray with thanksgiving, not with complaining. People who complain indicate by their attitudes and words a low level of trust in God and a lack of thankfulness or appreciation. You may be a person who genuinely loves God, but you may also have a habit of complaining and not realized until now how disrespectful it is to God. If you are convicted of sin in this area, there is no condemnation. Simply ask God to forgive you and begin to fill your prayers with praise and thanksgiving.

¹⁷Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

¹⁸"Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites and say to them, 'Any man of the house of Israel or any stranger in Israel who presents his offering, whether to *fulfill* any of their vows or as any of their freewill (voluntary) offerings which they presented to the LORD as a burnt offering—¹⁹so that you may be accepted—it must be a male without blemish from the

cattle, the sheep, or the goats.

²⁰“You shall not offer anything which has a blemish, because it will not be accepted for you. [1 Pet 1:19]

²¹“Whoever offers a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD to fulfill a special vow to the LORD or as a freewill offering from the herd or from the flock, it must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish in it.

²²“Animals *that are* blind or fractured or mutilated, or have a sore or a running wound or an itch or scabs, you shall not offer to the LORD nor make an offering of them by fire on the altar to the LORD.

²³“For a freewill offering you may offer either a bull or a lamb which has an overgrown or stunted member (deformity), but for [the payment of] a vow it will not be accepted.

²⁴“You shall not offer to the LORD any animal which has its testicles bruised or crushed or torn or cut off, or sacrifice it in your land.

²⁵“Nor shall you offer as the food of your God any such [animals obtained] from a foreigner, because their corruption *and* blemish makes them unfit; there is a defect in them, they shall not be accepted for you.”

²⁶Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

²⁷“When a bull or a sheep or a goat is born, it shall remain for seven days with its mother; and after the eighth day it shall be accepted as an offering by fire to the LORD.

²⁸“And whether [the mother] is a cow or a sheep, you shall not kill both it and its young in one day.

²⁹“When you sacrifice an offering of thanksgiving to the

LORD, you shall sacrifice it so that you may be accepted.

³⁰“It shall be eaten on the same day; you shall leave none of it until *the next morning*; I am the LORD.

³¹“So you shall keep My commandments and do them; I am the LORD.

³²“You shall not profane My holy name [using it to honor an idol, or treating it with irreverence or contempt or as a byword]; but I will be sanctified (set apart as holy) among the Israelites. I am the LORD, who sanctifies *and* declares you holy, ³³who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God; I am the LORD.”

23 THE LORD spoke again to Moses, saying, ²“Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The appointed times (established feasts) of the LORD which you shall proclaim as holy convocations—My appointed times are these: ³‘For six days work may be done, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of complete rest, a holy convocation (calling together). You shall not do any work [on that day]; it is the Sabbath of the LORD wherever you may be.

⁴‘These are the appointed times of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times:

⁵‘The LORD’s Passover is on the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight.

⁶‘The Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD is on the fifteenth day of the same month; for seven days you shall eat

unleavened bread. [1 Cor 5:7, 8]

⁷‘On the first day you shall have a holy convocation (calling together); you shall not do any laborious work [on that day].

⁸‘But you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD for seven days; on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work [on that day].’”

⁹Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

¹⁰“Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘When you enter the land which I am giving you and reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest.

¹¹‘He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD so that you may be accepted; the priest shall wave it on the day after the Sabbath.

¹²‘Now on the day when you wave the sheaf you shall offer a male lamb one year old without blemish as a burnt offering to the LORD.

¹³‘Its grain offering shall be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with [olive] oil, an offering by fire to the LORD for a sweet *and* soothing aroma, with its drink offering [to be poured out], a fourth of a hin of wine.

¹⁴‘You shall not eat any bread or roasted grain or new growth, until this same day when you bring in the offering to your God; it is a permanent statute throughout your generations wherever you may be.

¹⁵‘You shall count from the day after the Sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf (tied bundle of grain) of the

wave offering; there shall be seven complete Sabbaths (seven full weeks).

¹⁶‘You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to the LORD.

¹⁷‘You shall bring in from your places two loaves of bread as a wave offering, made from two-tenths *of an ephah* of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven as first fruits to the LORD.

¹⁸‘And you shall offer with the bread seven unblemished lambs, one year old, and one young bull and two rams. They are to be a burnt offering to the LORD, with their grain offering and their drink offerings. It is an offering by fire, a sweet *and* soothing aroma to the LORD.

¹⁹‘And you shall sacrifice one male goat as a sin offering and two male lambs, one year old as a sacrifice of peace offerings.

²⁰‘The priest shall wave them before the LORD as a wave offering, together with the bread of the first fruits and the two lambs. They are to be holy to the LORD for the priest.

²¹‘On this same day you shall make a proclamation, you are to have a holy convocation (calling together); you shall not do any laborious work [on that day]. It is to be a permanent statute throughout your generations wherever you may be.

²²‘When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the edges of your field, nor gather the gleaning of your harvest; you are to leave them for the poor and for the stranger. I am the LORD your God.’”

²³Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

²⁴“Say to the children of Israel, ‘On the first day of the

seventh month (almost October), you shall observe a day of solemn sabbatical rest, a memorial day announced by the blowing *of trumpets*, a holy convocation.

²⁵“You shall not do any laborious work [on that day], but you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD.”

²⁶The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

²⁷“Also the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement; it shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall humble yourselves [by fasting] and present an offering by fire to the LORD.

²⁸“You shall not do any work on this same day, for it is the Day of Atonement, to make atonement on your behalf before the LORD your God.

²⁹“If there is any person who will not humble himself on this same day, he shall be cut off from his people [excluding him from the atonement made for them].

³⁰“If there is any person who does any work on this same day, I will destroy that person from among his people.

³¹“You shall do no work at all [on that day]. It is a permanent statute throughout your generations wherever you may be.

³²“It is to be to you a Sabbath of complete rest, and you shall humble yourselves. On the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening you shall keep your Sabbath.”

³³Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

³⁴“Say to the children of Israel, ‘On the fifteenth day of this seventh month, and for seven days, is the Feast of Booths

(Tabernacles) to the LORD.

³⁵‘The first day is a holy convocation (calling together); you shall not do any laborious work [on that day].

³⁶‘For seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation and present an offering by fire to the LORD. It is a festive assembly; you shall not do any laborious work [on that day].

³⁷‘These are the appointed times (established feasts) of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to present an offering by fire to the LORD, a burnt offering and a grain offering, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its own day.

³⁸‘This is in addition to the [weekly] Sabbaths of the LORD, and in addition to your gifts and all your vowed offerings and all your freewill offerings, which you give to the LORD.

³⁹‘On exactly the fifteenth day of the seventh month (nearly October), when you have gathered in the crops of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD for seven days, with a Sabbath rest on the first day and a Sabbath rest on the eighth day.

⁴⁰‘Now on the first day you shall take for yourselves the foliage of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of thick (leafy) trees, and willows of the brook [and make booths of them]; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days.

⁴¹‘You shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It shall be a permanent statute throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month.

⁴²‘You shall live in booths (temporary shelters) for seven

days; all native-born in Israel shall live in booths,

⁴³so that your generations may know that I had the sons of Israel live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.”

⁴⁴So Moses declared to the Israelites the appointed feasts of the LORD.

24 THEN THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Command the children of Israel to bring to you clear oil from beaten olives for the light [of the golden lampstand], to make a lamp burn continually.

³“Outside the veil of the Testimony [between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place] in the Tent of Meeting, Aaron shall always keep the lamps burning before the LORD from evening until morning; it shall be a permanent statute throughout your generations.

⁴“He shall keep the lamps burning on the pure *gold* lampstand before the LORD continually. [Rev 1:12–18]

⁵“Then you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes (bread of the Presence, showbread) with it; two-tenths of *an ephah* shall be in each cake (loaf).

⁶“You shall set the bread of the Presence (showbread) in two rows, six in a row, on the pure *gold* table before the LORD.

⁷“You shall put pure frankincense [in two censers, one] beside each row, so that it may be with the bread as a memorial portion, an offering by fire to the LORD.

⁸“Every Sabbath day Aaron shall arrange the showbread

before the LORD continually; it is an everlasting covenant for the Israelites.

⁹“The bread of the Presence shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a sacred place, for it is for Aaron a most holy portion of the offerings by fire to the LORD, his portion forever.”

¹⁰Now the son of an Israelite woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the Israelites, and he and a man of Israel quarreled *and* struggled with each other in the camp.

¹¹The Israelite woman’s son blasphemed the Name [of the LORD] and cursed. So they brought him to Moses. (Now his mother’s name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan.) ¹²They put him in custody until the will *and* command of the LORD might be made clear to them.

¹³Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

¹⁴“Bring the one who has cursed [the LORD] outside the camp, and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head [as witnesses to his guilt]; then let all the congregation stone him.

¹⁵“You shall speak to the Israelites, saying, ‘Whoever curses his God will bear his sin [through his own death].

¹⁶Further, the one who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall most certainly be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him. The stranger as well as the native-born shall be put to death when he blasphemes the Name [of the LORD].

POWERPOINT

While much of modern society has lost respect for the name of the Lord, we are called to “ascribe to the LORD the glory *and* honor due His name” (1 Chr. 16:29). We should not use the names God, Lord, or Jesus in a frivolous or disrespectful way. Instead, we need to remember that His name represents all that He is, and His name is to be honored in our hearts and in our words.



¹⁷“If a man takes the life of any human being [unlawfully], he shall most certainly be put to death.

¹⁸“The one who kills an animal shall replace it, animal for animal.

¹⁹“If a man injures his neighbor (fellow citizen), whatever he has done shall be done to him:

²⁰fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; just as

he has injured a man, so shall the same be done to him. [Matt 5:38–42; 7:2]

²¹“The one who kills an animal shall replace it; but he who kills a human being [unlawfully] shall be put to death.

²²“You shall have one standard of law for the stranger *among you* as well as for the native, for I am the LORD your God.”

²³Then Moses spoke to the Israelites, and they brought the one who had cursed [the LORD] outside the camp and stoned him with stones. Thus the Israelites did just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

25 THE LORD spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai, saying,

²“Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘When you come into the land which I am giving you, then the land shall keep a Sabbath to the LORD.

³‘For six years you shall sow your field, and for six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its crop.

⁴‘But in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of rest for the land, a Sabbath to the LORD; you shall not sow [seed in] your field nor prune your vineyard.

⁵‘Whatever reseeds itself (uncultivated) in your harvest you shall not reap, nor shall you gather the grapes from your uncultivated vine, it shall be a year of sabbatical rest for the land.

⁶‘And all of you shall have for food whatever the [untilled] land produces during its Sabbath year; yourself, and your male and female slaves, your hired servant, and the foreigners who

reside among you,⁷ even your domestic animals and the [wild] animals that are in your land shall have all its crops to eat.

⁸‘You are also to count off seven Sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years, so that you have the time of the seven Sabbaths of years, namely, forty-nine years.

Speak God's Word

*I will not wrong other people,
but I shall fear my God with
reverence; for You are the
Lord my God.*

| *adapted from* LEVITICUS 25:17

|

⁹“Then you shall sound the ram’s horn everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month (almost October); on the Day of Atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout your land.

¹⁰“And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim freedom [for the slaves] throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee (year of remission) for you, and each of you shall return to his own [ancestral] property [that was sold to another because of poverty], and each of you shall return to his family [from whom he was separated by bondage].

¹¹“That fiftieth year shall be a Jubilee for you; you shall not sow [seed], nor reap what reseeds itself, nor gather the grapes of the uncultivated vines.

¹²“For it is the Jubilee; it shall be holy to you; you shall eat its crops out of the field.

¹³“In this Year of Jubilee each of you shall return to his own

[ancestral] property.

¹⁴“If you sell anything to your friend or buy from your friend, you shall not wrong one another.

¹⁵“According to the number of years after the Jubilee, you shall buy from your friend. And he is to sell to you according to the number of years of crops [which may be harvested before you must restore the property to him].

¹⁶“If the years [until the next Jubilee] are many, you shall increase the price, but if the years remaining are few, you shall reduce the price, because it is the number of crops that he is selling to you.

¹⁷“You shall not wrong one another, but you shall fear your God [with profound reverence]; for I am the LORD your God.

¹⁸“Therefore you shall carry out My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them, so that you may live securely on the land.

¹⁹“Then the land will yield its produce, so that you can eat your fill and live securely on it.

²⁰“And if you say, “What are we going to eat in the seventh year if we do not sow [seed] or gather in our crops?”

²¹then [this is My answer:] I will order My [special] blessing for you in the sixth year, so that it will produce [sufficient] crops for three years.

²²“When you are sowing the eighth year, you can still eat old things from the crops, eating the old until the ninth year when its crop comes in.

²³“The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; you are [only] foreigners and temporary residents with Me. [Heb 11:13; 1 Pet 2:11–17]

²⁴‘So in all the country that you possess, you are to provide for the redemption of the land [in the Year of Jubilee].

²⁵‘If a fellow countryman of yours becomes so poor he has to sell some of his property, then his nearest relative is to come and buy back (redeem) what his relative has sold.

²⁶‘Or in case a man has no relative [to redeem his property], but he has become more prosperous *and* has enough to buy it back,

²⁷then he shall calculate the years since its sale and refund the balance to the man to whom he sold it, and so return to his [ancestral] property. [1 Kin 21:2, 3]

²⁸‘But if he is unable to redeem it, then what he has sold shall remain in the hands of the purchaser until the Year of Jubilee; but at the Jubilee it shall revert, and he may return to his property.

²⁹‘If a man sells a house in a walled city, then his right of redemption remains valid for a full year after its sale; his right of redemption lasts a full year.

³⁰‘But if it is not redeemed for him within a full year, then the house that is in the walled city passes permanently *and* irrevocably to the purchaser throughout his generations. It does not revert back in the Year of Jubilee.

³¹‘The houses of the villages that have no surrounding walls, however, shall be considered as open fields. They may be redeemed, and revert in the Year of Jubilee.

³²‘As for the cities of the Levites, the Levites have a permanent right of redemption for the houses in the cities which they possess.

³³‘Therefore, what is [purchased] from the Levites may be

redeemed [by a Levite], and the house that was sold in the city they possess reverts in the Year of Jubilee, for the houses in the Levite cities are their [ancestral] property among the Israelites.

³⁴But the pasture lands of their cities may not be sold, for that is their permanent possession.

³⁵Now if your fellow countryman becomes poor and his hand falters with you [that is, he has trouble repaying you for something], then you are to help *and* sustain him, [with courtesy and consideration] like [you would] a stranger or a temporary resident [without property], so that he may live among you. [1 John 3:17]

³⁶Do not charge him usurious interest, but fear your God [with profound reverence], so your countryman may [continue to] live among you.

³⁷You shall not give him your money at interest, nor your food at a profit.

³⁸I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God.

³⁹And if your fellow countryman becomes so poor [in his dealings] with you that he sells himself to you [as payment for a debt], you shall not let him do the work of a slave [who is ineligible for redemption], ⁴⁰but he is to be with you as a hired man, as if he were a temporary resident; he shall serve with you until the Year of Jubilee,

⁴¹and then he shall leave you, he and his children with him, and shall go back to his own family and return to the property of his fathers.

⁴²‘For the Israelites are My servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold in a slave sale. [1 Cor 7:23]

⁴³‘You shall not rule over him with harshness (severity, oppression), but you are to fear your God [with profound reverence]. [Eph 6:9; Col 4:1]

⁴⁴‘As for your male and female slaves whom you may have—you may acquire male and female slaves from the pagan nations that are around you.

⁴⁵‘Moreover, from the children of the strangers who live as aliens among you, from them you may buy *slaves* and from their families who are with you, whom they have produced in your land; they may become your possession.

⁴⁶‘You may even bequeath them as an inheritance to your children after you, to receive as a possession; you can use them as permanent slaves. But in respect to your fellow countrymen, the children of Israel, you shall not rule over one another with harshness (severity, oppression).

⁴⁷‘Now if the financial means of a stranger or temporary resident among you become sufficient, and your fellow countryman becomes poor *in comparison* to him and sells himself to the stranger who is living among you or to the descendants of the stranger’s family, ⁴⁸then after he is sold he shall have the right of redemption. One of his relatives may redeem him:

⁴⁹either his uncle or his uncle’s son may redeem him, or one of his blood relatives from his family may redeem him; or if he prospers, he may redeem himself.

⁵⁰‘Then he [or his redeemer] shall calculate with his

purchaser from the year when he sold himself to the purchaser to the Year of Jubilee, and the [original] price of his sale shall be adjusted according to the number of years. The time he was with his owner shall be considered as that of a hired man.

⁵¹‘If there are still many years [before the Year of Jubilee], in proportion to them he must refund [to the purchaser] part of the price of his sale for his redemption *and* release.

⁵²‘And if *only* a few years remain until the Year of Jubilee, he shall so calculate it with him. He is to refund the proportionate amount for his release.

⁵³‘Like a man hired year by year he shall deal with him; he shall not rule over him with harshness in your sight.

⁵⁴‘Even if he is not redeemed during these years *and* under these provisions, then he shall go free in the Year of Jubilee, he and his children with him.

⁵⁵‘For the children of Israel are My servants; My servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

26 ‘YOU SHALL not make idols for yourselves, nor shall you erect an image, a sacred pillar *or* an obelisk, nor shall you place any figured stone in your land so that you may bow down to it; for I am the LORD your God.

²‘You shall keep My Sabbaths and have reverence for My sanctuary. I am the LORD.

A Prayer To

Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, God, for saying,
“I will make My dwelling
among you, and My soul will
not reject nor separate itself
from you.” I know that You
are always with me!*

• adapted from Leviticus 26:11

³‘If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments and [obediently] do them,

⁴then I will give you rain in its season, and the land will yield her produce and the trees of the field bear their fruit.

⁵‘And your threshing season will last until grape gathering and the grape gathering [time] will last until planting, and you will eat your bread and be filled and live securely in your land.

⁶‘I will also grant peace in the land, so that you may lie down and there will be no one to make you afraid. I will also eliminate harmful animals from the land, and no sword will pass through your land.

⁷‘And you will chase your enemies, and they will fall before

you by the sword.

⁸‘Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will put ten thousand to flight; your enemies will fall before you by the sword.

⁹‘For I will turn toward you [with favor and regard] and make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will establish *and* confirm My covenant with you. [2 Kin 13:23]

¹⁰‘You will eat the old supply of [abundant] produce, and clear out the old [to make room] for the new.

¹¹‘I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject *nor* separate itself from you.

¹²‘I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.

¹³‘I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt so that you would not be their slaves; and I broke the bars of your yoke and made you walk upright [with heads held high as free men].

¹⁴‘But if you do not obey Me and do not [obediently] do all these commandments,

¹⁵if, instead, you reject My statutes, and if your soul rejects My ordinances, so that you will not [obediently] do all My commandments, and in this way break My covenant, ¹⁶I, in turn, will do this to you: I will appoint over you sudden terror, consumption, and fever that will waste away the eyes and cause the soul to languish also. And you will sow your seed uselessly, for your enemies will eat what you plant.

¹⁷‘I will set My face against you so that you will be struck down before your enemies; those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee when no one is pursuing you. [1 Sam

4:10; 31:1]

¹⁸‘If in spite of all this you still will not listen to Me *and* be obedient, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.

¹⁹‘I will break your pride in your power, and I will make your sky like iron [giving no rain and blocking all prayers] and your ground like bronze [hard to plow and yielding no produce]. [1 Kin 17:1]

²⁰‘Your strength will be spent uselessly, for your land will not yield its produce and the trees of the land will not yield their fruit.

²¹‘If then, you act with hostility toward Me and are unwilling to obey Me, I will increase the plague on you seven times in accordance with your sins.

²²‘I will let loose the [wild] animals of the field among you, which will bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock and make you so few in number that your roads will lie deserted *and* desolate. [2 Kin 17:25, 26]

²³‘And if by these things you are not turned to Me, but act with hostility against Me,

²⁴then I also will act with hostility against you, and I will strike you seven times for your sins.

²⁵‘I will bring a sword on you that will execute vengeance for [breaking] the covenant; and when you gather together in your cities, I will send pestilence (virulent disease) among you, and you shall be handed over to the enemy. [Num 16:49; 2 Sam 24:15]

²⁶‘When I break your staff of bread [that is, cut off your supply of food], ten women will bake your bread in one oven,

and they will ration your bread; and you will eat and not be satisfied. [Hag 1:6]

²⁷‘Yet if in spite of this you will not [attentively] listen to Me but act with hostility against me,

²⁸then I will act with hostility against you in wrath, and I also will punish you seven times for your sins.

²⁹‘You will eat the flesh of your sons and the flesh of your daughters. [2 Kin 6:28, 29]

³⁰‘I will destroy your high places [devoted to idolatrous worship], and cut down your incense altars, and heap your dead bodies upon the [crushed] bodies of your idols, and My soul will detest you [with deep and unutterable loathing]. [2 Kin 23:8, 20]

³¹‘I will lay waste your cities as well and will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your sweet *and* soothing aromas [of offerings by fire]. [2 Kin 25:4–10; 2 Chr 36:19]

³²‘I will make the land desolate, and your enemies who settle in it will be appalled at it.

³³‘I will scatter you among the nations and draw out the sword [of your enemies] after you; your land will become desolate and your cities will become ruins. [Ps 44:11–14]

³⁴‘Then the land [of Israel] will enjoy its Sabbaths as long as it lies desolate, while you are in your enemies’ land; then the land will rest and enjoy its Sabbaths.

³⁵‘As long as it lies desolate, it will have rest, the rest it did not have on your Sabbaths, while you were living on it. [2 Chr 36:21]

³⁶‘As for those who are left of you, I will bring despair (lack

of courage, weakness) into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; the sound of a scattered leaf will put them to flight, and they will flee as if [running] from the sword, and will fall even when no one is chasing them.

³⁷‘They shall stumble over one another as if *to escape* from a sword when no one is chasing them; and you will have no power to stand before your enemies.

³⁸‘You will perish among the nations; the land of your enemies will consume you.

³⁹‘Those of you who are left will rot away because of their wickedness in the lands of your enemies; also because of the wickedness of their forefathers they will rot away like them.

⁴⁰‘If they confess their wickedness and the wickedness of their forefathers, in their unfaithfulness which they have committed against Me—and also in their acting with hostility toward Me—⁴¹I also was acting with hostility toward them and brought them into the land of their enemies—then if their uncircumcised (sin-filled) hearts are humbled and they accept the punishment for their wickedness, [2 Kin 24:10–14; Dan 9:11–14]

⁴²then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham, and remember the land. [Ps 106:44–46]

⁴³‘But the land will be abandoned by them and will enjoy its Sabbaths while it lies desolate without them; and they will accept the punishment for their wickedness *and* make amends because they rejected My ordinances and their soul rejected My statutes.

⁴⁴‘Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their

enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I so despise them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God. [Deut 4:31–35; Jer 33:4, 5, 23–26; Rom 11:2–5]

⁴⁵“But I will, for their sake, [earnestly] remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I have brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am the LORD.”

⁴⁶These are the statutes, ordinances, and laws which the LORD established between Himself and the Israelites through Moses at Mount Sinai.

27 AGAIN, THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘When a man makes a special vow [consecrating himself or a member of his family], he *shall be valued* according to your [established system of] valuation of people belonging to the LORD [that is, the priest accepts from the man making the vow a specified amount of money for the temple treasury in place of the actual person].

³‘If your valuation is of a male between twenty and sixty years of age, then your valuation shall be fifty shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary.

⁴‘Or if the person is a female, then your valuation shall be thirty shekels.

⁵‘If the person is between five years and twenty years of age, then your valuation for the male shall be twenty shekels and for the female ten shekels.

⁶‘But if the child is between one month and five years of age, then your valuation shall be five shekels of silver for the

male and three shekels for the female.

⁷‘If the person is sixty years old and above, your valuation shall be fifteen shekels for the male, and ten shekels for the female.

⁸‘But if the person is too poor to pay your valuation, then he shall be placed before the priest, and the priest shall value him; according to the ability of the one who vowed, the priest shall value him.

⁹‘Now if it is an animal of the kind which men can present as an offering to the LORD, any such that one gives to the LORD shall be holy.

¹⁰‘He shall not replace it or exchange it, a good for a bad, or a bad for a good; but if he does exchange an animal for an animal, then both the original offering and its substitute shall be holy.

¹¹‘If it is any unclean animal of the kind which men do not present as an offering to the LORD, then he shall bring the animal before the priest, ¹²and the priest shall value it as either good or bad; it shall be as you, the priest, value it.

¹³‘But if he ever *wishes to* redeem it, then he shall add one-fifth of it to your valuation.

¹⁴‘If a man consecrates his house as sacred to the LORD, the priest shall appraise it as either good or bad; as the priest appraises it, so shall it stand.

¹⁵‘If the one who consecrates his house should *wish to* redeem it, then he shall add one-fifth of your valuation price to it, so that it may be his.

¹⁶‘And if a man consecrates to the LORD part of a field of his own property, then your valuation shall be proportionate to

the seed needed for it; a homer of barley seed shall be valued at fifty shekels of silver.

¹⁷‘If he consecrates his field during the Year of Jubilee, it shall stand according to your valuation.

¹⁸‘But if he consecrates his field after the Jubilee, then the priest shall calculate the price for him in proportion to the years that remain until the Year of Jubilee; and it shall be deducted from your valuation.

¹⁹‘If the one who consecrates the field should ever wish to redeem it, then he shall add one-fifth of the appraisal price to it, so that it may return to him.

²⁰‘If he does not redeem the field, but has sold it to another man, it may no longer be redeemed.

²¹‘When the field reverts in the Jubilee, the field shall be holy to the LORD, like a field set apart (devoted); the priest shall possess it as his property.

²²‘Or if a man consecrates to the LORD a field which he has bought, which is not part of the field of his [ancestral] property,
²³then the priest shall calculate for him the amount of your valuation up to the Year of Jubilee; and the man shall give that [amount] on that day as a holy thing to the LORD.

²⁴‘In the Year of Jubilee the field shall return to the one from whom it was purchased, to whom the land belonged [as his ancestral inheritance].

²⁵‘Every valuation of yours shall be in accordance with the sanctuary shekel; twenty gerahs shall make a shekel.

²⁶‘However, the firstborn among animals, which as a firstborn belongs to the LORD, no man may consecrate, whether an ox or a sheep. It is [already] the LORD’s.

²⁷‘If it is among the unclean animals, the owner may redeem it in accordance with your valuation, and add one-fifth to it; or if it is not redeemed, then it shall be sold in accordance with your valuation.

²⁸‘But nothing that a man sets apart [that is, devotes as an offering] to the LORD out of all that he has, of man or of animal or of the fields of his own property, shall be sold or redeemed. Anything devoted to destruction (banned, cursed) is most holy to the LORD.

²⁹‘No one who may have been set apart among men shall be ransomed [from death], he shall most certainly be put to death.

³⁰‘And all the tithe (tenth part) of the land, whether the seed of the land or the fruit of the tree, is the LORD’s; it is holy to the LORD. [1 Cor 9:11; Gal 6:6]

³¹‘If a man wishes to redeem any part of his tithe, he shall add one-fifth to it.

³²‘For every tithe of the herd or flock, whatever passes under the [shepherd’s] staff, the tenth one shall be holy to the LORD. [2 Cor 9:7–9]

³³‘The man is not to be concerned whether *the animal* is good or bad, nor shall he exchange it. But if he does exchange it, then both it and its substitute shall become holy; it shall not be redeemed.”

³⁴These are the commandments which the LORD commanded Moses on Mount Sinai for the children of Israel. [Rom 10:4; Heb 4:2; 12:18–29]

Numbers

Author: | Moses
Date: | About 1440
BC

The book of Numbers offers us a great lesson for the battle of the mind. It helps us understand the power of our words, and all our words begin with our thoughts. In Numbers, the Israelites began to think about the difficulties they faced as they tried to walk through the wilderness to reach the Promised Land. The more they thought about their hardships, the more they began to speak about them. Before long, they were complaining and speaking against the Lord.

Part of winning the battle of the mind involves learning to discipline our words. When we go through difficult times, we can think negative thoughts and speak words of complaint, making the situation worse, or we can think positive thoughts and speak optimistic words that will help give us the strength to overcome adversity. We have the freedom to choose how we think and how we speak. Let's learn from the book of Numbers not to think pessimistic thoughts that lead

to complaining.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM NUMBERS:

When we keep our eyes on our problems, we feel defeated and discouraged (see Numbers 13:31–32), but when we realize God is bigger than our problems, we can experience victory.

Any kind of challenge or difficulty may make us want to complain, give up, or question God's wisdom as He leads us through life (see Numbers 21:4–5). We need to resist the urge to complain, determine to keep following God, and trust His good plans.

To speak against the Lord is sin (see Numbers 21:7). Always use your words to speak in ways that honor, praise, thank, and glorify Him.

VERSES FOR VICTORY:

The LORD bless you, and keep you [protect you, sustain you, and guard you]; the LORD make His face shine upon you [with favor], and be gracious to you [surrounding you with lovingkindness]; the LORD lift up His countenance (face) upon you [with divine approval], and give you peace [a tranquil heart and life]. | Numbers 6:24–26

The LORD is with us. Do not fear. | Numbers 14:9

THE FOURTH BOOK OF MOSES, CALLED NUMBERS

1 THE LORD spoke [by special revelation] to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai in the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle) on the first day of the second month in the second year after the Israelites came out of the land of Egypt, saying,

²“Take a census of all the congregation of the sons of Israel, by their families (clans), by their fathers’ households, according to the number of names, every male, head by head

³from twenty years old and upward, all in Israel who *are able to* go out to war. You and Aaron shall number them, army by army.

⁴“And with you there shall be a man [to assist you] from each tribe, each being the head of his father’s household.

⁵“These then are the names of the men who shall stand with you: from [the tribe of] Reuben, Elizur the son of Shedeur;

⁶from [the tribe of] Simeon, Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai;

⁷from [the tribe of] Judah, Nahshon the son of Amminadab;

⁸from [the tribe of] Issachar, Nethanel the son of Zuar;

⁹from [the tribe of] Zebulun, Eliab the son of Helon;

¹⁰from the sons (descendants) of Joseph: from [the tribe of]

Ephraim, Elishama the son of Ammihud; from [the tribe of] Manasseh, Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur;

¹¹from [the tribe of] Benjamin, Abidan the son of Gideoni;

¹²from [the tribe of] Dan, Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai;

¹³from [the tribe of] Asher, Pagiel the son of Ochran;

¹⁴from [the tribe of] Gad, Eliasaph the son of Deuel;

¹⁵from [the tribe of] Naphtali, Ahira the son of Enan.

¹⁶“These men were the ones called from the congregation, the leaders of their fathers’ (ancestors’) tribes; they were the heads of thousands [the highest ranking officers] in Israel.”

¹⁷So Moses and Aaron took these men who were designated by name,

¹⁸and assembled all the congregation on the first day of the second month, and they registered by ancestry in their families (clans), by their fathers’ households, according to the number of names from twenty years old and upward, head by head,

¹⁹just as the LORD had commanded Moses. So he numbered them in the Wilderness of Sinai.

²⁰The sons of Reuben, Israel’s (Jacob’s) firstborn, their generations, by their families (clans), by their fathers’ households, according to the number of names, head by head, every male from twenty years old and upward, all who *were able to go to war*:

²¹those of the tribe of Reuben numbered 46,500.

POWERPOINT

The book of Numbers opens with God asking Moses to take a census of the people of Israel and to count “every male, head by head” (Num. 1:2). Talk about detailed work! This should remind us that God is concerned about every person and that He pays attention to the details of our lives. If something in your life seems like an insignificant detail in the grand scheme of things but is very important to you, remember that God sees and knows you individually and that the details of your life are important to Him.



²²Of the sons of Simeon, their descendants, by their families (clans), by their fathers' households, their numbered men according to the number of names, head by head, every

male from twenty years old and upward, all who *were able to* go to war:

²³those of the tribe of Simeon numbered 59,300.

²⁴Of the sons of Gad, their descendants, by their families (clans), by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, all who *were able to go to war*:

²⁵those of the tribe of Gad numbered 45,650.

²⁶Of the sons of Judah, their descendants, by their families (clans), by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, all who *were able to go to war*:

²⁷those of the tribe of Judah numbered 74,600.

²⁸Of the sons of Issachar, their descendants, by their families (clans), by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, all who *were able to go to war*:

²⁹those of the tribe of Issachar numbered 54,400.

³⁰Of the sons of Zebulun, their descendants, by their families (clans), by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, all who *were able to go to war*:

³¹those of the tribe of Zebulun numbered 57,400.

³²Of the sons of Joseph: the sons (descendants) of Ephraim, their descendants, by their families (clans), by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, all who *were able to go to war*:

³³those of the tribe of Ephraim numbered 40,500.

³⁴Of the sons of Manasseh, their descendants, by their families (clans), by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, all who *were able to go to war*:

³⁵those of the tribe of Manasseh numbered 32,200.

³⁶Of the sons of Benjamin, their descendants, by their families (clans), by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, all who *were able to go to war*:

³⁷those of the tribe of Benjamin numbered 35,400.

³⁸Of the sons of Dan, their descendants, by their families (clans), by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, all who *were able to go to war*:

³⁹those of the tribe of Dan numbered 62,700.

⁴⁰Of the sons of Asher, their descendants, by their families (clans), by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, all who *were able to go to war*:

⁴¹those of the tribe of Asher numbered 41,500.

⁴²Of the sons of Naphtali, their descendants, by their families (clans), by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, all who *were able to go to war*:

⁴³those of the tribe of Naphtali numbered 53,400.

⁴⁴These were the ones who were numbered, whom Moses and Aaron numbered, with the leaders of Israel, twelve men, each representing his fathers' household.

⁴⁵So all those numbered of the sons of Israel, by their fathers' households, from twenty years old and upward, all who *were able to go to war* in Israel,

⁴⁶all who were numbered were 603,550.

⁴⁷The Levites, however, were not numbered among them by their fathers' tribe.

⁴⁸For the LORD had said to Moses,

⁴⁹“Only the tribe of Levi you shall not number, nor shall you take their census among the sons of Israel [since they are unavailable to go to war].

⁵⁰“But appoint the Levites over the tabernacle (sanctuary) of the Testimony, and over all its furnishings and all things that belong to it. They shall carry the tabernacle [when traveling] and all its furnishings, and they shall take care of it and camp around it.

⁵¹“When the tabernacle is to go forward, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle is to [be set up for] camp, the Levites shall set it up. But the layman (non-Levite) who approaches the tabernacle shall be put to death.

⁵²“The Israelites shall camp according to their armies, every man by his own camp and every man by his own [tribal] standard (banner).

⁵³“But the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the Testimony, so that there will be no wrath against the congregation of the Israelites. The Levites shall be in charge of the tabernacle of the Testimony.”

⁵⁴Thus the sons of Israel did *these things*; according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses, so they did.

2 THE LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,

²“The sons of Israel shall camp, each by his own standard, with the banners of their fathers’ households; they shall camp around the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle), but at a distance.

³“Those who camp on the east side toward the sunrise *shall be* of the standard of the camp of Judah, by their armies; and Nahshon the son of Amminadab shall lead the sons of Judah,

⁴and his army as numbered totaled 74,600.

⁵“Next to Judah [on the east side] the tribe of Issachar shall encamp; and Nethanel the son of Zuar shall lead the sons of Issachar,

⁶and his army as numbered totaled 54,400.

⁷“Then [also on the east side] the tribe of Zebulun; and Eliab the son of Helon shall lead the sons of Zebulun,

⁸and his army as numbered totaled 57,400.

⁹“The total of the numbered men [in the three tribes on the east side] in the camp of Judah was 186,400, by their armies. They shall move out first [on the march].

¹⁰“On the south side shall be the standard of the camp of Reuben, by their armies; and Elizur the son of Shedeur shall lead the sons of Reuben,

¹¹and his army as numbered totaled 46,500.

¹²“Those who camp next to Reuben [on the south side] shall be the tribe of Simeon; and Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai shall lead the sons of Simeon,

¹³and his army as numbered totaled 59,300.

¹⁴“Then [completing the south side] the tribe of Gad; and Eliasaph the son of Reuel (Deuel) shall lead the sons of Gad,

¹⁵and his army as numbered totaled 45,650.

¹⁶“The total of the numbered men [in the three tribes on the south side] in the camp of Reuben was 151,450, by their armies. They shall move out second [on the march].

¹⁷“Then the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle) shall move out with the camp of the Levites in the middle of the [other] camps; just as they camp so shall they move out, every man in his place by their standards.

¹⁸“On the west side shall be the standard of the camp of Ephraim, by their armies; and Elishama the son of Ammihud shall lead the sons of Ephraim,

¹⁹and his army as numbered totaled 40,500.

²⁰“Beside Ephraim [on the west side] shall be the tribe of Manasseh; and Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur shall lead the sons of Manasseh,

²¹and his army as numbered totaled 32,200.

²²“Then [completing the west side shall be] the tribe of Benjamin; and Abidan the son of Gideon shall lead the sons of Benjamin,

²³and his army as numbered totaled 35,400.

²⁴“The total of the numbered men [of the three tribes on the west side] in the camp of Ephraim was 108,100, by their armies. They shall move out in third place.

²⁵“On the north side shall be the standard of the camp of Dan, by their armies; and Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai shall lead the sons of Dan,

²⁶and his army as numbered totaled 62,700.

²⁷“Encamped next to Dan [on the north side] shall be the tribe of Asher; and Pagiel the son of Ochran shall lead the sons of Asher,

²⁸and his army as numbered totaled 41,500.

²⁹“Then [completing the north side] *comes* the tribe of Naphtali; and Ahira the son of Enan shall lead the sons of Naphtali,

³⁰and his army as numbered totaled 53,400.

³¹“The total of the numbered men [of the three tribes on the north side] in the camp of Dan was 157,600. They shall move out last, standard after standard.”

³²These are the men of the Israelites [twenty years old and upward] as numbered by their fathers’ households. The total of the numbered men of the camps by their armies, 603,550.

³³But the Levites were not numbered with the [other] Israelites, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

³⁴Thus the Israelites did [as ordered]; according to everything the LORD had commanded Moses, so they camped by their standards, and so they moved out, everyone with his family (clan), according to his fathers’ household.

3 NOW THESE are the *records of the* generations of Aaron and Moses in the day when the LORD spoke [by special revelation] with Moses on Mount Sinai.

²These are the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadab the firstborn, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

³These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the priests who were anointed, whom Aaron consecrated *and* ordained to minister in the priest's office.

⁴But Nadab and Abihu died in the presence of the LORD when they offered strange (unholy, unacceptable, inappropriate) fire before the LORD in the Wilderness of Sinai; and they had no sons. So Eleazar and Ithamar served as priests in the presence *and* under the supervision of Aaron their father. [Lev 10:1–4]

⁵Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

⁶“Bring the tribe of Levi near and present them before Aaron the priest, so that they may serve him.

⁷“They shall carry out the duties for him and for the whole congregation before the Tent of Meeting, doing the service of the tabernacle.

⁸“They shall also take care of all the furnishings *and* utensils of the Tent of Meeting, and [attend to] the duties of the Israelites, doing the service of the tabernacle.

⁹“You shall give the Levites to Aaron and to his sons [as servants and helpers]; they are to be given wholly to him from among the Israelites.

POWERPOINT

In Numbers 3:5–10, God gave specific responsibilities to the Levites, and later to the sons of Aaron and the sons of Kohath.

He knew and communicated exactly what each group needed to do. Likewise God has given each of us responsibilities in various areas of our lives. What specific responsibilities has He given you? Ask Him to help you fulfill them.



¹⁰“So you shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall observe *and* attend to their priesthood; but the layman (non-Levite) who approaches [the holy things] shall be put to death.”

¹¹Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

¹²“Behold, I have taken the Levites from among the sons of Israel instead of *and* as a substitute for every firstborn, that is,

the first that opens the womb among the Israelites. So the Levites shall be Mine,

¹³for all the firstborn are Mine. On the day that I killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I consecrated for Myself all the firstborn in Israel, both man and animal. They shall be mine; I am the LORD.”

¹⁴Then the LORD spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, saying,

¹⁵“Number the sons of Levi by their fathers’ households, by their families (clans). You shall number every male from a month old and upward.”

¹⁶So Moses numbered them just as he was commanded by the word (mouth) of the LORD.

¹⁷These are the [three] sons of Levi by their names: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

¹⁸These are the names of the [two] sons of Gershon by their families: Libni and Shimei;

¹⁹and the [four] sons of Kohath by their families: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel;

²⁰and the [two] sons of Merari by their families: Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites by their fathers’ households.

²¹Of Gershon were the families of the Libnites and of the Shimeites. These are the families of the Gershonites.

²²The males who were numbered, every male from a month old and upward totaled 7,500.

²³The families of the Gershonites were to camp behind the tabernacle on the west,

²⁴and the leader of the fathers' households of the Gershonites was Eliasaph the son of Lael.

²⁵Now the responsibilities of the sons of Gershon in the Tent of Meeting *involved* the tabernacle and the tent, its covering, and the curtain for the doorway of the Tent of Meeting,

²⁶and the hangings of the courtyard, the curtain for the doorway of the courtyard which is around the tabernacle and the altar, its tent ropes, and all the service concerning them.

²⁷Of Kohath were the families of the Amramites, the Izharites, the Hebronites, and the Uzzielites; these are the families of the Kohathites.

²⁸The males who were numbered, every male from a month old and upward *totaled* 8,600, attending to the duties of the sanctuary.

²⁹The families of the sons of Kohath were to camp on the south side of the tabernacle,

³⁰and the leader of the fathers' households of the families of the Kohathites was Elizaphan the son of Uzziel.

³¹Now their responsibilities *involved* the ark, the table [on which the bread of the Presence was placed], the lampstand, the altars, the utensils of the sanctuary with which the priests minister, and the curtain, and all the service concerning them.

³²Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, was chief of the leaders of the Levites; he supervised those who performed the duties of the sanctuary.

³³Of Merari were the families of the Mahlites and the Mushites; these are the families of Merari.

³⁴The males who were numbered, every male from a month

old and upward *totaled* 6,200.

³⁵The leader of the fathers' households of the families of Merari was Zuriel the son of Abihail. The Merarites were to camp on the north side of the tabernacle.

³⁶Now the appointed responsibilities of the sons of Merari *involved* the frames of the tabernacle, its bars, its pillars, its sockets *or* bases, and all the equipment, and all the service concerning them,

³⁷and the pillars around the courtyard with their bases and their pegs and their cords (tent ropes).

³⁸Now those to camp before the tabernacle toward the east, before the Tent of Meeting, toward the sunrise, were to be Moses, and Aaron and his sons, performing the duties of the sanctuary for whatever was required of the Israelites; and the layman (non-Levite) who approached [the sanctuary] was to be put to death.

³⁹All the men of the Levites whom Moses and Aaron numbered at the command of the LORD, by their families, every male from a month old and upward, were 22,000.

⁴⁰Then the LORD said to Moses, "Number every firstborn male of the Israelites from a month old and upward, and make a list of their names.

⁴¹"You shall take the Levites for Me instead of *and* as a substitute for all the firstborn among the Israelites. I am the LORD; and *you shall take* the cattle of the Levites instead of *and* as a substitute for all the firstborn among the cattle of the Israelites."

⁴²So Moses numbered all the firstborn among the Israelites, just as the LORD had commanded him;

⁴³and all the firstborn males from a month old and upward as numbered were 22,273 [273 more than the Levites].

⁴⁴Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

⁴⁵“Take the Levites [for Me] instead of all the firstborn among the sons of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle. And the Levites shall be Mine. I am the LORD.

⁴⁶“For the ransom (redemption price) of the 273 of the firstborn of the Israelites who outnumber the Levites,

⁴⁷you shall take five shekels apiece, per head, you shall take them in terms of the sanctuary shekel (the shekel is twenty gerahs),

⁴⁸and give the money, the ransom (redemption price) of those who outnumber the Levites to Aaron and to his sons.”

⁴⁹So Moses took the ransom (redemption) money from those who were in excess, beyond those ransomed by the Levites;

⁵⁰from the firstborn of the Israelites he took the money in terms of the sanctuary shekel, 1,365 shekels.

⁵¹Then Moses gave the ransom money to Aaron and to his sons at the command of the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

4 THEN THE LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,

²“Take a census of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, by their families (clans), by their fathers’ households,

³from thirty years old and upward, even to fifty years old,

all who enter the service to do the work in the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle).

⁴“This is the work *and* responsibility of the sons of Kohath in the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle): the most holy things.

⁵“When the camp prepares to move out, Aaron and his sons shall come into *the sanctuary* and take down the veil (curtain) screening off *the Holy of Holies*, and cover the ark of the testimony with it;

⁶and they shall put on it a covering of porpoise skin (fine leather), and shall spread over that a cloth of pure blue, and shall insert the carrying poles of the ark.

⁷“Over the table of the bread of the Presence they shall spread a cloth of blue and put on it the plates, the dishes [for incense], the sacrificial bowls, the jars for the drink offering, and the continual bread [of the Presence] shall be on it.

⁸“They shall spread over them a cloth of scarlet, and cover that with a covering of porpoise skin, and they shall insert its carrying poles.

⁹“Then they shall take a blue cloth and cover the lampstand for the light, along with its lamps, its wick cutters, its trays, and all the oil vessels, by which it is supplied;

¹⁰and they shall put the lampstand and all its utensils in a covering of porpoise skin, and shall put it on the carrying bars.

¹¹“Over the golden [incense] altar they shall spread a blue cloth, and cover it with a covering of porpoise skin, and shall insert its carrying poles;

¹²and they shall take all the utensils of the service with which they minister in the sanctuary, and put them in a blue cloth, and cover them with a covering of porpoise skin, and put

them on the carrying bars.

¹³“Then they shall clean away the ashes from the altar [of burnt offering], and spread a purple cloth over it.

¹⁴“They shall also put on it all its utensils with which they minister in connection with it: the pans, the meat-forks, the shovels, the basins, and all the utensils of the altar; and they shall spread a covering of porpoise skin over it, and insert its carrying poles.

¹⁵“When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all its furniture, as the camp sets out, after all that [is done, but not before], the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them [using the poles], so that they do not touch the holy things, and die. These are the things in the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle) which the sons of Kohath are to carry.

¹⁶“The responsibility of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, is the oil for the light, the fragrant incense, the continual grain offering, and the anointing oil—the responsibility of all the tabernacle and everything that is in it, with the sanctuary and its furnishings.”

¹⁷Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,

¹⁸“Do not cut off (eliminate, destroy) the tribe of the families of the Kohathites [who are only Levites and not priests], from among the Levites [by exposing them to the sin of touching the most holy things].

¹⁹“But deal with them in this way, so that they may live and not die when they approach the most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in and assign each of them to his [specific] work and to his load [to be carried on the march].

²⁰“But the Kohathites shall not go in to see the holy

things, even for an instant, or they will die.”

²¹Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

²²“Take a census of the sons of Gershon also, by their fathers’ households, by their families.

²³“From thirty years and upward to fifty years old, you shall number them; all who enter for service to do the work in the Tent of Meeting.

²⁴“This is the service of the families of the Gershonites, in serving and in carrying [when on the march]:

²⁵they shall carry the tent curtains of the tabernacle, and the Tent of Meeting, its covering and the covering of porpoise skin (fine leather) that is on top of it, and the curtain for the doorway of the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle),

²⁶and the hangings of the courtyard, and the curtain for the entrance of the gate of the courtyard which is around the tabernacle and the altar, and their tent ropes, and all the equipment for their service; and all that is to be done, they shall perform.

²⁷“Aaron and his sons shall direct all the service of the sons of the Gershonites, all they have to carry and all they have to do. You shall assign to them as a duty all that they are to carry [on the march].

²⁸“This is the service of the families of the sons of Gershon in the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle); and their duties *shall be* under the direction of Ithamar the son of Aaron, the [high] priest.

²⁹“As for the sons of Merari, you shall number them by their families (clans), by their fathers’ households;

³⁰from thirty years and upward to fifty years old, you shall

number them, everyone who enters the service to do the work of the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle).

³¹“This is what they are assigned to carry [on the march], according to all their service in the Tent of Meeting: the boards [for the framework] of the tabernacle and its bars and its pillars and its sockets *or* bases,

³²and the pillars around the courtyard with their sockets *or* bases and their pegs and their cords (tent ropes), with all their equipment and with all their [accessories for] service; and you shall assign *each man* by name the items he is to carry [on the march].

³³“This is the work of the families of the sons of Merari, according to all their tasks in the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle), under the direction of Ithamar the son of Aaron, the priest.”

³⁴So Moses and Aaron and the leaders of the congregation numbered the sons of the Kohathites by their families (clans) and by their fathers' households,

³⁵from thirty years and upward even to fifty years old, everyone who enters the service to do the work in the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle);

³⁶the men who were numbered by their families were 2,750.

³⁷These were numbered of the families of the Kohathites, all who did service in the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle), whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment of the LORD through Moses.

³⁸The men who were numbered of the sons of Gershon, by their families (clans), and by their fathers' households,

³⁹from thirty years and upward even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service to do the work in the Tent of

Meeting (tabernacle);

⁴⁰the men who were numbered by their families, by their fathers' households, were 2,630.

⁴¹These were numbered men of the families of the sons of Gershon, everyone who served in the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle), whom Moses and Aaron numbered just as the LORD had commanded.

⁴²The men who were numbered of the sons of Merari, by their families (clans), by their fathers' households,

⁴³from thirty years and upward even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle);

⁴⁴the men who were numbered by their families were 3,200.


⁴⁵These are the men who were numbered of the families of the sons of Merari, whom Moses and Aaron numbered in accordance with the commandment of the LORD through Moses.

⁴⁶All the men who were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron and the leaders of Israel counted by their families (clans) and by their fathers' households,

⁴⁷from thirty years and upward even to fifty years old, everyone who could enter to do the work of service and the work of carrying in the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle);

⁴⁸the men that were numbered were 8,580.

⁴⁹According to the commandment of the LORD through Moses, they were numbered, each *assigned* to his work of serving and carrying. Thus they were numbered by him, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.



! REMEMBER, any time the enemy attacks your mind, the battle belongs to the Lord.

5 THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

²“Command the Israelites to send away from the camp every leper and everyone who has a discharge, and whoever is defiled [that is, ceremonially unclean] by [coming in contact with] the dead.

³“You shall send away both male and female; you shall send them outside the camp so that they will not defile their camp where I dwell in their midst.”

⁴The Israelites did so, and sent them outside the camp; just as the LORD had said to Moses, so the Israelites did.

⁵And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

⁶“Say to the Israelites, ‘When a man or woman commits any of the sins of mankind [against other people], thus breaking faith with the LORD, and that person is guilty,

⁷then he shall confess the sin which he has committed, and he shall make restitution for his wrong in full, and add a fifth to it, and give it to [the person] whom he has wronged.

⁸‘But if the man [who was wronged] has no redeemer (relative) to whom the restitution may be made, it is to be given to the LORD for the priest, besides the ram of atonement with which atonement is made for the offender.

⁹“Also every contribution pertaining to all the holy gifts of the Israelites which they offer to the priest, shall be his.

¹⁰“And every man’s holy gifts shall be the priest’s; whatever any man gives the priest, it becomes his.””

¹¹Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

¹²“Speak to the Israelites and say to them, ‘If any man’s wife goes astray (deviates) and is unfaithful to him,

¹³and a man is intimate with her, and it is hidden from the eyes of her husband and it is kept secret, although she has defiled herself, and there is no witness against her and she has not been caught in the act,

¹⁴and if a spirit (sense, attitude) of jealousy comes over him and he is jealous *and* angry at his wife who has defiled herself—or if a spirit of jealousy comes over him and he is jealous of his wife when she has not defiled herself—

¹⁵then the man shall bring his wife to the priest, and he shall bring as an offering for her, a tenth of an ephah of barley meal; he shall not pour oil on it nor put frankincense on it [the symbols of favor and joy], because it is a grain offering of jealousy, a memorial grain offering, a reminder of [the consequences of] wickedness.

¹⁶Then the priest shall have her approach and have her stand before the LORD,

¹⁷and the priest shall take holy water [from the sacred basin] in an earthenware vessel; and he shall take some of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle and put it in the water.

¹⁸“The priest shall then have the woman stand before the LORD, and let the hair of the woman’s head hang loose, and put

the memorial grain offering in her hands, which is the jealousy offering, and in the hand of the priest is to be the water of bitterness that brings a curse.

¹⁹Then the priest shall have her take an oath and say to the woman, “If no man has lain with you and if you have not gone astray into uncleanness [while married], then be immune to this water of bitterness that brings a curse;

²⁰but if you have gone astray [while married] and you have defiled yourself and a man other than your husband has been intimate with you”

²¹(then the priest shall have the woman swear the oath of the curse, and say to the woman), “The LORD make you a curse and an oath among your people when the LORD makes your thigh waste away and your abdomen swell;

²²and this water that brings a curse shall go into your stomach, and make your abdomen swell and your thigh waste away.” And the woman shall say, “Amen. Amen (so let it be).”

²³The priest shall then write these curses on a scroll and shall wash them off into the water of bitterness;

²⁴and he shall make the woman drink the water of bitterness that brings a curse, and the water that brings the curse will go into her and *cause* bitterness.

²⁵Then the priest shall take the grain offering of jealousy out of the woman’s hand, and he shall wave the grain offering before the LORD and offer it on the altar.

²⁶Then the priest shall take a handful of the grain offering as the memorial portion of it and offer it up in smoke on the altar, and afterward he shall make the woman drink the water.

²⁷When he has made her drink the water, then it shall come

about, that if she has defiled herself and has been unfaithful to her husband, the curse water will go into her and *cause* bitterness and cause her abdomen to swell and her thigh to waste away, and the woman will become a curse among her people.

²⁸“But if the woman has not defiled herself and is clean, then she will be free and conceive children.

²⁹“This is the law of jealousy: when a wife goes astray [while married] and defiles herself,

³⁰or when a spirit (sense, attitude) of jealousy *and* suspicion comes on a man and he is jealous of his wife; then he shall have the woman stand before the LORD, and the priest shall apply this law to her.

³¹“Further, the husband will be free from guilt, but that woman [if guilty] shall bear her guilt.”

6 AGAIN THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

²“Say to the sons of Israel, ‘When a man or a woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, that is, one separated *and* dedicated to the LORD,

³he shall abstain from wine and strong drink; he shall drink no vinegar, whether made from wine or strong drink, nor shall he drink any grape juice nor eat fresh or dried grapes. [Luke 1:15]

⁴“All the time of his separation he shall not eat anything produced from the grapevine, from the seeds even to the skins.

⁵“All the time of the vow of his separation no razor shall be used on his head. Until the time of his separation to the LORD is

completed, he shall be holy, and shall let the hair of his head grow long.

⁶‘All the time that he separates himself to the LORD he shall not go near a dead body.

⁷‘He shall not make himself [ceremonially] unclean for his father, mother, brother, or sister, when they die, because [the responsibility for] his separation to God is on his head.

⁸‘All the time of his separation he is holy to the LORD.

⁹‘If a man dies very suddenly beside him, and he defiles his dedicated head, then he shall shave his head on the day that he becomes [ceremonially] clean; he shall shave it on the seventh day [the end of the purification period].

¹⁰‘On the eighth day he shall bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest, to the doorway of the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle).

¹¹‘The priest shall offer the one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering and make atonement for him concerning his sin because of the [dead] body. He shall consecrate his head the same day,

¹²and he shall dedicate himself to the LORD for the time of his separation and shall bring a male lamb a year old as a guilt offering; but the previous days will be void *and* lost, because his separation was defiled.

¹³‘Now this is the law of the Nazirite when the days of his separation *and* dedication are fulfilled: he shall bring the offering to the doorway of the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle).

¹⁴and he shall offer his gift to the LORD: one male lamb a year old without blemish as a burnt offering, and one female lamb a year old without blemish as a sin offering, and one ram

without blemish as a peace offering,

¹⁵and a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, and wafers of unleavened bread spread with oil, along with their grain offering and their drink offering.

¹⁶Then the priest shall present them before the LORD and shall offer the person's sin offering and his burnt offering.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



I pray, Lord, that You would bless and keep me, protecting me, sustaining me, and guarding me, that You would make Your face shine upon me with favor, and be gracious to me, surrounding me with lovingkindness. I pray that You would lift up Your countenance upon me with divine approval, and give me peace.

• adapted from Numbers 6:24–26

¹⁷“He shall also offer the ram as a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD, together with the basket of unleavened bread; the priest shall offer also its grain offering and its drink offering.

¹⁸“The Nazirite shall shave his dedicated head at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle), and take the dedicated hair of his head and put it on the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offerings.

¹⁹“The priest shall take the boiled shoulder of the ram, and one unleavened [ring-shaped] loaf out of the basket, and one unleavened flat cake and shall put them on the hands of the Nazirite after he has shaved his dedicated *hair*.

²⁰“Then the priest shall wave them as a wave offering before the LORD; they are a holy portion for the priest, together with the breast that is waved and the thigh that is offered by lifting up; and afterward the Nazirite may drink wine.’

²¹“This is the law for the Nazirite who vows his offering to the LORD for his separation, besides what else he is able to afford, according to the vow which he has vowed; so shall he do according to the law for his separation *and* abstinence [as a Nazirite].” [Acts 21:24, 26]

²²Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

²³“Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, ‘This is the way you shall bless the Israelites. Say to them:

POWERPOINT

No matter what you may be facing, God can give you peace. Numbers 6:26 indicates that peace is “a tranquil heart and life.” If you are frustrated, confused, or anxious in any way, remember this verse and remind yourself often that God is a God of peace who wants to give you tranquility in your heart, in your mind, and in your life.



- ²⁴The LORD bless you, and keep you [protect you, sustain you, and guard you];
- ²⁵The LORD make His face shine upon you [with favor],
And be gracious to you [surrounding you with lovingkindness];
- ²⁶The LORD lift up His countenance (face) upon you [with divine approval],
And give you peace [a tranquil heart and life].’

27“So Aaron and his sons shall put My name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them.”

1 ON THE day that Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle and had anointed and consecrated it and all its furniture, and the altar and all its utensils; he also anointed them and consecrated them [for holy use].

²Then the leaders of Israel, the heads of their fathers' households, made offerings. (These were the leaders of the tribes; they were the ones who were over the men who were numbered.)

³They brought their offering before the LORD, six covered carts and twelve oxen; a cart for each two of the leaders and an ox for each one; and they presented them before the tabernacle.

⁴Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

⁵“Accept *these things* from them, so that they may be used in the service of the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle), and give them to the Levites, to each man according to his service.”

⁶So Moses took the carts and the oxen and gave them to the Levites.

⁷He gave two carts and four oxen to the sons of Gershon, according to their service [in transporting the tabernacle];

⁸and he gave four carts and eight oxen to the sons of Merari, according to their service [in transporting the tabernacle], under the supervision of Ithamar the son of Aaron, the [high] priest.

⁹But to the sons of Kohath he gave nothing, because they were assigned the care of the holy things which they carried on their shoulders [when the tabernacle was moved].

¹⁰The leaders offered the dedication *sacrifices* for the altar on the day that it was anointed; and they offered their sacrifice before the altar.

¹¹Then the LORD said to Moses, “Let them present their offerings, one leader each day, for the dedication of the altar.”

¹²Now the one who presented his offering on the first day was Nahshon the son of Amminadab, of the tribe of Judah;

¹³and his offering was one silver dish, the weight of which was a hundred and thirty *shekels*, one silver basin of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering;

¹⁴one golden bowl of ten *shekels*, full of incense;

¹⁵one young bull, one ram, one male lamb one year old, as a burnt offering;

¹⁶one male goat as a sin offering;

¹⁷and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five male lambs one year old. This was the offering of Nahshon the son of Amminadab [from the tribe of Judah].

¹⁸On the second day Nethanel the son of Zuar, leader [of the tribe] of Issachar, presented [his offering];

¹⁹he presented as his offering one silver dish, the weight of which was a hundred and thirty *shekels*, one silver basin of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering;

²⁰one golden bowl of ten *shekels*, full of incense;

²¹one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb one year old, as a burnt offering;

²²one male goat as a sin offering;

²³and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five male lambs one year old. This was the offering of Nethanel the son of Zuar [from the tribe of Issachar].

²⁴On the third day [it was] Eliab the son of Helon, leader [of the tribe] of the sons of Zebulun [who presented his offering];

²⁵his offering was one silver dish, the weight of which was a hundred and thirty *shekels*, and one silver basin of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering;

²⁶one golden bowl of ten *shekels*, full of incense;

²⁷one young bull, one ram, one male lamb one year old, as a burnt offering;

²⁸one male goat as a sin offering;

²⁹and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five male lambs one year old. This was the offering of Eliab the son of Helon [from the tribe of Zebulun].

³⁰On the fourth day [it was] Elizur the son of Shedeur, leader [of the tribe] of the sons of Reuben [who presented his offering];

³¹his offering was one silver dish, the weight of which was a hundred and thirty *shekels*, and one silver basin of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them

full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering;

³²one golden bowl of ten *shekels*, full of incense;

³³one young bull, one ram, one male lamb one year old, as a burnt offering;

³⁴one male goat as a sin offering;

³⁵and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five male lambs one year old. This was the offering of Elizur the son of Shedeur [from the tribe of Reuben].

³⁶On the fifth day [it was] Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai, leader [of the tribe] of the sons of Simeon [who presented his offering];

³⁷his offering was one silver dish, the weight of which was a hundred and thirty *shekels*, and one silver basin of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering;

³⁸one golden bowl of ten *shekels*, full of incense;

³⁹one young bull, one ram, one male lamb one year old, for a burnt offering;

⁴⁰one male goat as a sin offering;

⁴¹and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five male lambs one year old. This was the offering of Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai [from the tribe of Simeon].

⁴²On the sixth day [it was] Eliasaph the son of Deuel, leader [of the tribe] of the sons of Gad [who presented his offering];

⁴³his offering was one silver dish the weight of which was a hundred and thirty *shekels*, and a silver basin of seventy

shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering;

⁴⁴one golden bowl of ten *shekels*, full of incense;

⁴⁵one young bull, one ram, one male lamb one year old, as a burnt offering;

⁴⁶one male goat as a sin offering;

⁴⁷and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five male lambs one year old. This was the offering of Eliasaph the son of Deuel [from the tribe of Gad].

⁴⁸On the seventh day [it was] Elishama the son of Ammihud, leader [of the tribe] of the sons of Ephraim [who presented his offering];

⁴⁹his offering was one silver dish, the weight of which was a hundred and thirty *shekels*, and one silver basin of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering;

⁵⁰one golden bowl of ten *shekels*, full of incense;

⁵¹one young bull, one ram, one male lamb one year old, as a burnt offering;

⁵²one male goat as a sin offering;

⁵³and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five male lambs one year old. This was the offering of Elishama the son of Ammihud [from the tribe of Ephraim].

⁵⁴On the eighth day [it was] Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur, leader [of the tribe] of the sons of Manasseh [who presented his offering];

⁵⁵his offering was one silver dish the weight of which was a hundred and thirty *shekels*, and one silver basin of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering;

⁵⁶one golden bowl of ten *shekels*, full of incense;

⁵⁷one young bull, one ram, one male lamb one year old, as a burnt offering;

⁵⁸one male goat as a sin offering;

⁵⁹and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five male lambs one year old. This was the offering of Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur [from the tribe of Manasseh].

⁶⁰On the ninth day [it was] Abidan the son of Gideoni, leader [of the tribe] of the sons of Benjamin [who presented his offering];

⁶¹his offering was one silver dish, the weight of which was a hundred and thirty *shekels*, and one silver basin of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering;

⁶²one golden bowl of ten *shekels*, full of incense;

⁶³one young bull, one ram, one male lamb one year old, as a burnt offering;

⁶⁴one male goat as a sin offering;

⁶⁵and as the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five male lambs one year old. This was the offering of Abidan the son of Gideoni [from the tribe of Benjamin].

⁶⁶On the tenth day [it was] Ahiezer the son of

Ammishaddai, leader [of the tribe] of the sons of Dan [who presented his offering];

⁶⁷his offering was one silver dish, the weight of which was a hundred and thirty *shekels*, and one silver basin of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering;

⁶⁸one golden bowl of ten *shekels*, full of incense;

⁶⁹one young bull, one ram, one male lamb one year old, as a burnt offering;

⁷⁰one male goat as a sin offering;

⁷¹and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five male lambs one year old. This was the offering of Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai [from the tribe of Dan].

⁷²On the eleventh day [it was] Pagiel the son of Ochran, leader [of the tribe] of the sons of Asher [who presented his offering];

⁷³his offering was one silver dish, the weight of which was a hundred and thirty *shekels*, and one silver basin of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering;

⁷⁴one golden bowl of ten *shekels*, full of incense;

⁷⁵one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb one year old, as a burnt offering;

⁷⁶one male goat as a sin offering;

⁷⁷and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five male lambs one year old. This was the offering of Pagiel the son of Ochran [from the tribe of Asher].

⁷⁸On the twelfth day [it was] Ahira the son of Enan, leader [of the tribe] of the sons of Naphtali [who presented his offering];

⁷⁹his offering was one silver dish, the weight of which was a hundred and thirty *shekels*, and one silver basin of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering;

⁸⁰one golden bowl of ten *shekels*, full of incense;

⁸¹one young bull, one ram, one male lamb one year old, as a burnt offering;

⁸²one male goat as a sin offering;

⁸³and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five male lambs one year old. This was the offering of Ahira the son of Enan [from the tribe of Naphtali].

⁸⁴This was the dedication offering for the altar from the leaders of Israel on the day when it was anointed: twelve dishes of silver, twelve silver basins, twelve golden bowls;

⁸⁵each dish of silver weighing a hundred and thirty *shekels*, each basin seventy [shekels]; all the silver vessels weighed 2,400 shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary;

⁸⁶the twelve golden bowls, full of incense, weighing ten shekels apiece, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, all the gold of the bowls being a hundred and twenty *shekels*;

⁸⁷all the oxen for the burnt offering were twelve bulls, the rams twelve, the male lambs one year old twelve, together with their grain offering; and the male goats as a sin offering twelve;

⁸⁸and all the oxen for the sacrifice of the peace offerings

were twenty-four bulls, the rams sixty, the male goats sixty, the male lambs one year old sixty. This was the dedication for the altar [of burnt offering] after it was anointed.

⁸⁹Now when Moses went into the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle) to speak with the LORD, he heard the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat (the gold cover) that was on the ark of the Testimony from between the two cherubim; and He spoke [by special revelation] to him.

8 THEN THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

²“Speak to Aaron and say to him, ‘When you set up *and* light the lamps, the seven lamps will shine in front of the lampstand.’”

³And Aaron did so; he set up the lamps at the front of the lampstand, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

⁴Now this was the workmanship of the lampstand: hammered work of gold; from its base to its flowers it was hammered work; according to the pattern which the LORD had shown Moses, so he made the lampstand.

⁵Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

⁶“Take the Levites from among the sons of Israel and cleanse them.

⁷“This is what you shall do to them to [ceremonially] cleanse them: sprinkle the water of purification on them, and let them use a razor over their whole body and wash their clothes, and they will be clean. [Num 19:17, 18]

⁸“Then let them take a young bull and its grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil, and you shall take another young bull

as a sin offering.

⁹“You shall present the Levites before the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle), and you shall also assemble the whole congregation of the children of Israel,

¹⁰and present the Levites before the LORD, and the Israelites shall lay their hands on the Levites.

¹¹“Aaron shall present the Levites before the LORD as a wave offering from the Israelites, so that they may perform the service of the LORD.

¹²“Then the Levites shall lay their hands on the heads of the bulls, then you are to offer the one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering to the LORD, to make atonement for the Levites.

¹³“You shall have the Levites stand before Aaron and his sons and present them as a wave offering to the LORD.

¹⁴“Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the Israelites, and the Levites shall be Mine [in a very special sense].

¹⁵“Then after that the Levites may go in to serve the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle), but you shall cleanse them [first] and present them as a wave offering;

¹⁶for they are wholly given to Me from among the Israelites. I have taken them for Myself instead of all who are born first, the firstborn of all the Israelites.

¹⁷“For all the firstborn among the Israelites are Mine, among the men and among the animals; on the day that I struck down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified *and* set the Israelites apart for Myself.

¹⁸“And I have taken the Levites instead of every firstborn

among the Israelites.

¹⁹“I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the Israelites, to perform the service of the Israelites at the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle) and to make atonement for them, so that there will be no plague among the Israelites if they should approach the sanctuary.”

²⁰Thus Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel did [these things] to the Levites; in accordance with all that the LORD had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so the Israelites did to them.

²¹The Levites, too, purified themselves from sin and they washed their clothes; and Aaron presented them as a wave offering before the LORD, and Aaron made atonement for them to cleanse them.

²²Then after that the Levites went in to perform their service in the Tent of Meeting before Aaron and his sons; just as the LORD had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so they did to them.

²³Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

²⁴“This is what *applies* to the Levites: from twenty-five years old and upward they shall enter to perform service in the work of the Tent of Meeting,

²⁵but at the age of fifty years, they shall retire from the service of the [tabernacle] work and serve no longer.

²⁶They may assist their brothers in the Tent of Meeting to keep an obligation, but they shall do no [heavy or difficult] work. Thus you shall deal with the Levites concerning their obligations.”

9 THE LORD spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying,

²“The sons of Israel are to keep the Passover at its appointed time.

POWERPOINT

God has an appointed time for everything. You may sometimes think you know the best timing for Him to answer a prayer or to do something specific in your life. At times you may feel sure He is running late! When you do, just remember that God's schedule is different than yours. He knows exactly what needs to happen in your life and He will bring it to pass at just the right moment. Keep this thought in mind, and you'll be able to stay more positive and hopeful when answers seem to be delayed.



³“On the fourteenth day of this month at twilight, you shall keep it at its appointed time; according to all its statutes and ordinances you shall keep it.”

⁴So Moses told the Israelites to observe the Passover.

⁵They observed the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight in the Wilderness of Sinai; in accordance with all that the LORD had commanded Moses, so the Israelites did.

⁶But there were certain men who were [ceremonially] unclean because of [touching] the dead body of a man, so they could not observe the Passover on that day; so they came before Moses and Aaron that same day.

⁷Those men said to Moses, “We are [ceremonially] unclean because of [touching] a dead body. Why are we being restrained from presenting the LORD’s offering at its appointed time among the Israelites?”

⁸Therefore, Moses said to them, “Wait, and I will listen to what the LORD will command concerning you.”

⁹Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

¹⁰“Say to the Israelites, ‘If any one of you or of your descendants becomes [ceremonially] unclean because of [touching] a dead body or is on a distant journey, he may, however, observe the Passover to the LORD.

¹¹‘On the fourteenth day of the second month [thirty days later] at twilight, they shall observe it; they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

¹²‘They shall leave none of it until morning nor break any of its bones; in accordance with all the statutes of the Passover they shall observe it. [John 19:36]

¹³‘But the man who is [ceremonially] clean and is not on a journey, and yet does not observe the Passover, that person

shall be cut off from among his people [excluding him from the atonement made for them] because he did not bring the LORD's offering at its appointed time; that man will bear [the penalty of] his sin.

¹⁴“If a stranger lives among you as a resident alien and observes the Passover to the LORD, in accordance with its statutes and its ordinances, so shall he do; you shall have one statute, both for the resident alien and for the native of the land.”

¹⁵Now on the day that the tabernacle was erected, the cloud [of God's presence] covered the tabernacle, that is, the tent of the Testimony; and in the evening it was over the tabernacle, appearing like [a pillar of] fire until the morning. [Ex 13:21]

¹⁶So it was continuously; the cloud covered it *by day*, and the appearance of fire by night.

¹⁷Whenever the cloud was lifted from over the tent (tabernacle), afterward the Israelites would set out; and in the place where the cloud stopped, there the Israelites would camp.

POWERPOINT

In the midst of your busy life, it's important to be able to be like Moses and "wait" to hear what the Lord wants to say to you. Ask Him to help you wait patiently for Him and hear His voice more clearly when He speaks. It is amazing how powerfully God can work when we are willing to be patient and listen.



¹⁸At the LORD's command the Israelites would journey on, and at His command they would camp. As long as the cloud remained over the tabernacle they remained camped.

¹⁹Even when the cloud lingered over the tabernacle for many days, the Israelites would keep their obligation to the LORD and not set out.

²⁰Sometimes the cloud remained only a few days over the tabernacle, and in accordance with the command of the LORD they remained camped. Then at His command they set out.

²¹If sometimes the cloud remained [over the tabernacle] from evening only until morning, when the cloud was lifted in the morning, they would journey on; whether in the daytime or at night, whenever the cloud was lifted, they would set out.

²²Whether it was two days or a month or a year that the cloud [of the LORD's presence] lingered over the tabernacle, staying above it, the Israelites remained camped and did not set out; but when it was lifted, they set out.

²³At the command of the LORD they camped, and at the command of the LORD they journeyed on; they kept their obligation to the LORD, in accordance with the command of the LORD through Moses.

10 THE LORD spoke further to Moses, saying,

²“Make two trumpets of silver; you shall make them of hammered work. You shall use them to summon the congregation and to have the camps move out.

³“When both are blown, all the congregation [that is, all adult males] shall gather before you at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle).

⁴“However, if a single trumpet is blown, then the leaders, heads of the tribes of Israel, shall gather themselves to you.

⁵“When you blow an alarm, the camps on the east side [of the tabernacle] shall set out.

⁶“When you blow an alarm the second time, then the camps on the south side [of the tabernacle] shall set out. They shall blow an alarm whenever they are to move out [on their

journeys].

⁷“When the assembly is to be gathered, you shall blow [the trumpets in short, sharp tones], but without sounding an alarm.

⁸“The sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets; and the trumpets shall be for you a perpetual statute throughout your generations.

⁹“When you go to war in your land against the enemy that attacks you, then sound an alarm with the trumpets, so that you may be remembered before the LORD your God, and you shall be saved from your enemies.

¹⁰“Also in the day of rejoicing, and in your appointed feasts, and at the beginnings of your months, you shall sound the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifice of your peace offerings; and they shall be as a reminder of you before your God. I am the LORD your God.”

¹¹On the twentieth day of the second month in the second year [since leaving Egypt], the cloud [of the Lord’s presence] was lifted from over the tabernacle of the Testimony,

¹²and the Israelites set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sinai, and the cloud [of the LORD’s guiding presence] settled down in the Wilderness of Paran.

¹³So they moved out for the first time in accordance with the command of the LORD through Moses.

¹⁴The standard of the camp of the sons of Judah, according to their armies, moved out first, Nahshon the son of Amminadab was [commander] over its army,

¹⁵and Nethanel the son of Zuar was [commander] over the tribal army of the sons of Issachar;

¹⁶and Eliab the son of Helon was [commander] over the

tribal army of the sons of Zebulun.

¹⁷Then the tabernacle was taken down; and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari, who were carrying the tabernacle, moved out.

¹⁸Next the standard of the camp of the sons of Reuben, according to their armies, moved out, with Elizur the son of Shedeur [commander] over its army,

¹⁹and Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai was [commander] over the tribal army of the sons of Simeon,

²⁰and Eliasaph the son of Deuel was [commander] over the tribal army of the sons of Gad.

²¹Then the Kohathites moved out, carrying the holy things, and the tabernacle was set up before they arrived.

²²Next the standard of the camp of the sons of Ephraim moved out, according to their armies, with Elishama the son of Ammihud [commander] over its army,

²³and Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur was [commander] over the tribal army of the sons of Manasseh,

²⁴and Abidan the son of Gideon was [commander] over the tribal army of the sons of Benjamin.

²⁵Then the standard of the camp of the sons of Dan, according to their armies, which formed the rear guard for all the camps, moved out, with Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai [commander] over its army,

²⁶and Pagiel the son of Ochran was [commander] over the tribal army of the sons of Asher,

²⁷and Ahira the son of Enan was [commander] over the tribal army of the sons of Naphtali.

²⁸This was the order of march of the sons of Israel by their armies as they moved out.

²⁹Then Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are going to the place of which the LORD said, 'I will give it to you.' Come with us, and we will be good to you, for the LORD has promised good [things] concerning Israel."

³⁰But Hobab [Moses' brother-in-law] said to him, "I will not go; I will return to my own land and to my family."

³¹Then Moses said, "Please do not leave us, for you know how we are to camp in the wilderness, and you will serve as eyes for us [as we make our trek through the desert]."

³²"So if you will go with us, it shall be that whatever good the LORD does for us, we will do *the same* for you."

³³So they set out from the mountain of the LORD (Sinai) three days' journey; and the ark of the covenant of the LORD went in front of them during the three days' journey to seek out a resting place for them.

³⁴The cloud of the LORD was over them by day when they set out from the camp.

³⁵Whenever the ark set out, Moses said,

"Rise up, O LORD!

Let Your enemies be scattered;

And let those who hate You flee before You." [Ps 68:1, 2]

³⁶And when the ark rested, Moses said,

"Return, O LORD,

To the myriad (many) thousands of Israel."

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Follow the Leading of the Holy Spirit

The ark of the covenant referred to in Numbers 10:33 contained both the Ten Commandments, which represent the will of God, and a piece of manna—the same manna with which God fed the Israelites in the wilderness. The manna represents God's presence and His miraculous provision.

On your journey through life, in every situation you can follow the ark (figuratively speaking) just as the Israelites followed the ark literally. To “follow the ark” in our day is to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, Who lives within all believers. As you follow Him, you can be assured that you will always have His presence and provision in your life.

We can be easily tempted to follow our own thoughts, emotions, or desires, which will ultimately leave us unfulfilled and unsuccessful. Following the Holy Spirit is the way to peace and joy.

11 NOW THE people became like those who complain and whine about their hardships, and the LORD heard it; and when the LORD heard it, His anger was kindled, and the fire of the LORD burned among them and devoured those in the outlying parts of the camp.

²So the people cried out to Moses, and when Moses prayed to the LORD, the fire died out.

³He named that place Taberah (the place of burning), because the fire of the LORD burned among them.

⁴The rabble among them [who followed Israel from Egypt] had greedy desires [for familiar and delicious food], and the Israelites wept again and said, “Who will give us meat to eat?”

⁵“We remember the fish we ate freely *and* without cost in Egypt, the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic.

⁶“But now our appetite is gone; there is nothing at all [in the way of food] to be seen but this manna.”

⁷The manna was like coriander seed, and it looked like bdellium.

⁸The people went about and gathered it, and ground it in mills or beat it in mortars, and boiled it in pots, and made cakes with it; and it tasted like cakes baked with fresh [olive] oil.

⁹When the dew fell on the camp at night, the manna fell with it.

¹⁰Now Moses heard the people weeping [in self-pity] throughout their families, every man at the doorway of his tent; and the anger of the LORD blazed hotly, and Moses regarded their behavior as evil.

¹¹So Moses said to the LORD, “Why have You been so hard on Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have placed the burden of all these people on me?”

¹²“Was it I who conceived all these people? Was it I who brought them forth, that You should say to me, ‘Carry them in

your arms as a nurse carries the nursing infant, to the land which You swore to their fathers”?

¹³“Where am I to get meat to give to all these people? For they weep before me and say, ‘Give us meat, so that we may eat.’

¹⁴“I am not able to carry all these people alone, because the burden is too heavy for me.

¹⁵“So if this is the way You are going to deal with me, please kill me at once, if I have found favor in your sight, and do not let me see my wretchedness.”

¹⁶Accordingly, the LORD said to Moses, “Gather for Me seventy men from among the elders of Israel whom you know to be the elders of the people and their officers; bring them to the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle) and let them stand there with you.

¹⁷“Then I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take away some of the Spirit who is upon you, and will put *Him* upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you will not have to bear it all alone.

¹⁸“Say to the people, ‘Consecrate (separate as holy) yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat; for you have wept [in self-pity] in the ears of the LORD, saying, “Who will give us meat to eat? For we were well-off in Egypt.” Therefore the LORD will give you meat, and you shall eat.

POWERPOINT

In Numbers 11:18, the Israelites felt sorry for themselves. Every inconvenience on their journey to the Promised Land became another excuse for them to engage in self-pity. I used to have a lot of pity parties for myself. During one of them, the Lord impressed on my heart that I could be pitiful or I could be powerful, but I could not be both. It is vitally important to understand that we cannot entertain self-pity. Leaving self-pity behind means we have to learn to think differently about ourselves and about our lives. Remember today that you are powerful, not pitiful, because God loves you and has a great plan for your life.



¹⁹“You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days,

²⁰but a whole month—until it comes out of your nostrils and is disgusting to you—because you have rejected *and* despised the LORD who is among you, and have wept [in self-pity] before Him, saying, “Why did we come out of Egypt?”” [Ps 106:13–15]

²¹But Moses said, “The people, among whom I am, are 600,000 [fighting men] on foot [besides all the women and children]; yet You have said, ‘I will give them meat, so that they may eat it for a whole month!’

²²“Should flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, to be sufficient for them? Or should all the fish of the sea be collected for them to be sufficient for them?”

²³The LORD said to Moses, “Is the LORD’s hand (ability, power) limited (short, inadequate)? You shall see now whether My word will come to pass for you or not.” [Is 50:2]

²⁴So Moses went out and spoke to the people the words of the LORD, and he gathered seventy men from among the elders of the people and stationed them around the Tent (tabernacle).

²⁵Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him; and He took some of the Spirit who was upon Moses and put *Him* upon the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied [praising God and declaring His will], but they did not do it again. [Num 11:29]

²⁶But two men had remained in the camp; one named Eldad and the other named Medad. The Spirit rested upon them (now they were among those who had been registered, but had not gone out to the Tent), and they prophesied in the camp.

²⁷So a young man ran and told Moses and said, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying [extolling the praises of God and declaring His will] in the camp.”

²⁸Then Joshua the son of Nun, the attendant of Moses from his youth, said, “My lord Moses, stop them!”

²⁹But Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD’s people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!” [Luke 9:49, 50]

³⁰Then Moses went back into the camp, he and the elders of Israel.

POWERPOINT

Numbers 11:23 teaches us that God's abilities are unlimited. As

human beings, all of our abilities are limited and we are inadequate in many ways, but God is not limited. As we lean on and trust in Him, we will be able to do things that will amaze us, but we must not entertain thoughts that limit us.

We should not think in ways that do not reflect the promises of God's Word; otherwise, those promises will never come to pass in our lives. I

encourage you to think about what you're thinking about and ask yourself if any of your mind-sets are limiting you unnecessarily. If you'll begin to take the limits off your thoughts, God can begin to move in your life with His unlimited power.



³¹Now there went forth a wind from the LORD and it brought quails from the sea, and let *them* fall [so they flew low] beside the camp, about a day's journey on this side and on the other side, all around the camp, about two cubits (three feet) *deep* on the surface of the ground.

³²The people spent all that day and all night and all the next day and caught *and* gathered the quail (the one who gathered least gathered ten homers) and they spread them out for themselves around the camp [to cure them by drying].

³³While the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the anger of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD struck them with a very severe plague.

³⁴So that place was named Kibroth-hattaavah (the graves of greediness), because there they buried the people who had been greedy [for more than the manna that God provided them]. [1 Cor 10:1–13]

³⁵From Kibroth-hattaavah the people set out for Hazeroth, and they remained at Hazeroth.

Speak God's Word

The Lord's hand is not limited, short, or inadequate toward me. I will see His word come to pass in my life.

| adapted from NUMBERS 11:23 |

12 NOW MIRIAM and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married (for he had married a Cushite woman);

²and they said, “Has the LORD really spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken also through us?” And the LORD heard it.

³(Now the man Moses was very humble (gentle, kind, devoid of self-righteousness), more than any man who was on the face of the earth.)

⁴Suddenly the LORD said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, “Come out, you three, to the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle).” And the three of them came out.

⁵The LORD came down in a pillar of cloud and stood at the doorway of the tabernacle, and He called Aaron and Miriam, and they came forward.

⁶And He said,

“Hear now My words:

If there is a prophet among you,

I the LORD will make Myself known to him in a vision

And I will speak to him in a dream.

⁷“But it is not so with My servant Moses;

He is entrusted *and* faithful in all My house. [Heb 3:2, 5, 6]

⁸“With him I speak mouth to mouth [directly],

Clearly *and* openly and not in riddles;

And he beholds the form of the LORD.

Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant
Moses?”

⁹And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Miriam and Aaron, and He departed.

¹⁰But when the cloud had withdrawn from over the tent, behold, Miriam was leprous, as *white as* snow. And Aaron turned *and* looked at Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous.

¹¹Then Aaron said to Moses, “Oh, my lord, I plead with you, do not account this sin to us, in which we have acted foolishly and in which we have sinned.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

No Place for Pride

When Moses' sister, Miriam, and his brother, Aaron, complained to God about Moses' wife, his wife was not the real issue. The real problem was revealed when they asked, "Has the LORD really spoken only through Moses?" (Ex. 12:2). They were jealous and yearning for recognition and a feeling of importance for themselves.

That's the big "I" problem—also known as pride. Pride manifesting as competition with one another is one way Satan gets into our lives, divides us, confuses us, and causes us to fight among ourselves.

In the story in Numbers 12, Moses' siblings' plan backfired. Not only did God punish Miriam, but she held the entire camp back from moving forward (v. 15). What we need to recognize about pride is that it is sin and causes lots of problems. Pride is all about what we want, think, or feel, and not about God and His will for us.

Our gifts and callings are from God and it is useless to be jealous of, or try to be, what someone else is. It appears to me that Aaron and Miriam wanted to be what God had called Moses to be, and that attitude was not only displeasing to God, it actually caused problems—serious ones.

I urge you to be content with what God has called you to be and to do, and to realize that the only thing that is truly

important is whether or not you are in His will. Whatever your position is in life, serve the Lord with gladness (see Ps. 100:2). Pray for those things you desire, trust that He will move you to another position if that is what is right for you, and trust that God's perfect will will be done in your life in His perfect timing.

¹²“Oh, do not let her be like one dead, already half decomposed when he comes from his mother's womb.”

¹³So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, “Heal her please, O God, I plead with You!”

¹⁴But the LORD said to Moses, “If her father had but spit in her face, would she not bear her shame for seven days? Let her be shut up outside the camp for seven days, and afterward she may return.”

¹⁵So Miriam was shut up outside the camp for seven days, and the people did not move on until Miriam was brought in again [and declared ceremonially clean from her leprosy].

¹⁶Afterward the people moved on from Hazeroth and camped in the Wilderness of Paran.

13 THEN THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

²“Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am going to give to the sons of Israel. From each of their fathers' tribes you shall send a man, every one a leader among them.”

³So Moses sent spies from the Wilderness of Paran at the command of the LORD, all of them men who were heads of the Israelites.

⁴These were their names: from the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur;

⁵from the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori;

⁶from the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh;

⁷from the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph;

⁸from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea [that is, Joshua] the son of Nun;

⁹from the tribe of Benjamin, Palti the son of Raphu;

¹⁰from the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi;

¹¹from the tribe of Joseph, that is, of the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi the son of Susi;

¹²from the tribe of Dan, Ammiel the son of Gemalli;

¹³from the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael;

¹⁴from the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi;

¹⁵from the tribe of Gad, Geuel the son of Machi.

¹⁶These are the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land; but Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun, Joshua (the LORD is salvation).

¹⁷Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, "Go up this way into the Negev (the South country); then go up into the hill country.

¹⁸"See what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many,

¹⁹and whether the land in which they live is good or bad, and whether the cities in which they live are [open] camps or fortifications,

²⁰and what the land is, whether it is fat (productive) or lean,

whether there is timber on it or not. Make an effort to get some of the fruit of the land.” Now the time was the time of the first ripe grapes.

²¹So they went up and spied out the land from the Wilderness of Zin to Rehob [a town in Lebanon], at Lebohamath [in the far north].

²²When they had gone up into the Negev (the South country), they came to Hebron; and Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai the descendants of Anak were there. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.)

²³Then they came to the Valley of Eshcol (cluster of grapes), and from there cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes; and they carried it on a pole between two of them, with some of pomegranates and the figs.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Humility

Numbers 12:3 describes Moses as “very humble (gentle, kind, devoid of self-righteousness),” and he demonstrated that humility many times throughout his life. Like Moses, we shouldn’t have high-minded ideas about ourselves, elevating ourselves above others; but we shouldn’t be low-minded, thinking we are inferior to other people, either. Here is the mind-set I think we ought to have—I call it an “everything-nothing” attitude: I’m everything with Christ; I’m nothing without Him. I’m no better than other people; I’m no worse than them. I’m not above them; I’m not beneath them.

In 1 Corinthians 15:10, Paul demonstrates the “everything-nothing” attitude when he says: “But by the [remarkable] grace of God I am what I am.” He then adds, “I took His grace and I worked really hard, but even the work you saw me do wasn’t really me; it was God manifesting Himself through me” (paraphrase mine).

POWERPOINT

Notice that Numbers 13:28 begins with the word *But*. *If* and *but* are two of the most deceptive words the enemy plants in our minds. The twelve spies who were sent into the Promised Land as scouts came back with amazing news, but ten of the twelve also brought an unfavorable report. It was the “but” that defeated them and turned a positive into a negative! They should have kept their eyes on God and not on the potential problems. In many situations you face, you may be able to see possible challenges ahead, but if you will think positively instead of negatively, you’ll be better positioned to overcome the potential difficulties.



²⁴That place was called the Valley of Eshcol (cluster of grapes) because of the cluster of grapes which the sons of Israel cut down there.

²⁵When they returned from spying out the land, at the end of forty days,

²⁶they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the sons of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran at Kadesh, and brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the land's fruit.

²⁷They reported to Moses and said, "We went in to the land where you sent us; and it certainly does flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.

²⁸"But the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified (walled) and very large; moreover, we saw there the descendants of Anak [people of great stature and courage].

²⁹"[The people descended from] Amalek live in the land of the Negev (South country); the Hittite, the Jebusite, and the Amorite live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live by the [Dead] Sea and along the side of the Jordan."

³⁰Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession of it; for we will certainly conquer it."

³¹But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people [of Canaan], for they are too strong for us."

³²So they gave the Israelites a bad report about the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we went, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants.

And all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature.

³³“There we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.”

Speak God's Word

I will go up at once and take possession of my Promised Land; for I will certainly conquer it.

| *adapted from* NUMBERS 13:30 |

14 THEN ALL the congregation [of Israel] raised their voices and cried out, and the people wept that night.

²All the Israelites murmured [in discontent] against Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation said to them, “Oh that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or that we had died in this wilderness!

³“Why is the LORD bringing us to this land [of Canaan], to fall by the sword? Our wives and children will become plunder. Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?” [Acts 7:37–39]

⁴So they said one to another, “Let us appoint a [new] leader and return to Egypt.”

⁵Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the Israelites.

⁶Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh,

who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes [as a sign of grief],

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Dwell on Good Things

The people mentioned in Numbers 14 provide a great example of the power of thoughts, emotions, and words. They had negative thoughts and feelings about the hardships they faced on their journey to the Promised Land, and their ungodly attitude led to strong negative words against Moses and Aaron. Yes, the people suffered disappointments and trials as they traveled. But those problems became bigger than they needed to be because the people of Israel focused too much on them. People today can learn an important lesson from the Israelites: If we don't want to be devastated by discouragement, we can't meditate on our disappointments and difficulties.

Did you know that your feelings are connected to your thinking? If you don't think that is true, take about twenty minutes and think about nothing but your problems. I guarantee that by the end of that time your feelings, and maybe even your countenance, will have changed.

I remember one morning years ago thinking about a

problem I had. Suddenly the Spirit of the Lord spoke to me, “Joyce, are you going to fellowship with your problem or are you going to fellowship with Me?”

When you go through a trial or become deeply discouraged, as the Israelites did, it’s important not to feel sorry for yourself. As bad as things may seem, you still have a choice: You can choose to fellowship with your problems or you can choose to fellowship with God.

We can allow our thoughts to dwell on bad things until we become totally discouraged and devastated, or we can focus our attention on all the good things that have happened in our lives—and on all the blessings God still has in store for us in the days ahead.

Our thoughts are silent words that only we hear and the Lord hears, but those silent words affect our inner being, our health, our joy, and our attitude, which will in time impact our actions and spoken words.

APRAYER FOR VICTORY

Heavenly Father, help me to dwell on the good things in my life, and not on the difficulties or disappointments. When trials come, help me not to feel sorry for myself and fellowship with my problems., but help me to choose to fellowship with You. Amen.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Find Out What the Real Problem Is

What *is your* problem?" That's the question I would have liked to ask the Israelites. Their chief occupation seemed to be grumbling. In Numbers 14:2–3, they not only lamented and groaned about their situation, but they also accused Moses of bringing them into the wilderness so they could die. When God provided manna for them, and all they had to do was pick it up fresh every morning, they didn't like the heavenly diet. When the slightest problem arose, they were ready to return to Egypt.

In short, it wouldn't have mattered what God did for them, they were committed to complaining. They had formed the grumbling habit. And much of it is a habit! If you grumble about one thing, it's not long before there is something else to complain about. When two moaners come together, the situation gets worse. What about the million or more people who came out of Egypt? Once the disease of disgruntlement struck, it became like a virus and infected them all. They were

negative about everything.

When the twelve spies were sent into the land to check on the fruit, ten of them brought back a negative and evil report, and only two had a good report. The negative group saw only impossible problems, but the two faith-filled, positive men saw opportunity. That's how the enemy defeats many people. They complain, find fault, and end up making no progress. They may wonder why they have problems, but the truth is that "they are the problem." What they need to learn to say is, "I don't have a problem; I am the problem."

The enemy in Canaan wasn't any bigger, or more powerful than the enemies the Israelites had already faced. And even if the situation had been worse, why wouldn't God have given them another miracle? They were His people, and He loved them.

They themselves were the problem, and they never accepted that fact. Forty years of wandering, and they never got the message. We should look at their example and not get caught up in grumbling and complaining. Let us instead offer up a voice of thanksgiving to God for His goodness in our lives.

Perhaps the next time we find ourselves complaining, we should ask ourselves, "Is the problem the problem or am I the problem?"

APRAYER FOR VICTORY

Father, help me see my blessings instead of focusing on problems or inconveniences in life. I repent of complaining and ask that You remind me to always be thankful. Amen.

⁷and they spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, “The land through which we passed as spies is an exceedingly good land.

⁸“If the LORD delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land which flows with milk and honey.

⁹“Only do not rebel against the LORD; and do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and the LORD is with us. Do not fear them.”

¹⁰But all the congregation said to stone Joshua and Caleb with stones. But the glory *and* brilliance of the LORD appeared at the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle) before all the sons of Israel.

¹¹The LORD said to Moses, “How long will these people treat me disrespectfully *and* reject Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, despite all the [miraculous] signs which I have performed among them?

¹²“I will strike them with the pestilence (plague) and dispossess them, and will make you into a nation greater and mightier than they.”

¹³But Moses said to the LORD, “Then the Egyptians will hear of it, for by Your strength You brought up these people from among them,

¹⁴and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, LORD, are among these people [of Israel], that You, LORD, are seen face to face, while Your cloud stands over them; and that You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night.

¹⁵“Now if You kill these people as one man, then the nations (Gentiles) that have heard of Your fame will say,

¹⁶‘Because the LORD was not able to bring these people into the land which He promised to give them, therefore He slaughtered them in the wilderness.’

¹⁷“But now, please, let the power of the Lord be great, just as You have declared, saying,

¹⁸‘The LORD is slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving wickedness and transgression; but He will by no means clear *the guilty*, visiting (avenging) the wickedness *and* guilt of the fathers on the children, to the third and fourth *generations* [that is, calling the children to account for the sins of their fathers].’ [Ex 34:6, 7]

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, for being
slow to anger and abundant
in lovingkindness toward me.*

• *adapted from Numbers 14:18*

¹⁹“Please pardon the wickedness *and* guilt of these people according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness, just as You have forgiven these people, from Egypt even until now.”

²⁰So the LORD said, “I have pardoned *them* according to your word;

²¹but indeed as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the LORD. [Is 6:3; 11:9]

²²“Surely all the men who have seen My glory and My [miraculous] signs which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice,

²³will by no means see the land which I swore to [give to] their fathers; nor will any who treated me disrespectfully *and* rejected Me see it. [Heb 6:4–11]

²⁴“But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land into which he entered, and his descendants shall take possession of it.

²⁵“Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites live in the valley; tomorrow turn and set out for the wilderness by way of the Red Sea.”

²⁶The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,

²⁷“How long *shall I put up with* this evil congregation who murmur [in discontent] against Me? I have heard the complaints of the Israelites, which they are making against Me.

²⁸“Say to them, ‘As I live,’ says the LORD, ‘just what you have spoken in My hearing I will most certainly do to you;

²⁹your dead bodies will fall in this wilderness, even all who were numbered of you, your entire number from twenty years

old and upward, who have murmured against Me. [Heb 3:17–19]

³⁰‘Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, not one of you shall enter the land in which I swore [an oath] to settle you.

³¹‘But your children whom you said would become plunder, I will bring in, and they will know the land which you have despised *and* rejected.

³²‘But as for you, your dead bodies will fall in this wilderness.

³³‘Your sons shall be wanderers *and* shepherds in the wilderness for forty years, and they will suffer for your unfaithfulness (spiritual infidelity), until your corpses are consumed in the wilderness.

³⁴‘According to the number of days in which you spied out the land [of Canaan], forty days, for each day, you shall bear *and* suffer a year for your sins *and* guilt, for forty years, and you shall know My displeasure [the revoking of My promise and My estrangement because of your sin].

³⁵‘I, the LORD, have spoken. I will most certainly do this to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed [by war, disease, and plagues], and here they shall die.” [1 Cor 10:10, 11]

³⁶As for the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, and who returned and made all the congregation murmur *and* complain against him by bringing back a bad report concerning the land,

³⁷even those [ten] men who brought back the very bad

report of the land died by a plague before the LORD. [Heb 3:17–19; Jude 5–7]

³⁸But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive out of those men who went to spy out the land.

³⁹Moses spoke the Lord's words to all the Israelites, and the people mourned greatly.

⁴⁰They got up early in the morning and went up to the ridge of the hill country, saying, "Look, here we are; we have indeed sinned, but we will go up to the place which the LORD has promised."

⁴¹But Moses said, "Why then are you transgressing the commandment of the LORD, when it will not succeed?"

⁴²"Do not go up, or you will be struck down before your enemies, for the LORD is not among you.

⁴³"For the Amalekites and the Canaanites will be there in front of you, and you will fall by the sword, because you have turned away from following the LORD; therefore the LORD will not be with you."

⁴⁴But [in their arrogance] they dared to go up to the ridge of the hill country; however, neither the ark of the covenant of the LORD nor Moses left the camp.

⁴⁵Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down and struck the Israelites and scattered them as far as Hormah.

15 NOW THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

²“Speak to the Israelites and say to them, ‘When you come into the land where you are to live, which I am giving you,

³then make an offering by fire to the LORD, a burnt offering or a sacrifice to fulfill a special vow, or as a freewill offering or in your appointed feasts, to make a sweet *and* soothing aroma to the LORD, from the herd or from the flock.

⁴‘The one who presents his offering shall present to the LORD a grain offering of a tenth *of an ephah* of fine flour mixed with a fourth of a hin of oil,

⁵and you shall prepare wine for the drink offering, a fourth of a hin, with the burnt offering or for the sacrifice, for each lamb.

⁶‘Or for a ram you shall prepare as a grain offering two-tenths *of an ephah* of fine flour mixed with a third of a hin of oil.

⁷‘And for the drink offering you shall offer a third of a hin of wine, as a sweet *and* soothing aroma to the LORD.

⁸‘When you prepare a bull as a burnt offering or as a sacrifice, in fulfilling a special vow or peace offering to the LORD,

⁹then you shall offer with the bull a grain offering of three-tenths *of an ephah* of fine flour mixed with half a hin of oil;

¹⁰and you shall bring as the drink offering one-half a hin of wine as an offering by fire, as a sweet *and* soothing aroma to the LORD.

¹¹‘Thus shall it be done for each bull, or for each ram, or for each of the male lambs, or of the goats.

¹²‘According to the number that you prepare, so shall you

do to everyone according to their number.

¹³“All who are native-born shall do these things in this way, in presenting an offering by fire, as a sweet *and* soothing aroma to the LORD.

¹⁴“If a stranger lives as a resident alien with you, or whoever may be among you throughout your generations, and he *wishes to* make an offering by fire, as a sweet *and* soothing aroma to the LORD, just as you do, so shall he do.

¹⁵“As for the assembly, there shall be one [and the same] statute for you [of the congregation] and for the stranger who is a resident alien with you, a permanent statute throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the stranger be before the LORD.

¹⁶“There is to be one law and one ordinance for you and for the stranger who lives with you as a resident alien.””

¹⁷Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

¹⁸“Speak to the Israelites and say to them, ‘When you enter the land to which I am bringing you,

¹⁹then, when you eat the food of the land, you shall lift up an offering (heave offering) to the LORD.

²⁰“You shall lift up a cake *made* of the first of your [ground grain which has been made into] dough as an offering [to the Lord]; as an offering from the threshing floor, so shall you lift it up.

²¹“From the first of your dough (ground grain) you shall give to the LORD an offering throughout your generations.

²²“But when you unintentionally fail and do not observe all these commandments, which the LORD has spoken to Moses,

²³*even* all that the LORD has commanded you through Moses, from the day that the LORD gave commandments and onward throughout your generations,

²⁴then it shall be, if it was done unintentionally without the knowledge of the congregation, that all the congregation shall offer one young bull as a burnt offering, as a sweet *and* soothing aroma to the LORD, with its grain offering and its drink offering, according to the ordinance, and one male goat as a sin offering.

²⁵Then the priest shall make atonement for all the congregation of the sons of Israel, and they will be forgiven, for it was an error and they have brought their offering, an offering by fire to the LORD, and their sin offering before the LORD, for their error.

²⁶So all the congregation of the Israelites will be forgiven as well as the stranger who lives among them as a resident alien, because all the people were involved in the error.

²⁷Also if one person sins unintentionally, then he shall offer a female goat one year old as a sin offering.

²⁸The priest shall make atonement before the LORD for the person who commits an error when he sins unintentionally, making atonement for him so that he may be forgiven.

²⁹You shall have one law for him who sins unintentionally, whether he is native-born among the Israelites or a stranger who is living among them as a resident alien.

³⁰But the person who does [anything wrong] willfully *and* defiantly, whether he is native-born or a stranger, that one is blaspheming the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from among his people [excluding him from the atonement made for

them].

³¹“Because he has despised *and* rejected the word of the LORD, and has broken His commandment, that person shall be utterly cut off; [the responsibility for] his wickedness *and* guilt will be upon him.””

³²Now while the Israelites were in the wilderness, they found a man who was gathering wood on the Sabbath day.

³³Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation;

³⁴and they put him in custody, because it had not been explained [by God] what should be done to him.

POWERPOINT

Most of us would be quick to say we do not “despise” God’s Word as the person mentioned in Numbers 15:31 did, but do you know that the word *despise* also means “to regard as unimportant”? Living by God’s Word and keeping His commandments is very important in every area of your life.



³⁵Then the LORD said to Moses, “The man shall certainly be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.”

³⁶So all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him to death with stones, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

³⁷The LORD said to Moses,

³⁸“Speak to the sons of Israel and tell them to make for themselves tassels on the hems of their garments throughout

their generations, and put a cord of blue on the tassel of each hem.

³⁹“It shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, to do them, so that you do not follow after [the desires of] your own heart and eyes, [desires] after which you used to follow *and* play the prostitute,

⁴⁰so that you may remember to do all My commandments and be holy (set apart) to your God.

⁴¹“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God. I am the LORD your God.”

16 NOW KORAH the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, descendants of Reuben, took *action*,

²and they rose up [in rebellion] before Moses, together with some of the Israelites, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation chosen in the assembly, men of distinction.

³They assembled together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, “You have gone far enough, for all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?”

⁴And when Moses heard this, he fell face downward;

⁵and he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, “In the morning the LORD will show who belongs to Him, and who is holy, and will bring him near to Himself; the one whom He will choose He will bring near to Himself. [2 Tim 2:19]

⁶“Do this: Take censers for yourselves, Korah and all your company,

POWERPOINT

In Numbers 16:4, Moses responded to the Israelites' rebellion by falling on his face—an act of humility and seeking God in prayer. Had Korah and the other leaders of the congregation also been on their faces before God, they would have seen miracle after miracle. If we want good things to happen, we should trust God, stay positive in our thoughts and words, and guard against feeling sorry for ourselves, speaking negatively, and finding fault with others.



⁷then put fire in them and place incense on them in the presence of the LORD tomorrow; and the man whom the LORD chooses shall be the one who is holy. You have gone far enough, you sons of Levi.”

⁸Then Moses said to Korah, “Hear now, you sons of Levi,

⁹does it seem but a small thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself, to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister to them;

¹⁰and that He has brought you near [to Him], *Korah* and all your brothers, sons of Levi with you? Would you seek the priesthood also?

¹¹“Therefore you and all your company are gathered together against the LORD; but as for Aaron, who is he that you murmur against him?”

¹²Then Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab; but they said [defiantly], “We will not come up.

¹³“Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land [of plenty] flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the wilderness, but you would also lord it over us?

¹⁴“Indeed, you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Will you gouge out the eyes of these men? We will not come up!”

¹⁵Then Moses became very angry and said to the LORD, “Pay no attention to their offering! I have not taken one donkey from them, nor have I harmed any one of them.”

¹⁶Moses said to Korah, “You and all your company are to appear before the LORD tomorrow, both you and they along with Aaron.

¹⁷“Each of you take his censer and put incense on it, and each of you bring his censer before the LORD, two hundred and

fifty censers; also you and Aaron *shall* each *bring* his censer.”

¹⁸So they each took his own censer and put fire on it and laid incense on it; and they stood at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle), with Moses and Aaron.

¹⁹Then Korah assembled all the congregation against Moses and Aaron at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle). And the glory *and* brilliance of the LORD appeared to all the congregation.

²⁰Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,

²¹“Separate yourselves from among this congregation, so that I may consume them immediately.”

²²But they fell on their faces [before the LORD], and said, “O God, God of the spirits of all flesh! When one man sins, will You be angry with the entire congregation?”

²³Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

²⁴“Say to the congregation, ‘Get away from around the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.’”

²⁵Then Moses arose and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him.

²⁶And he said to the congregation, “Get away from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, or you will be swept away in all their sin.”

²⁷So they got back from around the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the doorway of their tents with their wives and their sons and their little children.

²⁸Then Moses said, “By this you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works; for I do not act of my own

accord.

²⁹“If these men die the common death of all mankind or if what happens to everyone happens to them, then [you will know for sure that] the LORD has not sent me.

³⁰“But if the LORD creates an entirely new thing, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up, along with all that belongs to them, and they descend alive into Sheol (the nether world, the place of the dead), then you will understand that these men have spurned *and* rejected the LORD!”

³¹As soon as Moses finished speaking all these words, the ground under them split open;

³²and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their households, and all the men who supported Korah, with all their possessions. [Num 26:10, 11]

³³So they and all that belonged to them went down alive to Sheol; and the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly.

³⁴All Israel who were around them fled at their outcry, for they said, “The earth may swallow us *also*.”

³⁵Fire also came forth from the LORD and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering the incense.

³⁶Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

³⁷“Tell Eleazar the son of Aaron, the priest, that he is to pick up the censers from the midst of the blaze for they are holy; and you scatter the burning coals abroad.

³⁸“As for the censers of these people who have sinned at the cost of their lives, have the censers made into hammered sheets as a plating for the altar [of burnt offering], for they

were presented before the LORD and they are sacred. They shall be a [warning] sign to the sons of Israel.”

³⁹So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers which the Levites who were burned had offered, and they were hammered out [into broad sheets] as a plating for the [bronze] altar [of burnt offering],

⁴⁰as a reminder to the sons of Israel so that no layman—that is, one who is not of the descendants of Aaron should approach to offer incense before the LORD; so that he will not become like Korah and as his company—just as the LORD had said to him through Moses.

⁴¹But on the next day the entire congregation of the Israelites murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, “You have caused the death of the people of the LORD.”

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Facing the Truth

The rebellion of Korah and two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation against the leadership of Moses and Aaron was rooted in jealousy and envy. Yet when Moses confronted them, and even in the face of impending judgment, they did not back down but held to their unrighteous cause.

That is an extreme situation, but when you are offended and participating in strife, it is wise to examine your thoughts. If you find you are justifying any bad attitude or behavior that God's Word condemns, it can be dangerous. It keeps us deceived and unable to take ownership of our faults. Nobody enjoys saying, "I was wrong—please forgive me," but it is one of the most powerful six-word sentences in the world. It brings peace to turmoil, causes joy to replace frustration and misery, and puts a smile on God's face. He is delighted when we follow His ways instead of our own carnal thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

God has changed me dramatically over the course of my life, and I expect He will continue to do so. But in every

instance, I have been required to face a truth about myself that ended up setting me free. If we continue in His Word, we will know the truth and the truth will set us free (see John 8:31–32). Self-justification is dangerous because it prevents us from seeing what God wants us to see in order for things to be better in our lives.

When I attempt to justify myself, I can always find an excuse for my bad behavior. I know the behavior is wrong, and I would more than likely condemn it in someone else, but I give myself a free pass (see Rom. 2:1). For example, I tell Dave there is absolutely no excuse for him to be irritable with me, but if I am irritable with him, I might excuse myself by saying I've had a rough day. If we would be as merciful with others as we are with ourselves, I am sure everyone would feel more loved.

Are you the source of strife in any situation? If you need to make a change, make it quickly. Thank God we can always change! Facing truth and changing accordingly is what a wise person does.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Father, search my heart and show me any bad attitudes I may have toward people in my life. Help me to take ownership of my thoughts, feelings, or behaviors that are wrong and to go to others and ask forgiveness where I have been wrong. Amen.

⁴²When the congregation was assembled against Moses and Aaron, they turned *and* looked at the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle), and behold, the cloud covered it and the glory *and* brilliance of the LORD appeared.

⁴³Then Moses and Aaron came to the front of the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle),

⁴⁴and the LORD spoke to Moses saying,

⁴⁵“Get away from among this congregation, so that I may consume them immediately.” Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces [in silence before the LORD].

⁴⁶Moses said to Aaron, “Take a censer and put fire in it from the altar and lay incense on it; then bring it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them, for wrath has gone forth from the LORD; the plague has begun!”

⁴⁷So Aaron took the burning censer as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the assembly; and behold, the plague had [already] begun among the people; and he put on the incense and made atonement for the people.

⁴⁸He stood between the dead and the living, so that the plague was brought to an end.

⁴⁹But those who died in the plague were 14,700, besides those who died because of Korah.

⁵⁰Then Aaron returned to Moses at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle), for the plague had been brought to an end.

17 THEN THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

²“Speak to the sons of Israel and get rods from them, a rod for each father’s household, from all their leaders according to their fathers’ households, twelve rods. Write every man’s name on his rod,

³and write Aaron’s name on the rod of Levi [his ancestor]; for there is one rod for the head of each of their fathers’ households.

⁴“You shall then deposit them in the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle) in front of [the ark of] the Testimony, where I meet with you.

⁵“It shall be that the rod of the man whom I choose will bud, and I will no longer hear the constant grumblings of the Israelites, who are grumbling against you.”

⁶So Moses spoke to the Israelites, and each of their leaders gave him a rod, one for each leader according to their fathers’ households, twelve rods, and the rod of Aaron was among their rods.

⁷So Moses deposited the rods before the LORD in the Tent of the Testimony (tabernacle).

⁸Now on the next day Moses went into the Tent of the Testimony, and the rod of Aaron of the tribe of Levi had sprouted and put out buds and produced blossoms and yielded [ripe] almonds.

⁹Moses brought out all the rods from the presence of LORD to all the Israelites; and they looked, and each man took his rod.

¹⁰But the LORD said to Moses, “Put Aaron’s rod back

before the Testimony [in the ark], to be kept as a [warning] sign for the rebellious *and* contentious, so that you may put an end to their murmurings [of discontent] against Me, so that they do not die.”

¹¹And Moses did so; just as the LORD had commanded him, so he did.

¹²The sons of Israel said to Moses, “Look, we perish, we are doomed, all doomed!

¹³“Everyone who approaches, who approaches the tabernacle of the LORD, must die. Are we to perish completely?”

18 SO THE LORD said to Aaron, “You and your sons and your father’s household (family) with you shall bear the guilt in connection with the sanctuary [that is, through your service as priests you will atone for the offenses which the people unknowingly commit when brought into contact with the manifestations of God’s presence]; and you and your sons with you shall bear the guilt in connection with your priesthood [that is, your own unintentional offenses].

²“But bring with you also your brothers, the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father (ancestor), so that they may join with you and serve you [as assistants], while you and your sons with you are before the Tent of the Testimony [the Holy Place where only priests may go, and the Most Holy Place which only the high priest may enter].

³“And the Levites shall attend to your duty [as assistants] and to the duties of all the tent (tabernacle); only they shall not

approach the articles of the sanctuary and the altar, or both they and you will die.

4“‘They shall join you and attend to the duties of the Tent of Meeting—all the service of the tent—and no stranger [no layman, anyone who is not a Levite] may approach you [and your sons].

5“‘So you shall attend to the duties of the sanctuary and the duties of the altar [of burnt offering and the altar of incense], so that there will no longer be wrath on the Israelites [as with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram]. [Num 16:42–50]

6“‘Behold, I Myself have taken your fellow Levites from among the sons of Israel; they are a gift to you, given (dedicated) to the LORD, to do the service for the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle).

7“‘Therefore you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everything concerning the altar [of burnt offering and the altar of incense] and [of the Holy of Holies] within the veil, and you are to serve. I am giving you the priesthood as a bestowed service, but the stranger (outsider, layman) who approaches shall be put to death.” [Ex 40:18, 20, 26]

8Then the LORD spoke to Aaron, “Now behold, I [the LORD] have entrusted you with My heave offerings, even all the holy gifts of the Israelites, I have given them to you as a portion, and to your sons as a continual allotment. [Lev 7:35]

9“‘This shall be yours of the most holy things, [reserved] from the fire: every offering of the people, every grain offering and sin offering and guilt offering, which they shall render (give) to Me, shall be most holy for you and for your sons.

¹⁰“You shall eat it as the most holy thing; every male [of your family] shall eat it. It shall be holy to you. [Lev 22:10–16]

¹¹“This also is yours: the heave offering of their gift, including all the wave offerings of the Israelites. I have given them to you and to your sons and to your daughters with you as a continual allotment; everyone in your household who is [ceremonially] clean may eat it.

¹²“All the best of the fresh [olive] oil, and all the best of the new wine and of the grain, the first fruits of those which they give to the LORD, I give them to you.

¹³“The first ripe fruits of all that is in the land, which they bring to the LORD, shall be yours; everyone in your household who is [ceremonially] clean may eat it.

¹⁴“Every devoted thing in Israel [everything that has been promised to the Lord with an oath] shall be yours.

¹⁵“Every firstborn of the womb of all flesh, whether it is man or animal, which they bring to the LORD, shall be yours; nevertheless, the firstborn of man you shall most certainly redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem.

¹⁶“And their redemption price, from a month old you shall redeem, according to your valuation, for the [fixed] price of five shekels in silver, in accordance with the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs.

¹⁷“But the firstborn of a cow or of a sheep or of a goat you shall not redeem; they are holy [and belong to the LORD]. You shall sprinkle their blood on the altar and shall offer up their fat in smoke as an offering by fire, for a sweet *and* soothing aroma to the LORD.

¹⁸“Their meat shall be yours, like the breast of a wave

offering and like the right thigh.

¹⁹“All the offerings of the holy things, which the Israelites offer to the LORD I have given to you and to your sons and your daughters with you as a continual allotment. It is an everlasting covenant of salt [that cannot be dissolved or violated] before the LORD to you and to your descendants with you.”

²⁰Then the LORD said to Aaron, “You shall have no inheritance in the land [of the Israelites], nor have any portion [of land] among them. I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel.

²¹“Behold, I have given the Levites all the tithe in Israel as an inheritance, in return for their service which they perform, the service of the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle).

²²“The Israelites shall never again approach the Tent of Meeting [the covered sanctuary, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies], or they [who do] will incur sin and die.

²³“Only the Levites shall perform the service of the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle), and they shall bear their iniquity; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, that the Levites shall have no inheritance [of land] among the children of Israel.

²⁴“But the tithe of the Israelites, which they present as an offering to the LORD, I have given to the Levites as an inheritance; therefore I have said to them, ‘They shall have no inheritance among the children of Israel.’”

²⁵Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

²⁶“Moreover, you shall speak to the Levites and say to them, ‘When you take from the Israelites the tithe which I have

given to you from them as your inheritance, then you shall present an offering from it to the LORD, a tithe of the tithe [paid by the people].

²⁷“Your offering shall be credited to you as the grain from the threshing floor or as the full produce from the wine vat.

²⁸“Likewise you shall also present an offering to the LORD from all your tithes, which you receive from the Israelites; and from it you shall give the LORD’s offering to Aaron the priest.

²⁹“Out of all your gifts, you shall present every offering due to the LORD, from all the best of it, *even* the sacred part from them.’

³⁰“Therefore you shall say to them, ‘When you have offered the best from it, then *the rest* shall be credited to the Levites as the product of the threshing floor, and as the product of the wine vat.

³¹“You may eat it anywhere, you and [the members of] your households, for it is your compensation in return for your service in the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle).

³²“You will bear no sin because of it when you have offered the best of it; but you shall not profane the sacred gifts of the children of Israel, or you will die [because of it].”

19 THEN THE LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,

²“This is the statute of the law which the LORD has commanded: ‘Tell the Israelites to bring you an unblemished red heifer in which there is no defect and on which a yoke has never been placed.

³‘You shall give it to Eleazar the priest, and it shall be

brought outside the camp and be slaughtered in his presence.

⁴Next Eleazar the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and sprinkle some of it toward the front of the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle) seven times.

⁵Then the heifer shall be burned in his sight; its skin, its flesh, its blood, and its waste, shall be burned (reduced to ash).

⁶The priest shall take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet [material] and cast them into the midst of the burning heifer.

⁷Then the priest shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water; and afterward come into the camp, but he shall be [ceremonially] unclean until evening.

⁸The one who burns the heifer shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and shall be unclean until evening.

⁹Now a man who is [ceremonially] clean shall collect the ashes of the heifer and deposit them outside the camp in a clean place, and the congregation of the Israelites shall keep it for water to remove impurity; it is [to be used for] purification from sin.

¹⁰The one who gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until evening. This shall be a perpetual statute to the Israelites and to the stranger who lives as a resident alien among them.

¹¹The one who touches the dead body of any person shall be unclean for seven days.

¹²That one shall purify himself from uncleanness with the water [made with the ashes of the burned heifer] on the third day and on the seventh day, and then he will be clean; but if he does not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he will not be clean.

¹³Whoever touches a corpse, the body of anyone who has died, and does not purify himself, defiles the tabernacle of the LORD; and that person shall be cut off from Israel [that is, excluded from the atonement made for them]. Because the water for impurity was not sprinkled on him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is still on him.

¹⁴This is the law when a man dies in a tent: everyone who comes into the tent and everyone who is in the tent shall be [ceremonially] unclean for seven days.

¹⁵Every open container [in the tent], which has no covering tied down on it, is unclean.

¹⁶Also, anyone in the open field who touches one who has been killed with a sword or who has died [of natural causes], or a human bone or a grave, shall be unclean for seven days.

¹⁷Then for the unclean person they shall take some of the ashes of the heifer burnt for the purification from sin, and running water shall be added to them in a container.

¹⁸A clean person shall take hyssop and dip it in the water and sprinkle it on the tent and on all the furnishings and on the people who were there, and on the one who touched the bone or the one who was killed or the one who died [naturally] or the grave.

¹⁹Then the clean person shall sprinkle [the water for purification] on the unclean person on the third day and on the seventh day, and on the seventh day the unclean man shall purify himself, and wash his clothes and bathe himself in water, and shall be [ceremonially] clean at evening.

²⁰But the man who is unclean and does not purify himself,

that person shall be cut off from among the assembly, because he has defiled the sanctuary of the LORD. The water for purification has not been sprinkled on him; he is unclean.

²¹“So it shall be a perpetual statute to them. He who sprinkles the water for impurity [on another] shall wash his clothes, and he who touches the water for impurity shall be unclean until evening.

²²“Furthermore, anything the unclean person touches shall be unclean, and anyone who touches it shall be [ceremonially] unclean until evening.”

20 THEN THE Israelites, the whole congregation, came into the Wilderness of Zin in the first month [in the fortieth year after leaving Egypt]. And the people lived in Kadesh. Miriam died there and was buried there.

²Now there was no water for the congregation, and they gathered together against Moses and Aaron.

³The people contended with Moses, and said, “If only we had perished when our brothers perished [in the plague] before the LORD! [Num 16:49]

⁴“Why have you brought up the assembly of the LORD into this wilderness to die here, we and our livestock?

⁵“Why have you made us come up from Egypt, to bring us to this wretched place? It is not a place of grain or of figs or of vines or of pomegranates, and there is no water to drink.”

⁶Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the doorway of the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle) and fell on their faces [before the LORD in prayer]. Then the

glory *and* brilliance of the LORD appeared to them;

⁷and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

⁸“Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock in front of them, so that it will pour out its water. In this way you shall bring water for them out of the rock and let the congregation and their livestock drink [fresh water].”

⁹So Moses took the rod from before the LORD, just as He had commanded him;

¹⁰and Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock. Moses said to them, “Listen now, you rebels; must we bring you water out of this rock?”

¹¹Then Moses raised his hand [in anger] and with his rod he struck the rock twice [instead of speaking to the rock as the LORD had commanded]. And the water poured out abundantly, and the congregation and their livestock drank [fresh water].

¹²But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you have not believed (trusted) Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, you therefore shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.” [Ps 106:32, 33]

¹³These are the waters of Meribah (contention, strife), where the sons of Israel contended with the LORD, and He showed Himself holy among them.

¹⁴Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom: “Thus says your brother Israel, ‘You know all the hardship that has come upon us [as a nation];

¹⁵that our fathers (ancestors) went down to Egypt, and we lived there for a long time, and the Egyptians treated [both] us

and our fathers badly.

¹⁶“But when we cried out to the LORD [for help], He heard us and sent an angel and brought us out of Egypt. Now look, we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your territory.

¹⁷“Please let us pass through your land. We will not pass through a field or through a vineyard; we will not even drink water from a well. We will go along the king’s highway, not turning [off-course] to the right or to the left until we have passed through your territory.”

¹⁸But [the king of] Edom said to him, “You shall not pass through my territory, or I will come out against you with the sword.”

¹⁹Again, the Israelites said to him, “We will go by the highway [trade route], and if I and my livestock drink any of your water, then I will pay for it. Only let me pass through on foot, nothing else.”

²⁰But the king of Edom said, “You shall not pass through [my territory].” And Edom came out against Israel with many people and a strong hand.

²¹Thus [the king of] Edom refused to give Israel passage through his territory, so Israel turned away from him.

²²Now when they set out from Kadesh, the Israelites, the whole congregation, came to Mount Hor.

²³Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron at Mount Hor, by the border of the land of Edom, saying,

²⁴“Aaron will be gathered to his people [in death]; for he shall not enter the land which I have given to the children of Israel, because you [both] rebelled against My command at the waters of Meribah. [Num 20:7–12]

²⁵“Take Aaron and Eleazar his son and bring them up to Mount Hor;

²⁶and strip Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son. So Aaron will be gathered *to his fathers*, and will die there.”

²⁷So Moses did just as the LORD had commanded; and they went up Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation.

²⁸After Moses stripped Aaron of his [priestly] garments and put them on Eleazar his son, Aaron died there on the mountain top. Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain.

²⁹When all the congregation saw that Aaron had died, all the house of Israel wept (mourned) for him thirty days.

21 WHEN THE Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the Negev (the South country) heard that Israel was coming by the way of Atharim [the route traveled by the spies sent out by Moses], he fought against Israel and took some of them captive.

²So Israel made a vow to the LORD, and said, “If You will indeed hand over these people to me, then I will utterly destroy their cities.”

³The LORD heard the voice of Israel and handed over the Canaanites; then they utterly destroyed them and their cities. So the name of the place was called Hormah (dedicate to destruction).

POWERPOINT

An impatient attitude was one of the mentalities that kept the Israelites in the wilderness for forty years when their journey could have been as short as a week-and-a-half. Numbers 21:4 says the people became impatient “because [of the challenges] of the journey.” I encourage you to work with the Holy Spirit as He develops patience in you. I have learned that the more we resist Him, the longer the process will take. If we learn to respond patiently in all trials, we will experience a quality of life we not only endure but enjoy to the full.



⁴Then they set out from Mount Hor by the way of the [branch of the] Red Sea [called the Gulf of Aqabah], to go around the land of Edom; and the people became impatient,

because [of the challenges] of the journey.

⁵So the people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, nor is there any water, and we loathe this miserable food.”

⁶Then the LORD sent fiery (burning) serpents among the people; and they bit the people, and many Israelites died.

⁷So the people came to Moses, and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD, so that He will remove the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.

⁸Then the LORD said to Moses, “Make a fiery *serpent* [of bronze] and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten will live when he looks at it.”

⁹So Moses made a serpent of bronze and put it on the pole, and it happened that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived.

¹⁰Now the sons of Israel moved out and camped at Oboth.

¹¹They journeyed on from Oboth and camped at Iyeabarim, in the wilderness facing Moab, toward the sunrise.

¹²From there they set out and camped in the Wadi Zered.

¹³From there they journeyed on and camped on the other side of [the river] Arnon, which is in the wilderness that extends from the boundary of the Amorites; for [the river] Arnon is the boundary of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites.

¹⁴That is why it is said in the Book of the Wars of the LORD:

“Waheb in Suphah,
And the wadis of the Arnon [River],

¹⁵And the slope of the wadis
That stretches toward the site of Ar
And leans to the border of Moab.”

¹⁶From there *the Israelites went on* to Beer, that is the well where the LORD said to Moses, “Gather the people together and I will give them water.” [John 7:37–39]

¹⁷Then Israel sang this song,

“Spring up, O well! Sing to it, [Rom 14:17]

¹⁸The well which the leaders dug,
Which the nobles of the people hollowed out
With the scepter and with their staffs.”

And from the wilderness *Israel journeyed* to Mattanah,

¹⁹and from Mattanah to Nahaliel, and from Nahaliel to Bamoth,

²⁰and from Bamoth to the valley that is in the field of Moab, to the top of Pisgah which looks down on the wasteland.

²¹Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon, king of the Amorites, saying,

²²“Let me pass through your land; we will not turn away [from the road] into field or vineyard; we will not drink the water of the wells. We will go by the king’s highway until we have crossed your border.”

²³But Sihon would not allow Israel to pass through his border. Instead Sihon gathered all his people together and went

out against Israel into the wilderness, and came to Jahaz, and he fought against Israel.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Resist the Temptation To Complain

One reason the Israelites spent forty years wandering in the wilderness for what should have been an eleven-day journey was that they were complaining.

“So the people spoke against God and against Moses, ‘Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, nor is there any water, and we loathe this miserable food!’” (Num. 21:5). Do you hear evidence of their bad attitude? They think their discomfort is God’s fault! Or Moses’ fault! And they are complaining about the miraculous manna God sends daily from heaven to feed them!

One of the worst things about complaining is that it prevents us from seeing all the blessings we do have. Do you have a situation or circumstance you want to change? I have learned that we rarely find freedom from negative situations as long as we think and speak negatively about them. But when we start finding things to be thankful for, develop a godly attitude toward them, and stop complaining, our circumstances begin to change.

²⁴Then Israel struck the king of the Amorites with the edge of the sword and took possession of his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, as far as the Ammonites, for the boundary of the Ammonites was strong.

²⁵Israel took all these cities, and settled in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon and in all its towns.

²⁶For Heshbon was the city of Sihon, king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab and had taken all his land out of his hand, as far as the Arnon.

²⁷That is why those who use proverbs say,

“Come to Heshbon,
Let the city of Sihon be built and established.

²⁸“For fire has gone out of Heshbon,
A flame from the city of Sihon;
It devoured Ar of Moab
And the lords of the heights of the Arnon.

²⁹“Woe (judgment is coming) to you, Moab!
You are destroyed, O people of [the god] Chemosh!
Moab has given his sons as fugitives [that is, survivors of battle],
And his daughters into captivity
To Sihon king of the Amorites.

³⁰“We have shot them down [with arrows];
Heshbon is destroyed as far as Dibon,
And we have laid them waste as far as Nophah,
Which reaches to Medeba.”

³¹Thus Israel settled in the land of the Amorites.

³²Now Moses sent *men* to spy out Jazer, and they overthrew its villages and dispossessed the Amorites who were there.

³³Then they turned and went up by the way of Bashan;

and Og the king of Bashan went out against them, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei.

³⁴But the LORD said to Moses, “Do not fear him, for I have handed over him and all his people and his land to you; and you shall do to him just as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon.”

³⁵So the sons of Israel killed Og and his sons and all his people, until there was no survivor left to him; and they took possession of his land.

22 THE ISRAELITES journeyed, and camped in the plains of Moab, on the east side of the Jordan [River] across from Jericho.

²And Balak [the king of Moab] the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.

³So Moab was terrified because of the people, for they were numerous. Moab was overcome with fear because of the sons of Israel.

⁴Moab said to the elders of Midian, “Now this horde will lick up all that is around us, just as the ox licks up the grass of the field.” And Balak the son of Zippor was the king of Moab at that time.

⁵So he sent messengers to Balaam [a famous prophet-diviner] the son of Beor at Pethor, which is by the [Euphrates] River, in the land of the descendants of his people, to call for him, saying, “There is a people who have come out of Egypt; behold, they cover the surface of the land, and they are living opposite me.

⁶“Now please come, curse these people for me, for they are too powerful for me; perhaps I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land. For I know [your reputation] that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.”

⁷So the elders of Moab and of Midian departed with *fees* for divination (foretelling) in hand; and they came to Balaam and told him the words of Balak.

⁸Balaam said to them, “Spend the night here and I will bring word back to you as the LORD may speak to me.” So the leaders of Moab stayed with Balaam [that night].

⁹God came to Balaam, and said, “Who are these men with you?”

¹⁰Balaam said to God, “Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent *word* to me:

¹¹‘Hear this, the people who came out of Egypt cover the surface of the land; come now, curse them for me. Perhaps I may be able to fight against them and drive them out.’”

¹²God said to Balaam, “Do not go with them; you shall not curse the people [of Israel], for they are blessed.”

¹³Balaam got up in the morning, and said to the leaders of Balak, “Go back to your own land [of Moab], for the LORD has refused to let me go with you.”

¹⁴The leaders of Moab arose and went to Balak, and said, “Balaam refused to come with us.”

¹⁵Then Balak again sent leaders, more numerous and [men who were] more distinguished than the first ones.

¹⁶They came to Balaam, and said to him, “Thus says Balak the son of Zippor, ‘I beg you, let nothing hinder you from

coming to me.

¹⁷“For I will give you a very great honor and I will do whatever you tell me; so please come, curse these people [of Israel] for me.”

¹⁸Balaam answered the servants of Balak, “Even if Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do anything, either small or great, contrary to the command of the LORD my God.

¹⁹“Now please, you also stay here tonight, and I will find out what else the LORD will say to me.”

²⁰God came to Balaam at night and said to him, “If the men have come to call you, get up and go with them, but you shall *still* do only what I tell you.”

²¹So Balaam got up in the morning and saddled his donkey and went with the leaders of Moab.

²²But God’s anger was kindled because he was going, and the Angel of the LORD took His stand in the way as an adversary against him. Now he was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him.

²³When the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD standing in the way and His drawn sword in His hand, the donkey turned off the path and went into the field; but Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back toward the path.

²⁴But the Angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path of the vineyards, with a [stone] wall on this side and a [stone] wall on that side.

²⁵When the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD, she pressed herself against the wall and crushed Balaam’s foot against it, and he struck her again.

²⁶The Angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn, either to the right or to the left.

²⁷When the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam, so Balaam was angry and he struck the donkey [a third time] with his staff.

²⁸And the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you that you have struck me these three times?"

²⁹Then Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have made a mockery of me! If there had been a sword in my hand, I would have killed you by now!"

³⁰The donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden all your life until this day? Have I ever been accustomed to do so to you?" And he said, "No."

³¹Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the Angel of the LORD standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand; and he bowed his head and lay himself face down.

³²The Angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to stand against you, because your behavior was obstinate *and* contrary to Me.

³³"The donkey saw Me and turned away from Me these three times. If she had not turned away from Me, I would have certainly killed you now, and let her live."

³⁴Balaam said to the Angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know that You were standing in the way against me. But now, if my going displeases You, I will turn back."

³⁵The Angel of the LORD said to Balaam, “Go with the men, but you shall speak only what I tell you.” So Balaam went along with the leaders of Balak.

³⁶When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the city of Moab, which is on the border at the Arnon [River], at the farthest end of the border.

³⁷Balak said to Balaam, “Did I not urgently send *word* to you to call you? Why did you not come to me [immediately]? Am I really unable to honor (pay) you?”

³⁸So Balaam said to Balak, “Indeed I have come to you now, but am I able to say anything at all? The word that God puts in my mouth, that I shall speak.”

³⁹And Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kiriath-huzoth.

⁴⁰Balak sacrificed oxen and sheep, and sent *some* to Balaam and to the leaders who were with him.

⁴¹Then it came about in the morning that Balak took Balaam and brought him up to the high places of Baal; from there he saw a portion of the Israelites.

23 THEN BALAAM said to Balak, “Build seven altars for me here, and prepare for me seven bulls and seven rams here.”

²Balak did just as Balaam had said, and Balak and Balaam offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

³Then Balaam said to Balak, “Stand beside your burnt offering and I will go. Perhaps the LORD will come to meet me; and whatever He shows me I will tell you.” So he went to a

desolate hill.

⁴Now God met Balaam, who said to Him, “I have prepared seven altars, and I have offered a bull and a ram on each altar.”

⁵Then the LORD put a speech in Balaam’s mouth, and said, “Return to Balak, and you shall speak thus.”

⁶Balaam returned to Balak, and behold, he was standing by his burnt sacrifice, he and all the leaders of Moab.

⁷Balaam took up his [first] discourse (oracle) and said:

“Balak, the king of Moab, has brought me from Aram
(Syria),

from the mountains of the east, [saying,]

‘Come, curse [the descendants of] Jacob for me;

And come, [violently] denounce Israel.’

⁸“How shall I curse those whom God has not cursed?

Or how can I [violently] denounce those the LORD has not
denounced?

⁹“For from the top of the rocks I see Israel,

And from the hills I look at him.

Behold, the people [of Israel] shall dwell alone

And will not be reckoned among the nations.

¹⁰“Who can count the dust (the descendants) of Jacob

And the number of *even* the fourth part of Israel?

Let me die the death of the righteous [those who are upright
and in right standing with God],

And let my end be like his!” [Ps 37:37; Rev 14:13]

¹¹Then Balak said to Balaam, “What have you done to me?
I brought you to curse my enemies, but here you have

[thoroughly] blessed them instead!”

¹²Balaam answered, “Must I not be obedient *and* careful to speak what the LORD has put in my mouth?”

¹³Balak said to him, “Come with me, I implore you, to another place from where you can see them, although you will see only the nearest and not all of them; and curse them for me from there.”

¹⁴So he took Balaam to the field of Zophim to the top of [Mount] Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

¹⁵Balaam said to Balak, “Stand here beside your burnt offering while I go to meet the LORD over there.”

¹⁶Then the LORD met Balaam and put a speech in his mouth, and said, “Go back to Balak and you shall speak thus.”

¹⁷When Balaam returned to Balak, he was standing beside his burnt offering, and the leaders of Moab were with him. And Balak said to him, “What has the LORD spoken?”

¹⁸Balaam took up his [second] discourse (oracle) and said:

“Rise up, O Balak, and hear;

Listen [closely] to me, son of Zippor.

¹⁹“God is not a man, that He should lie,

Nor a son of man, that He should repent.

Has He said, and will He not do it?

Or has He spoken and will He not make it good *and* fulfill it?

²⁰“Behold, I have received *His command* to bless [Israel].

He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it.

²¹“God has not observed wickedness in Jacob [for he is forgiven],

Nor has He seen trouble in Israel.
The LORD their God is with Israel,
And the shout of their King is among the people. [Rom 4:7,
8; 1 John 3:1, 2]

²²“God brought them out of Egypt;
They have the strength of a wild ox.

²³“For there is no enchantment *or* omen against Jacob,
Nor is there any divination against Israel.
At the proper time it shall be said to Jacob
And to Israel, what has God done!

²⁴“Behold, a people rises up like a lioness
And lifts itself up like a lion;
He will not lie down until he devours the prey
And drinks the blood of the slain.”

²⁵Then Balak said to Balaam, “Neither curse them at all nor
bless them at all!”

²⁶But Balaam answered Balak, “Did I not say to you, ‘All
that the LORD speaks, that I must do?’”

²⁷Then Balak said to Balaam, “Please come; I will take you
to another place. Perhaps it will please God to let you curse
them for me from there.”

²⁸So Balak brought Balaam to the top of [Mount] Peor, that
overlooks the wasteland.

²⁹And Balaam said to Balak, “Build seven altars for me
here, and prepare for me seven bulls and seven rams here.”

³⁰Balak did just as Balaam had said, and offered a bull and
a ram on each altar.

24 WHEN BALAAM saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he did not go as he had done each time before [superstitiously] to seek omens *and* signs [in the natural world], but he set his face toward the wilderness (desert).

²And Balaam raised his eyes and he saw Israel living *in their tents* tribe by tribe; and the Spirit of God came on him.

³He took up his [third] discourse (oracle) and said:

“The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor,
And the oracle of the man whose eye is opened [at last, to see clearly the purpose and will of God],

⁴The oracle of one who hears the words of God,
Who sees the vision of the Almighty,
Falling down, but having his eyes open *and* uncovered,

⁵How fair are your tents, O Jacob,
And your tabernacles, O Israel!

⁶“Like valleys that stretch out,
Like gardens beside the river,
Like aloes planted by the LORD,
Like cedars beside the waters. [Ps 1:3]

⁷“Water [that is, great blessings] will flow from his buckets,
And his offspring *will live* by many waters,
And his king will be higher than Agag,
And his kingdom shall be exalted.

⁸“God brought Israel out of Egypt;
Israel has strength like the wild ox;
He will devour [Gentile] nations, his adversaries (enemies),
And will crush their bones in pieces,

And shatter them with his arrows.

⁹“He bowed down [to rest], he lies down as a lion;
And as a lioness, who dares to rouse him?
Blessed [of God] is he who blesses you,
And cursed [of God] is he who curses you.” [Matt 25:40]

¹⁰Then Balak’s anger was kindled against Balaam, and he struck his hands together; and Balak said to Balaam, “I called you to curse my enemies, but behold, you have done nothing but bless them these three times.

¹¹“Therefore now flee to your place! I had intended to honor you greatly, but behold, the LORD has held you back from honor.”

¹²Balaam said to Balak, “Did I not tell your messengers whom you had sent to me,

¹³“Even if Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the command of the LORD, to do either good or bad of my own accord. What the LORD speaks, that I will speak?”

¹⁴“And now, look, I am going to my people; come, I will advise you as to what this people [Israel] will do to your people [Moab] in the days to come.”

¹⁵He took up his [fourth] discourse (oracle) and said:

“The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor,
The oracle of the man whose eye is opened,

¹⁶The oracle of him who hears the words of God
And knows the knowledge of the Most High,
Who sees the vision of the Almighty,
Falling down, but having his eyes open *and* uncovered:

17“ I see Him, but not now;
I behold Him, but not near.
A star shall come forth from [the descendants of] Jacob,
A scepter shall rise out of [the descendants of] Israel
And shall crush the forehead of Moab
And destroy all the sons of Sheth. [Matt 2:2; Rom 15:12]

18“Edom shall be [taken as] a possession,
[Mount] Seir, Israel’s enemies, also will be a possession,
While Israel performs valiantly.

19“One from [the descendants of] Jacob shall have dominion
And will destroy the remnant from the city.”

20Balaam looked at Amalek and took up his [fifth] discourse (oracle) and said:

“Amalek was the first of the [neighboring] nations [to
oppose the Israelites after they left Egypt],
But his end shall be destruction.”

21And Balaam looked at the Kenites and took up his [sixth] discourse (oracle) and said:

“Strong is your dwelling place,
And you set your nest in the cliff.

22“Nevertheless the Kenites will be consumed.
How long will Asshur (Assyria) keep you (Israel) captive?”

23Then he took up his [seventh] discourse (oracle) and said:

“Alas, who can live unless God has ordained it?

²⁴“But ships *shall come* from the coast of Kittim,
And shall afflict Asshur (Assyria) and Eber;
So they (the victors) also *will come* to destruction.”

²⁵Then Balaam arose and departed and returned to his place, and Balak also went on his way.

25 ISRAEL SETTLED *and* remained in Shittim, and the people began to play the prostitute with the women of Moab [by being unfaithful to God].

²For they invited the Israelites to the sacrifices of their gods, and the Israelites ate [food offered to idols] and bowed down to Moab's gods.

³So Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor [in worship]. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.

⁴The LORD said to Moses, “Take all the leaders of the people [who have committed sin with the Moabites], and execute them in broad daylight before the LORD, so that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel.”

⁵So Moses said to the judges of Israel, “Each one of you must kill his men who have joined themselves to Baal of Peor [in worship].”

⁶Then one of the Israelites came and presented to his relatives a Midianite woman, in the sight of Moses and the whole congregation of the Israelites, while they were weeping [over God's judgment] at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle).

⁷When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the

priest, saw this, he left the congregation and took a spear in his hand,

⁸and he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and pierced both of them through the body, the man of Israel and the woman. Then the plague on the Israelites stopped.

⁹Nevertheless, those [Israelites] who died in the plague numbered 24,000.

¹⁰Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

¹¹“Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned my wrath away from the Israelites because he was jealous with My jealousy among them, so that I did not destroy the Israelites in My jealousy.

¹²“Therefore say, ‘Behold, I give to Phinehas My covenant of peace.

¹³“And it shall be for him and his descendants after him, a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was jealous (impassioned) for [the unique honor and respect owed to] his God and made atonement for the sons of Israel.” [Ps 106:28–31]

¹⁴Now the name of the man of Israel who was killed with the Midianite woman was Zimri the son of Salu, a leader of a father’s household among the Simeonites.

¹⁵The name of the Midianite woman who was killed was Cozbi the daughter of Zur, who was the tribal head of a father’s household in Midian.

¹⁶Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

¹⁷“Provoke hostilities with the Midianites and attack them,

¹⁸for they harass you with their tricks, the tricks with which they have deceived you in the matter [of the Baal] of Peor, and

in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of the leader of Midian, their sister, who was killed on the day of the plague because [of the Baal] of Peor.”

26 THEN IT happened after the plague that the LORD said to Moses and Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest,

²“Take a census of all the [males in the] congregation of the sons of Israel from twenty years old and upward, by their fathers’ households, all in Israel who are able to go to war.”

³So Moses and Eleazar the priest spoke with the people in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, saying,

⁴“*A census of the people shall be taken* from twenty years old and upward, just as the LORD has commanded Moses.”

Now the Israelites who came out of the land of Egypt were:

⁵Reuben, the firstborn of Israel (Jacob), the sons of Reuben: of Hanoch, the family of the Hanochites; of Pallu, the family of the Palluites;

⁶of Hezron, the family of the Hezronites; of Carmi, the family of the Carmites.

⁷These are the families (clans) of the Reubenites; and those who were numbered of them were 43,730.

⁸The son of Pallu: Eliab.

⁹The sons of Eliab: Nemuel and Dathan and Abiram. These are the Dathan and Abiram who were called by the congregation, who contended against Moses and Aaron in the company of Korah, when they contended against the LORD,

¹⁰and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up along with Korah, when that company died, when the fire

devoured two hundred and fifty men, so that they became a [warning] sign.

¹¹But Korah's sons did not die [because they did not participate in the rebellion].

¹²The sons of Simeon according to their families: of Nemuel, the family of the Nemuelites; of Jamin, the family of the Jaminites; of Jachin, the family of the Jachinites;

¹³of Zerah, the family of the Zerahites; of Shaul, the family of the Shaulites.

¹⁴These are the families (clans) of the Simeonites, 22,200.

¹⁵The sons of Gad according to their families: of Zephon, the family of the Zephonites; of Haggi, the family of the Haggites; of Shuni, the family of the Shunites;

¹⁶of Ozni, the family of the Oznites; of Eri, the family of the Erites;

¹⁷of Arod, the family of the Arodites; of Areli, the family of the Arelites.

¹⁸These are the families (clans) of the sons of Gad according to those who were numbered, 40,500.

¹⁹The sons of Judah were Er and Onan, but Er and Onan [were judged by God and] died in the land of Canaan. [Gen 38:7–10]

²⁰The sons of Judah according to their families: of Shelah, the family of the Shelanites; of Perez, the family of the Perezites; of Zerah, the family of the Zerahites.

²¹The sons of Perez: of Hezron, the family of the Hezronites; of Hamul, the family of the Hamulites.

²²These are the families (clans) of Judah according to those

who were numbered, 76,500.

²³The sons of Issachar according to their families: of Tola, the family of the Tolaites; of Puvah, the family of the Punites;

²⁴of Jashub, the family of the Jashubites; of Shimron, the family of the Shimronites.

²⁵These are the families (clans) of Issachar according to those who were numbered, 64,300.

²⁶The sons of Zebulun according to their families: of Sered, the family of the Seredites; of Elon, the family of the Elonites; of Jahleel, the family of the Jahleelites.

²⁷These are the families (clans) of the Zebulunites according to those who were numbered, 60,500.

²⁸The sons of Joseph according to their families were Manasseh and Ephraim.

²⁹The sons of Manasseh: of Machir, the family of the Machirites; and Machir was the father of Gilead; of Gilead, the family of the Gileadites.

³⁰These are the sons of Gilead: of Iezer, the family of the Iezerites; of Helek, the family of the Helekites;

³¹of Asriel, the family of the Asrielites; of Shechem, the family of the Shechemites;

³²of Shemida, the family of the Shemidaïtes; and of Hephher, the family of the Hephherites.

³³Zelophehad the son of Hephher had no sons, but only daughters, and the names of Zelophehad's daughters were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

³⁴These are the families (clans) of Manasseh; and those who were numbered of them were 52,700.

³⁵These are the sons of Ephraim according to their families: of Shuthelah, the family of the Shuthelahites; of Becher, the family of the Becherites; of Tahan, the family of the Tahanites.

³⁶And these are the sons of Shuthelah: of Eran, the family of the Eranites.

³⁷These are the families (clans) of the sons of Ephraim according to those who were numbered, 32,500. These are the descendants of Joseph according to their families (clans).

³⁸The sons of Benjamin according to their families: of Bela, the family of the Belaites; of Ashbel, the family of the Ashbelites; of Ahiram, the family of the Ahiramites;

³⁹of Shephupham, the family of the Shuphamites; of Hupham, the family of the Huphamites.

⁴⁰The sons of Bela were Ard and Naaman: *of Ard*, the family of the Ardites; of Naaman, the family of the Naamites.

⁴¹These are the sons of Benjamin according to their families (clans); and those who were numbered, 45,600.

⁴²These are the sons of Dan according to their families: of Shuham, the family of the Shuhamites. These are the families of Dan according to their families.

⁴³All the families (clans) of the Shuhamites according to those who were numbered, 64,400.

⁴⁴Of the sons of Asher according to their families: of Imnah, the family of the Immities; of Ishvi, the family of the Ishvites; of Beriah, the family of the Beriites.

⁴⁵Of the sons of Beriah: of Heber, the family of the Heberites; of Malchiel, the family of the Malchielites.

⁴⁶And the name of the daughter of Asher was Serah.

⁴⁷These are the families (clans) of the sons of Asher according to those who were numbered, 53,400.

⁴⁸Of the sons of Naphtali according to their families: of Jahzeel, the family of the Jahzeelites; of Guni, the family of the Gunites;

⁴⁹of Jezer, the family of the Jezerites; of Shillem, the family of the Shillemites.

⁵⁰These are the families (clans) of Naphtali according to their families; and those who were numbered of them were 45,400.

⁵¹This was the [total] number of the [male] Israelites, 601,730 [twenty years old and upward who were able to go to war].

⁵²And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

⁵³“Among these the land shall be divided as an inheritance according to the number of names.

⁵⁴“To the larger *tribe* you shall give the larger inheritance, and to the smaller *tribe* the smaller inheritance; each *tribe* shall be given its inheritance according to its numbers.

⁵⁵“But the land shall be divided by lot. They shall receive their inheritance according to the names of the tribes of their fathers (tribal ancestors).

⁵⁶“According to the [location selected by] lot, their inheritance shall be divided between the larger and the smaller [groups].”

⁵⁷These are those who were numbered of the Levites according to their families: of Gershon, the family of the Gershonites; of Kohath, the family of the Kohathites; of Merari, the family of the Merarites.

⁵⁸These are the families of Levi: the family of the Libnites, the family of the Hebronites, the family of the Mahlites, the family of the Mushites, the family of the Korahites. And Kohath was the father of Amram.

⁵⁹The name of Amram's wife was Jochebed, the daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt; and to Amram she bore Aaron, Moses, and Miriam their sister.

⁶⁰To Aaron were born Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

⁶¹But Nadab and Abihu died [in the presence of God] when they offered [in their ceremonial censers] strange [unholy, unacceptable, unauthorized] fire before the LORD. [Lev 10:1–3]

⁶²Those numbered of the Levites were 23,000, every male from a month old and upward; for they were not numbered among the sons of Israel, since no inheritance [of land] was given to them among the Israelites.

⁶³These are those numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who numbered the sons of Israel [for the second time] in the plains of Moab by the Jordan [River] at Jericho.

⁶⁴But among these there was not a man [left] of those numbered by Moses and Aaron the priest, who numbered the sons of Israel [for the first time] in the Wilderness of Sinai.

⁶⁵For the LORD had said of them, "They shall certainly die in the wilderness." And not a man was left of them except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.

27 THEN THE [five] daughters of Zelophehad the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, from the tribes of Manasseh [who was] the son of

Joseph, approached [with a request]. These are the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

²They stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the leaders, and all the congregation at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle), saying,

³“Our father died in the wilderness. He was not among those who assembled together against the LORD in the company of Korah, but he died for his own sin [as did all those who rebelled at Kadesh], and he had no sons. [Num 14:26–35]

⁴“Why should the name of our father be removed from his family because he had no son? Give to us a possession (land) among our father’s brothers.”

⁵So Moses brought their case before the LORD.

⁶Then the LORD said to Moses,

⁷“The request of the daughters of Zelophehad is justified. You shall certainly give them a possession as an inheritance among their father’s brothers, and you shall transfer their father’s inheritance to them.

⁸“Further, you shall say to the Israelites, ‘If a man dies and has no son, you shall transfer his inheritance to his daughter.

⁹‘If a man has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers.

¹⁰‘If a man has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father’s brothers.

¹¹‘If his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his nearest relative in his own family, and he shall take possession of it. It shall be a statute and ordinance to the Israelites, just as the LORD has commanded Moses.’”

¹²Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go up to this mountain (Nebo) [in the] Abarim [range] and look at the land I have given to the sons of Israel.

¹³“When you have seen it, you too will be gathered to your people [in death], just as Aaron your brother was gathered;

¹⁴because in the Wilderness of Zin, during the strife of the congregation, you rebelled against My command to treat me as holy [by following My instruction] before their eyes at the water.” (These are the waters of Meribah in Kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin.) [Num 20:10–12]

¹⁵Then Moses spoke to the LORD, saying,

¹⁶“Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation

¹⁷who will go out and come in before them, and will lead them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of the LORD will not be as sheep without a shepherd.”

¹⁸The LORD said to Moses, “Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him;

¹⁹and have him stand before Eleazar the priest and before the whole congregation, and give him a commission in their sight.

²⁰“You shall put some of your authority *and* honor on him, so that all the congregation of the Israelites will obey him.

²¹“He shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire before the LORD for him by the judgment (decision) of the Urim. At Joshua’s command the people shall go out and at his command they shall come in, he and all the congregation of

Israel with him.”

²²Moses did as the LORD commanded him. He took Joshua and had him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation,

²³and Moses laid his hands on Joshua and commissioned him, just as the LORD had commanded through Moses.

28 THEN THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

²“Command the Israelites and say to them, ‘You shall be careful to present at its appointed time [during the year] My offering, My food for My offerings by fire as a sweet *and* soothing aroma to Me.’

³“You shall say to the people, ‘This is the offering by fire which you shall present to the LORD every day: two male lambs one year old without blemish as a continual burnt offering.

⁴“You shall offer one lamb in the morning and you shall offer the other lamb at twilight,

⁵also a tenth of an ephah of finely-milled flour as a grain offering, mixed with a fourth of a hin of pressed oil.

⁶“It is a continual burnt offering which was ordained on Mount Sinai as a sweet *and* soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the LORD.

⁷“Its drink offering shall be a fourth of a hin for each lamb, in the holy place you shall pour out a strong drink offering to the LORD.

⁸“The other lamb you shall offer at twilight; as the grain offering of the morning and as its drink offering, you shall offer

it, an offering by fire, a sweet *and* soothing aroma to the LORD.

⁹Then on the Sabbath day two male lambs one year old without blemish, and two-tenths [of an ephah] of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, and its drink offering.

¹⁰This is the burnt offering of every Sabbath, in addition to the continual burnt offering and its drink offering.

¹¹Then at the beginning of [each of] your months you shall present a burnt offering to the LORD: two bulls, one ram, seven male lambs one year old without blemish;

¹²and three-tenths [of an ephah] of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, for each bull; and two-tenths [of an ephah] of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, for the one ram;

¹³and a tenth [of an ephah] of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering for each lamb, as a burnt offering of a sweet *and* soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the LORD.

¹⁴Their drink offerings shall be half a hin of wine for a bull, and a third of a hin for a ram, and a fourth of a hin for a lamb. This is the burnt offering of each month throughout the months of the year.

¹⁵And one male goat as a sin offering to the LORD; it shall be offered with its drink offering in addition to the continual burnt offering.

¹⁶The LORD's Passover shall be on the fourteenth day of the first month [of each year].

¹⁷There shall be a feast on the fifteenth day of this month; unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days.

¹⁸On the first day there shall be a holy [summoned] assembly; you shall do no laborious work *that day*.

¹⁹‘But you shall present an offering by fire, a burnt offering to the LORD: two bulls, one ram, and seven male lambs one year old, without blemish.

²⁰‘For their grain offering you shall offer fine flour mixed with oil; three-tenths [of an ephah] for the bull, and two-tenths for the ram;

²¹you shall offer a tenth [of an ephah] for each of the seven male lambs;

²²and one male goat as a sin offering to make atonement for you.

²³‘You shall present these in addition to the burnt offering of the morning, which is for a continual burnt offering.

²⁴‘In this way you shall present daily, for seven days, the food of the offering by fire, a sweet *and* soothing aroma to the LORD; it shall be presented with its drink offering in addition to the continual burnt offering.

²⁵‘On the seventh day you shall have a holy [summoned] assembly; you shall do no laborious work.

²⁶‘Also on the day of the first fruits, when you offer a new grain offering to the LORD at your *Feast of Weeks*, you shall have a holy [summoned] assembly; you shall do no laborious work.

²⁷‘You shall present the burnt offering as a sweet *and* soothing aroma to the LORD: two young bulls, one ram, seven male lambs one year old;

²⁸and their grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil; three-tenths [of an ephah] for each bull, two-tenths for the one ram,

²⁹a tenth for each of the seven male lambs,

³⁰and one male goat to make atonement for you.

³¹‘In addition to the continual burnt offering and its grain offering, you shall present them with their drink offerings. They shall be without blemish.

29 ‘ON THE first day of the seventh month, you shall have a holy [summoned] assembly; you shall do no laborious work. It will be for you a day of blowing the trumpets (the shophar, ram’s horn).

²‘You shall offer a burnt offering as a sweet *and* soothing aroma to the LORD: one bull, one ram, and seven male lambs one year old without blemish;

³also their grain offering, fine flour mixed with oil, three-tenths [of an ephah] for the bull, two-tenths for the ram,

⁴and one-tenth [of an ephah] for each of the seven lambs,

⁵and one male goat as a sin offering to make atonement for you.

⁶*These are* in addition to the burnt offering of the New Moon and its grain offering, and the continual burnt offering and its grain offering, and their drink offerings, according to the ordinance for them, as a sweet *and* soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the LORD.

⁷‘Then on the tenth day of this seventh month you shall have a holy [summoned] assembly [for the Day of Atonement]; and you shall humble yourselves; you shall not do any work.

⁸‘You shall present a burnt offering to the LORD as a sweet *and* soothing aroma: one bull, one ram, and seven male lambs

one year old, which are without blemish;

⁹and their grain offering, fine flour mixed with oil, three-tenths [of an ephah] for the bull, two-tenths for the one ram,

¹⁰a tenth [of an ephah] for each of the seven lambs,

¹¹one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the sin offering of atonement, and the continual burnt offering and its grain offering, and their drink offerings.

¹²Then on the fifteenth day of the seventh month you shall have a holy [summoned] assembly; you shall do no laborious work, and you shall observe a Feast [of Booths] to the LORD for seven days.

¹³You shall present a burnt offering, an offering by fire as a sweet *and* soothing aroma to the LORD: thirteen bulls, two rams, and fourteen male lambs one year old, which are without blemish;

¹⁴and their grain offering, fine flour mixed with oil, three-tenths [of an ephah] for each of the thirteen bulls, two-tenths for each of the two rams,

¹⁵and a tenth [of an ephah] for each of the fourteen lambs;

¹⁶also one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the continual burnt offering, its grain offering and its drink offering.

¹⁷Then on the second day [of the Feast of Booths]: twelve bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs one year old without blemish,

¹⁸with their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, the rams, and the lambs, by their number according to the ordinance,

¹⁹also one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the

continual burnt offering, its grain offering, and their drink offerings.

²⁰Then on the third day [of the Feast of Booths]: eleven bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs one year old without blemish,

²¹with their grain offering and drink offerings for the bulls, the rams, and the lambs, by their number according to the ordinance,

²²and one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the continual burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.

²³Then on the fourth day [of the Feast of Booths]: ten bulls, two rams, and fourteen male lambs one year old without blemish;

²⁴their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, the rams, and the lambs, by their number according to the ordinance,

²⁵and one male goat as a sin offering, besides the continual burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.

²⁶Then on the fifth day [of the Feast of Booths]: nine bulls, two rams, and fourteen male lambs one year old without blemish,

²⁷and their grain offering and drink offerings for the bulls, the rams, and the lambs, by their number according to the ordinance;

²⁸and one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the continual burnt offering, and its grain offering, and its drink offering.

²⁹Then on the sixth day [of the Feast of Booths]: eight

bulls, two rams, and fourteen male lambs one year old without blemish;

³⁰and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, the rams, and the lambs, by their number according to the ordinance,

³¹and one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the continual burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offerings.

³²‘Then on the seventh day [of the Feast of Booths]: seven bulls, two rams, and fourteen male lambs one year old without blemish,

³³and their grain offering and drink offerings for the bulls, the rams, and the lambs, by their number according to the ordinance;

³⁴and one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the continual burnt offering, and its grain offering, and its drink offering.

³⁵‘On the eighth day you shall have a solemn assembly [to mark the end of the feast]; you shall do no laborious work.

³⁶‘You shall present a burnt offering, an offering by fire, as a sweet *and* soothing aroma to the LORD: one bull, one ram, seven male lambs one year old without blemish;

³⁷their grain offering and drink offerings for the bull, the ram, and the lambs, by their number according to the ordinance,

³⁸and one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the continual burnt offering, and its grain offering, and its drink offering.

³⁹‘You shall present these to the LORD at your appointed

times, in addition the offerings you have vowed and your freewill offerings, as your burnt offerings, grain offerings, drink offerings, and as your peace offerings.”

⁴⁰So Moses spoke to the Israelites in accordance with everything that the LORD had commanded him.

30 THEN MOSES spoke to the leaders of the tribes of the Israelites, saying, “This is the thing which the LORD has commanded:

²“If a man makes a vow to the LORD or swears an oath to bind himself with a pledge [of abstinence], he shall not break (violate, profane) his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.

³“Also if a woman makes a vow to the LORD and binds herself by a pledge [of abstinence], while *living* in her father’s house in her youth,

⁴and her father hears her vow and her pledge by which she has bound herself, and he offers no objection, then all her vows shall stand and every pledge by which she has bound herself shall stand.

⁵“But if her father disapproves of her [making her vow] on the day that he hears about it, none of her vows or her pledges by which she has bound herself shall stand; and the LORD will forgive her because her father has disapproved of her [making the vow].

⁶“But if she marries while under her vows or if she has bound herself by a rash statement,

⁷and her husband hears of it and says nothing about it on

the day he hears it, then her vows shall stand and her pledge by which she bound herself shall stand.

⁸“But if her husband disapproves of her [making her vow or pledge] on the day that he hears of it, then he shall annul her vow which she is under and the rash statement of her lips by which she bound herself; and the LORD will forgive her.

⁹“But the vow of a widow or of a divorced woman, everything by which she has bound herself, shall stand against her.

¹⁰“However, if she vowed in her husband’s house or bound herself by a pledge with an oath,

¹¹and her husband heard it, but said nothing to her and did not disapprove of her [making the vow], then all her vows and every pledge by which she bound herself shall stand.

¹²“But if her husband absolutely annuls them on the day he heard them, then whatever proceeds from her lips concerning her vows or concerning her pledge shall not stand. Her husband has annulled them, and the LORD will forgive her.

¹³“Every vow and every binding oath to humble herself, her husband may confirm it or her husband may annul it.

¹⁴“But if her husband says nothing to her [concerning the matter] from day to day, then he confirms all her vows or all her pledges which are on her. He has confirmed them because he said nothing to her on the day he heard them.

¹⁵“But if he indeed nullifies them after he hears of them, then he shall be responsible for *and* bear her guilt [for breaking her promise].”

¹⁶These are the statutes which the LORD commanded Moses, between a man and his wife, and between a father and

his daughter while she is a youth in her father's house.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Willingness To Make a Change

Having no water, the people of Israel contended with Moses and said, “If only we had perished when our brothers perished [in the plague] before the LORD! Why have you brought up the assembly of the LORD into this wilderness to die here...?” (Num. 20:3–4). How could they have said such a terrible thing? They actually said they would rather suffer, be in torment, and die in slavery than to be patient and live freely with God.

God gave these people opportunity after opportunity to change, but they wouldn’t change. They wanted everything to work out the way they wanted it to—but they were not willing to do anything but moan and groan.

It’s the old idea that people can do bad things and expect good results. They grumble at God and expect divine blessings. How can that be? How can they be so confused and twisted in their thinking? But then, I know people like that today. I was one of those people!

It is wise to keep in mind that we always reap what we sow. Only obedience to God brings true blessing into our lives, and

we are only deceiving ourselves if we think we can do wrong things, have wrong attitudes, and reap God's blessing in our lives.

It's easy to condemn the Israelites because the Bible lays out their story so clearly. Paul urged his readers that those stories were written "for our instruction [to admonish and equip us], upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Cor. 10:11). If we do the same things the Israelites did in their grumbling, we'll get the same disastrous results.

When we tire of getting the same negative results—and when we tire of Satan's buffeting and tormenting us—then we're ready to make changes. Those people in the wilderness died outside the Promised Land because they never learned. Thankfully, we have an advantage: We have their example to remind and instruct us, and we have the Holy Spirit to help us do the right thing.

We can change! The first step is to ask God to help us think positive thoughts, because positive thinking produces positive attitudes. Once our attitudes change, our lives change.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Dear Father, please help me to think healthy, positive, godly thoughts. Enable me to produce a good attitude that will please You and lead me into a full and lasting victory. I ask this through Jesus Christ. Amen.

31 THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

²“Take vengeance for the Israelites on the Midianites; afterward you will be gathered to your people [in death].”

³Moses spoke to the people, saying, “Arm men from among you for war, so that they may go against Midian to execute the LORD’s vengeance on Midian [for seducing Israel to participate in idolatry]. [Num 25:16–18]

⁴“A thousand [fighting men] from each tribe of all the tribes of Israel you shall send to the war.”

⁵So out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand from each tribe were selected, twelve thousand armed for war.

⁶Moses sent them, a thousand from each tribe, to the war, and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to war with them, and the sacred vessels [of the sanctuary] and the trumpets to blow the alarm in his hand.

⁷They made war against Midian, just as the LORD had commanded Moses, and they killed every male.

⁸They killed the kings of Midian along with *the rest of* their slain: Evi and Rekem and Zur [the father of Cozbi] and Hur and Reba, the five kings of Midian; also Balaam the son of Beor they killed with the sword. [Num 22:31–35; Neh 13:1, 2]

⁹The sons of Israel captured the women of Midian and their children; and all their cattle, all their livestock, and all their property they took as spoil [of war].

¹⁰They burned all the cities where they lived, and all their encampments with fire.

¹¹They took all the plunder and all the spoils of war, both people and livestock.

¹²Then they brought the captives, the spoils, and the plunder to Moses and to Eleazar the priest and to the congregation of the Israelites at the camp on the plains of Moab by the Jordan [River] across from Jericho.

¹³Moses and Eleazar the priest and all the leaders of the congregation went out to meet them outside the camp.

¹⁴But Moses was angry with the officers of the army, the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, who served in the war.

¹⁵And Moses said to them, "Have you let all the women live?

¹⁶"Look, these [are the women who] caused the Israelites, by the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and so a plague came among the congregation of the LORD. [Num 25:1–9; 31:8]

¹⁷"Now therefore, kill every male among the children, and kill every woman who is not a virgin.

¹⁸"But all the young girls who have not known a man intimately, keep alive for yourselves [to marry].

¹⁹"Camp outside the camp for seven days; whoever has killed any person and whoever has touched any dead body, purify yourselves and your captives, on the third day and on the seventh day.

²⁰"You shall purify every garment and every article made of leather and all the things made of goats' hair, and every article made of wood."

²¹Then Eleazar the priest said to the men of war who had gone to battle, “This is the statute of the law which the LORD has commanded Moses:

²²only the gold, the silver, the bronze, the iron, the tin, and the lead,

²³everything that can stand fire, you shall pass through fire, and it shall be clean. Nevertheless, it shall also be purified with the water of purification [to remove its impurity]; and all that cannot stand fire [such as fabrics] you shall pass through water.

²⁴“And you shall wash your clothes on the seventh day and be clean, and afterward you may come into the camp.”

²⁵Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

²⁶“You and Eleazar the priest and the leaders of the fathers’ households of the congregation are to take a count of the spoil of war that was captured, both people and livestock.

²⁷“Divide the spoil into two [equal] parts between those who were involved in the war, that is, those who went out to battle and all [the rest of] the congregation.

²⁸“Levy a tax for the LORD from the warriors who went to battle, one in five hundred of the persons, the oxen, the donkeys, and the flocks.

²⁹“Take this tribute from the warriors’ half and give it to Eleazar the priest as an offering to the LORD.

³⁰“From the Israelites’ half [of the spoil] you shall take one out of every fifty of the persons, the oxen, the donkeys, the flocks, and of all the livestock, and give them to the Levites who are in charge of the tabernacle of the LORD.”

³¹Moses and Eleazar the priest did just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

³²The plunder that remained from the spoil of war which the warriors had taken, was 675,000 sheep,

³³and 72,000 cattle,

³⁴and 61,000 donkeys,

³⁵and 32,000 persons in all, of the [Midianite] women who were virgins.

³⁶The half share, the portion of those who went to war, was 337,500 sheep in number,

³⁷and the LORD's levy (tax) of the sheep was 675;

³⁸the cattle were 36,000, from which the LORD's levy was 72;

³⁹the donkeys were 30,500, from which the LORD's levy was 61;

⁴⁰the persons were 16,000, from whom the LORD's levy was 32 persons.

⁴¹Moses gave the levy which was the LORD's offering to Eleazar the priest, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

⁴²As for the Israelites' half, which Moses separated from that of the warriors—

⁴³now the congregation's half was 337,500 sheep,

⁴⁴and 36,000 cattle,

⁴⁵and 30,500 donkeys,

⁴⁶and 16,000 people—

⁴⁷and from the Israelites' half, Moses took one out of every fifty, both of persons and animals, and gave them to the

Levites, who were in charge of the tabernacle of the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

⁴⁸Then the officers who were over the thousands of the army, the commanders of thousands and hundreds, approached Moses,

⁴⁹and they said to him, “Your servants have counted the warriors under our command, and not one man of us is missing.

⁵⁰“So we have brought as an offering to the LORD what each man obtained—articles of gold, armlets, bracelets, signet rings, earrings, necklaces—to make atonement for ourselves before the LORD.”

⁵¹Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold from them, all the handmade articles.

⁵²All the gold of the offering which they presented to the LORD from the commanders of thousands and of hundreds was 16,750 shekels.

⁵³For the men of war had taken plunder, every man for himself.

⁵⁴So Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold from the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it into the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle) as a memorial for the sons of Israel before the LORD.

32 NOW THE sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad had very large herds of cattle, and they saw the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead [on the east side of the Jordan River], and indeed, the place was suitable for raising livestock.

²So the sons of Gad and of Reuben came and spoke to Moses, to Eleazar the priest, and to the leaders of the congregation, saying,

³“[The country around] Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo, and Beon,

⁴the land which the LORD conquered before the congregation of Israel, is a land [suitable] for livestock, and your servants have [very large herds of] livestock.”

⁵They said, “If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants as a possession. Do not take us across the Jordan [River].”

⁶But Moses said to the sons of Gad and the sons of Reuben, “Shall your brothers go to war while you sit here?

⁷“Now why are you discouraging the hearts of the Israelites from crossing over into the land which the LORD has given them?

⁸“This is what your fathers did when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to see the land!

⁹“For when they went up to the Valley of Eshcol and saw the land, they discouraged the hearts of the Israelites so that they did not go into the land which the LORD had given them.

¹⁰“And the LORD’s anger was kindled on that day and He swore an oath, saying,

¹¹“None of the men who came up from Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I promised to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, because they have not followed Me completely,

¹²except Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and

Joshua the son of Nun, for they have followed the LORD completely.'

POWERPOINT

In Numbers 32:6–9, the sons of Reuben and Gad discouraged other Israelites because they were not willing to fight for the Promised Land. There may be times in your life when God has promised you something, but you have to fight—or work really hard—for it. During these times, it's important to stay focused on God, His promises, and His strength and not to let other people discourage you or keep you from possessing the promises God has given you.



¹³“So the LORD’s anger was kindled against the sons of Israel (Jacob) and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until the entire generation of those who had done evil in the sight of the LORD was destroyed.

¹⁴“Now look, you [the tribes of Reuben and Gad] have

risen up in your fathers' place, a brood of sinful men, to add still more to the fierce anger of the LORD against Israel.

¹⁵“For if you turn back from following Him [completely], He will once again leave them in the wilderness, and you will destroy all these people.”

¹⁶But the people of Reuben and Gad approached Moses and said, “We will build sheepfolds here for our flocks and [walled] cities for our children,

¹⁷but we will be armed and ready to go to war before the [other tribes of the] Israelites, until we have brought them to their place, while our children live in the fortified cities because of the inhabitants of the land.

¹⁸“We will not return to our homes until every one of the [other] sons of Israel has taken possession of his inheritance.

¹⁹“For we will not inherit with them on the west side of the Jordan and beyond, because our inheritance has come to us on this side of the Jordan [River] toward the east.”

²⁰Moses replied, “If you will do as you say, if you will arm yourselves before the LORD for war,

²¹and every armed man of yours will cross the Jordan before the LORD until He has driven out His enemies before Him,

²²and the land [west of the Jordan] is subdued before the LORD, then afterward you shall return and be blameless [in this matter] before the LORD and before Israel, and this land [east of the Jordan] shall be yours as a possession before the LORD.

²³“But if you do not do this, behold, you will have sinned against the LORD; and be sure that your sin will find you out.

²⁴“Build yourselves cities for your children, and folds for your sheep, and do that of which you have spoken.”

²⁵Then the descendants of Gad and of Reuben said to Moses, “Your servants will do just as my lord commands.

²⁶“Our children, our wives, our livestock, and all our cattle shall be there in the cities of Gilead.

²⁷“But your servants will cross over, every man armed for war, before the LORD to the battle, just as my lord says.”

²⁸So Moses gave the command concerning them to Eleazar the priest, and to Joshua the son of Nun, and to the leaders of the fathers’ *households* of the tribes of the Israelites.

²⁹Moses said to them, “If the sons of Gad and the sons of Reuben will cross over the Jordan with you, every man armed for battle before the LORD, and the land is subdued before you, then you shall give them the land of Gilead [east of the Jordan River] as a possession;

³⁰but if they will not cross over with you armed, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan [and surrender their right to their land east of the Jordan River].”

³¹The sons of Gad and the sons of Reuben answered, “As the LORD has said to your servants, so will we do.

³²“We will cross over armed before the LORD into the land of Canaan, so that the possession of our inheritance on [the east] side of the Jordan may be ours.”

³³So Moses gave to them, to the sons of Gad and to the sons of Reuben and to the half-tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon, the king of the Amorites and the kingdom of Og, the king of Bashan, the land with its cities and territories, the cities of the surrounding land.

- ³⁴The sons of Gad built Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer,
³⁵Atroth-shopan, Jazer, Jogbehah,
³⁶Beth-nimrah, and Beth-haran, fortified (walled) cities, and sheepfolds for sheep.
³⁷The sons of Reuben built Heshbon, Elealeh, Kiriathaim,
³⁸Nebo, and Baal-meon (their names being changed) and Sibmah; and they gave other names to the cities which they built.
³⁹The sons of Machir the son of Manasseh went to Gilead and took it, and drove out the Amorites who were in it.
⁴⁰So Moses gave Gilead to [the tribe of] Machir the son of Manasseh, and they settled in it.
⁴¹[The sons of] Jair the son of Manasseh went and took its towns (tent villages) and called them Havvoth-jair.
⁴²Nobah went and took Kenath and its villages, and called it Nobah after his own name.

33 THESE ARE the stages of the journeys of the Israelites, by which they came out of the land of Egypt by their [tribal] armies, under the leadership of Moses and Aaron.

²Moses recorded their points of departure, as the LORD commanded, stage by stage; and these are their journeys according to their points of departure:

³They set out from Rameses on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the Passover the Israelites moved out triumphantly in the sight of all the Egyptians,

⁴while the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn whom

the LORD had struck down among them. Upon their gods the LORD also executed judgments.

⁵Then the Israelites moved out from Rameses [where they had all joined together], and camped in Succoth.

⁶They moved out from Succoth and camped in Etham, which is on the edge of the wilderness.

⁷They moved out from Etham and turned back to Pi-hahiroth, east of Baal-zephon, and they camped before Migdol.

⁸They moved out from before Pi-hahiroth and passed through the midst of the [Red] Sea into the wilderness; and they went a three days' journey in the Wilderness of Etham and camped at Marah.

⁹They moved out from Marah and came to Elim; in Elim there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they camped there.

¹⁰They moved out from Elim and camped by the Red Sea (Sea of Reeds).

¹¹They moved out from the Red Sea and camped in the Wilderness of Sin.

¹²They moved out from the Wilderness of Sin and camped at Dophkah.

¹³They moved out from Dophkah and camped at Alush.

¹⁴They moved out from Alush and camped at Rephidim; now it was there that the people had no water to drink.

¹⁵They moved out from Rephidim and camped in the Wilderness of Sinai [where they remained for about a year].

¹⁶They moved out from the Wilderness of Sinai and camped at Kibroth-hattaavah.

¹⁷They moved out from Kibroth-hattaavah and camped at Hazeroth.

¹⁸They moved out from Hazeroth and camped at Rithmah [near Kadesh, the place from which the twelve spies were sent to spy out the land of Canaan].

¹⁹They moved out from Rithmah and camped at Rimmon-perez.

²⁰They moved out from Rimmon-perez and camped at Libnah.

²¹They moved out from Libnah and camped at Rissah.

²²They moved out from Rissah and camped at Kehelathah.

²³They moved out from Kehelathah and camped at Mount Shepher.

²⁴They moved out from Mount Shepher and camped at Haradah.

²⁵They moved out from Haradah and camped at Makheloth.

²⁶They moved out from Makheloth and camped at Tahath.

²⁷They moved out from Tahath and camped at Terah.

²⁸They moved out from Terah and camped at Mithkah.

²⁹They moved out from Mithkah and camped at Hashmonah.

³⁰They moved out from Hashmonah and camped at Moseroth.

³¹They moved out from Moseroth and camped at Bene-jaakan.

³²They moved out from Bene-jaakan and camped at Horhaggidgad.

³³They moved out from Hor-haggidgad and camped at Jotbathah.

³⁴They moved out from Jotbathah and camped at Abronah.

³⁵They moved out from Abronah and camped at Ezion-geber [or Elath on the gulf of Aqabah].

³⁶They moved out from Ezion-geber and camped in the Wilderness of Zin, which is Kadesh.

³⁷They moved out from Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor, on the edge of the land of Edom.

³⁸Aaron the priest went up on Mount Hor at the command of the LORD, and died there in the fortieth year after the Israelites came out of the land of Egypt, on the first day of the fifth month. [Num 20:23–29]

³⁹Aaron was a hundred and twenty-three years old when he died on Mount Hor.

⁴⁰The Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the Negev (the South country) in the land of Canaan, heard that the sons of Israel were coming.

⁴¹They moved out from Mount Hor and camped at Zalmonah.

⁴²Then they moved out from Zalmonah and camped at Punon.

⁴³They moved out from Punon and camped at Oboth.

⁴⁴They moved out from Oboth and camped at Iye-abarim, on the border of Moab.

⁴⁵They moved out from Iyim (Iye-abarim) and camped at Dibon-gad.

⁴⁶They moved out from Dibon-gad and camped at Almon-

diblathaim.

⁴⁷They moved out from Almon-diblathaim and camped in the mountains of Abarim, before [Mount] Nebo.

⁴⁸They moved out from the mountains of Abarim and camped in the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho [their last stop on the journey to Canaan].

⁴⁹They camped by the Jordan from Beth-jeshimoth as far as Abel-shittim in the plains of Moab.

⁵⁰Then the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan *across from* Jericho, saying,

⁵¹“Say to the children of Israel, ‘When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan,

⁵²then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land before you and destroy all their sculpted images, and destroy all their cast idols and completely eliminate all their [idolatrous] high places,

⁵³and you shall take possession of the land and live in it, for I have given the land to you to possess.

⁵⁴“You shall inherit the land by lot according to your families; to the large *tribe* you shall give a larger inheritance, and to the small *tribe* you shall give a smaller inheritance. Wherever the lot falls to any man, that shall be [the location of] his [inheritance]. According to the tribes of your fathers (ancestors) you shall inherit.

⁵⁵“But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those you let remain of them will be like pricks in your eyes and like thorns in your sides, and they will attack you in the land in which you live.

⁵⁶“And as I [the LORD] planned to do to them, so I will do

to you.”

34 THEN THE LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

²“Command the Israelites, ‘When you enter the land of Canaan, this is the land that shall be yours as an inheritance, the land of Canaan according to its boundaries,

³your southern region shall be from the Wilderness of Zin along the side of Edom, and your southern boundary from the end of the Salt (Dead) Sea eastward.

⁴Your boundary shall turn from the south to the ascent of Akabbim, and continue on to Zin, and its limit shall be south of Kadesh-barnea. Then it shall go on to Hazar-addar and pass on to Azmon.

⁵Then the boundary shall turn from Azmon to the Brook of Egypt (Wadi el-arish), and its limit shall be at the [Mediterranean] Sea.

⁶As the western boundary you shall have the Great [Mediterranean] Sea and its coastline. This shall be your western boundary.

⁷And this shall be your north border: from the Great [Mediterranean] Sea mark out your boundary line to Mount Hor;

⁸from Mount Hor you shall mark out your boundary to the entrance of Hamath, and the limit of the border shall be at Zedad;

⁹then the [northern] boundary shall go on to Ziphron, and its limit shall be at Hazar-enan. This shall be your northern boundary.

¹⁰“You shall mark out your eastern boundary from Hazar-enan to Shepham;

¹¹the [eastern] boundary shall go down from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain and shall descend and reach to the slope on the east of the Sea of Chinnereth [the Sea of Galilee];

¹²and the [eastern] boundary shall go down to the Jordan [River], and its limit shall be at the Salt (Dead) Sea. This shall be your land according to its boundaries all around.”

¹³So Moses commanded the Israelites, saying, “This is the land you are to inherit by lot, which the LORD has commanded to be given to the nine tribes and the half-tribe [of Manasseh],

¹⁴for the tribe of the sons of Reuben and the tribe of the sons of Gad have received *their inheritance* by their fathers’ households, and the half-tribe of Manasseh have received their possession.

¹⁵“The two and a half tribes have received their inheritance across the Jordan [River] opposite Jericho, eastward toward the sunrise.”

¹⁶Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

¹⁷“These are the names of the men who shall divide the land among you as an inheritance: Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun.

¹⁸“You shall take one leader from every tribe to divide the land for the inheritance.

¹⁹“These are the names of the men: From the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh;

²⁰from the tribe of the sons of Simeon, Samuel the son of

Ammihud;

²¹from the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad the son of Chislon;

²²from the tribe of the sons of Dan a leader, Bukki the son of Jogli;

²³of the sons of Joseph: from the tribe of the sons of Manasseh a leader, Hanniel the son of Ephod;

²⁴from the tribe of the sons of Ephraim a leader, Kemuel the son of Shiphtan;

²⁵from the tribe of the sons of Zebulun a leader, Elizaphan the son of Parnach;

²⁶from the tribe of the sons of Issachar a leader, Paltiel the son of Azzan;

²⁷from the tribe of the sons of Asher a leader, Ahihud the son of Shelomi;

²⁸from the tribe of the sons of Naphtali a leader, Pedahel the son of Ammihud.”

²⁹These are the [twelve] men whom the LORD commanded [to work with Joshua and Eleazar] to divide the inheritance to the sons of Israel in the land of Canaan.

35 THEN THE LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan [across from] Jericho, saying,

²“Command the Israelites to give to the Levites cities to live in from the inheritance of their possession; and you shall give to the Levites pasture lands around the cities.

³“The cities shall be theirs to live in; and their pasture lands shall be for their cattle and for their herds and for all their

livestock.

⁴“The pasture lands around the cities which you shall give to the Levites *shall reach* from the wall of the city and outward a thousand cubits (1,500 ft.) around.

⁵“You shall also measure outside the city on the east, south, west, and north sides two thousand cubits (3,000 ft.), with the city in the center. This shall belong to the Levites as pasture lands for the cities.

⁶“[Among] the cities which you give to the Levites shall be the six cities of refuge, which you shall provide for the one who commits manslaughter to flee to; and in addition to them you shall give forty-two cities [to the Levites].

⁷“So you shall give to the Levites forty-eight cities in all, together with their pasture lands.

⁸“As for the cities which you shall give from the possession of the Israelites, from the larger *tribes* you shall take many and from the smaller *tribes* few; each *tribe* shall give [at least some] of its cities to the Levites in proportion to [the size of] its inheritance which it possesses.”

⁹Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

¹⁰“Tell the Israelites, ‘When you cross the Jordan [River] into the land of Canaan,

¹¹then you shall select for yourselves cities to be cities of refuge, so that the one who kills any person unintentionally may escape there.

¹²“The cities shall be to you as a refuge from the avenger, so that the one who has caused the death of another will not be killed until he has had a [fair] trial before the congregation.

¹³“The cities which you are to provide shall be your six

cities of refuge.

¹⁴‘You shall provide three cities on this [east] side of the Jordan [River], and three [more] cities in the land of Canaan; they are to be the cities of refuge.

¹⁵‘These six cities shall be a refuge for the Israelites and for the stranger and the resident alien among them; so that anyone who kills a person unintentionally may escape there.

¹⁶‘But if he struck his victim down [intentionally] with an iron object so that he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall certainly be put to death.

¹⁷‘If he struck his victim down [intentionally] with a stone in hand, which may cause a person to die, and he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall certainly be put to death.

¹⁸‘Or if he struck his victim down [intentionally] with a wooden object in hand, which may cause a person to die, and he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall certainly be put to death.

¹⁹‘The blood avenger shall himself put the murderer to death; he shall put him to death when he meets him.

²⁰‘But if he pushed his victim out of hatred or threw something at him with malicious intent, and he died,

²¹or if, in enmity, he struck the victim down with his hand, and he died, the one that struck the victim shall certainly be put to death; he is a murderer. The blood avenger shall put the murderer to death when he meets him.

²²‘But if he pushed the victim suddenly, not in enmity, or threw anything at him without malicious intent,

²³or without seeing him hit him [accidentally] with a stone object that could kill him, and he died, and [the offender] was

not his enemy nor intending to harm him,

²⁴then the congregation shall judge between the offender and the blood avenger according to these ordinances.

²⁵‘The congregation shall rescue the offender from the hand of the blood avenger and return him to his city of refuge, [the place] to which he had escaped; and he shall live there until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the sacred oil.

²⁶‘But if at any time the one guilty of manslaughter comes outside the border of his city of refuge to which he fled,

²⁷and the blood avenger finds him outside the border of his city of refuge and kills the offender, the blood avenger will not be guilty of murder,

²⁸because the offender should have remained in his city of refuge until the death of the high priest. But after the high priest’s death the offender shall return to the land of his possession.

²⁹‘These things shall be a statute for you throughout your generations wherever you may be.

³⁰‘If anyone kills a person [intentionally], the murderer shall be put to death on the testimony of [two or more] witnesses; but no one shall be put to death on the testimony of [only] one witness.

³¹‘Moreover, you shall not accept a ransom [in exchange] for the life of a murderer guilty *and sentenced* to death; but he shall certainly be put to death.

³²‘You shall not accept a ransom for him who has escaped to his city of refuge, so that he may return to live in his [own] land before the death of the high priest.

³³“So you shall not pollute *and* defile the land in which you live; for [the shedding of innocent] blood pollutes *and* defiles the land. No atonement (expiation) can be made for the land for the [innocent] blood shed in it, except by the blood (execution) of him who shed it.

³⁴“You shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I live, for I, the LORD, live among the people of Israel.”

36 THE LEADERS of the fathers’ *households* of the family of the sons of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of the sons of Joseph, approached and spoke before Moses and before the leaders, the heads of the fathers’ *households* of the Israelites,

²and they said, “The LORD commanded my lord [Moses] to give the land by lot to the sons of Israel as an inheritance, and my lord was commanded by the LORD to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother to his daughters.

³“But if the daughters marry any of the men from any of the *other* tribes of Israel, then their inheritance will be taken away from that of our fathers (tribal ancestors) and will be added to the inheritance of the tribe to which they belong; so it will be taken away from our allotted inheritance.

⁴“When the [year of] Jubilee of the Israelites comes, then their inheritance will be added [permanently] to that of the tribe to which they belong; so their inheritance will be taken away from that of the tribe of our fathers (tribal ancestors).”

⁵Then Moses commanded the Israelites in accordance with

the word of the LORD, saying, “The statement of the tribe of the sons of Joseph is correct.

⁶“This is what the LORD commands regarding the daughters of Zelophehad: ‘Let them marry whom they wish; only they must marry within the family of the tribe of their father.’

⁷“So no inheritance of the Israelites shall be transferred from tribe to tribe, for every one of the Israelites shall hold to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers (tribal ancestors).

⁸“Every daughter who possesses an inheritance [of land] in any one of the tribes of the Israelites shall marry [only] a man whose family is of her father’s tribe, so that the Israelites may each possess the inheritance of his fathers (tribal ancestors).

⁹“So no inheritance shall be transferred from one tribe to another, but each of the tribes of the Israelites shall hold to its own inheritance.”

¹⁰The daughters of Zelophehad did as the LORD commanded Moses.

¹¹For Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, were married to sons of their father’s brothers.

¹²They married into the families of the descendants of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of the family of their father.

¹³These are the commandments and the ordinances (judgments) which the LORD commanded through Moses to the sons of Israel in the plains of Moab by the Jordan [across from] Jericho.

Deuteronomy

Author: | Moses
Date: | About 1440
BC

The major point of the book of Deuteronomy is that we desperately need God and His presence in our lives. As we read about His faithfulness to the Israelites during their difficult journey to the Promised Land, we realize how faithful He is to us too, no matter what challenges we face. As we see how they learn to trust Him, we understand that we can trust Him too.

One of the most powerful verses in Deuteronomy is a verse about making good choices (see Deuteronomy 30:19). As you fight the battle of the mind, you will have many choices to make. Will you think positive thoughts or negative ones? Will you allow your thoughts to influence your words and actions in godly ways, or will you allow them to lead you to cooperate with the enemy. Will you fill your mind with life-giving thoughts, or will you fill it with thoughts that lead to despair and discouragement? Let me encourage you to

choose life!

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM DEUTERONOMY:

You don't ever have to fear anyone or fight for yourself. God fights for you (see Deuteronomy 3:22).

God's Word can be strongly impressed or "[written] on your heart *and* mind" as you read it, study it, believe it, memorize it, and speak it (see Deuteronomy 6:6).

You can be strong and courageous because God is always with you. No matter what kind of battle you face, the Lord goes before you. He will never fail you or abandon you (see Deuteronomy 31:6–8).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM DEUTERONOMY:

I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore, you shall choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants. | Deuteronomy 30:19

May the beloved of the LORD dwell in safety by Him; He shields and covers him all the day long, and he dwells between His shoulders. | Deuteronomy 33:12

The eternal God is your refuge and dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms; He drove out the enemy from before you, and said, "Destroy!" | Deuteronomy 33:27

THE FIFTH BOOK OF MOSES, CALLED
DEUTERONOMY

1 THESE ARE the words which Moses spoke to all Israel [while they were still] beyond [that is, on the east side of] the Jordan [River] in the wilderness [across from Jerusalem], in the Arabah [the long, deep valley running north and south from the eastern arm of the Red Sea to beyond the Dead Sea] opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel and Laban and Hazeroth and Dizahab (place of gold).

²It is [only] eleven days' *journey* from Horeb (Mount Sinai) by way of Mount Seir to Kadesh-barniea [on Canaan's border; yet Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years before crossing the border and entering Canaan, the promised land].

³In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses spoke to the children of Israel in accordance with all that the LORD had commanded him *to say* to them,

POWERPOINT

Moses pointed out to the Israelites that the journey to the border of the Promised Land was only eleven days, yet it took them forty years to get there. I once reached a point in my life when I finally had to realize I had been at the same mountain long enough. I was doing things, but not getting the results I hoped for. I was a Christian without victory. I had a “wilderness mentality”—wrong mind-sets and mental strongholds that had built up over years and years. Make up your mind that when God leads you to change your thinking about something, with His help you will do it, and you will not give up until victory is complete.



⁴after he had defeated Sihon the king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, who lived at Ashtaroth in Edrei.

⁵Beyond (east of) the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses began to explain this law, saying,

⁶“The LORD our God spoke to us at Horeb, saying, ‘You have stayed long enough on this mountain.

⁷‘Turn and resume your journey, and go to the hill country of the Amorites, and to all their neighbors in the Arabah, in the hill country and in the lowland (the Shephelah), in the Negev (South country) and on the coast of the [Mediterranean] Sea, the land of the Canaanites, and Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates.

⁸‘Look, I have set the land before you; go in and take possession of the land which the LORD swore (solemnly promised) to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give to them and to their descendants after them.’

⁹“I spoke to you at that time, saying, ‘I am not able to bear *the burden* of you alone.

¹⁰‘The LORD your God has multiplied you, and look, today you are as numerous as the stars of heaven.

¹¹‘May the LORD, the God of your fathers, add to you a thousand times as many as you are and bless you, just as He has promised you!

¹²‘How can I alone bear the weight *and* pressure and burden of you and your strife (contention) *and* complaining?

¹³‘Choose for yourselves wise, understanding, experienced, *and* respected men from your tribes, and I will appoint them as heads (leaders) over you.’

¹⁴“And you answered me, ‘The thing which you have said to do is good.’

¹⁵“So I took the leaders of your tribes, wise and experienced men, and made them leaders over you, commanders of thousands, and hundreds, and fifties, and tens, and officers (administrators) for your tribes.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Understanding the Wilderness Mentality

I've met people who disliked their lives, hated their jobs, or were in difficult relationships with the wrong kind of people. They were miserable but did nothing about it. When asked about these unpleasant situations, for some reason they often said, "I'll deal with that later."

These people have what I call a "wilderness mentality." I want to explain that. Moses led the people of Israel out of Egypt. Had they obeyed God, stopped their grumbling, and moved straight into the Promised Land as God originally told them to do, they could have made the trip in eleven days. But it took them forty years.

They finally obeyed God and moved on because He said, "You have stayed long enough on this mountain. Turn and resume your journey.... Look, I have set the land before you; go in and take possession of the land" (Deut. 1:6-8).

Although these people had seen miracles in Egypt and had

praised God at the defeat of the Egyptian armies at the Red Sea, they were still in bondage. The chains were no longer on their bodies, but they had never removed the chains that bound their minds. That is a wilderness mentality.

For forty years the people remained mental prisoners. As they had been in Egypt, so they were in the wilderness. No matter how good things became, they were never good enough. The people had forgotten all the hardships and slavery in Egypt, and they had no vision for how good things could get for them. Given the chance to move into this new land, they were afraid of the giants. They had seen God's deliverance in the past, but they weren't ready for it in the present. Even when God finally said, "It's time to move out," I can imagine they cried out, "Let's stay just a little longer. Things aren't good here, but at least we know how to live in the wilderness."

If you don't like certain things about your life, but are hesitant to change them, you may have a wilderness mentality. If your mind stays filled with negative thoughts, they will keep you in bondage.

However, you can say, "I've dwelt long enough at this mountain. Now I'm going into the promised land—the land where I'll live in victory and defeat Satan's plans."

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Great God, help me cast off the wilderness mentality. Help me take on the Promised-Land mentality and live in victory, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

¹⁶“Then I commanded your judges at that time, saying, ‘Hear *the matters* between your brothers [your fellow countrymen], and judge righteously *and* fairly between a man and his brother, or the stranger (resident alien, foreigner) who is with him.

¹⁷‘You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear *and* pay attention to the [cases of the] least [important] as well as the great. You shall not fear man, for the judgment is God’s. The case that is too hard for you [to judge], you shall bring to me, and I will hear it.’

¹⁸“I commanded you at that time [regarding] all the things that you should do.

¹⁹“Then we set out from Horeb (Sinai), and went through all that great and terrible wilderness which you saw on the way to the hill country of the Amorites, just as the LORD our God commanded us; and we came to Kadesh-barnea.

²⁰“And I said to you, ‘You have come to the hill country of the Amorites which the LORD our God is about to give us.

²¹‘Behold, the LORD your God has set the land before you; go up and take possession *of it*, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has spoken to you. Do not fear or be dismayed.’

²²“Then all of you approached me and said, ‘Let us send men [into the land] before us, so that they may explore *and* search the area for us, and bring back to us word regarding the way we should go, and the cities we should enter.’

²³“The plan pleased me and I took twelve of your men, one man from each tribe.

24“‘They turned and went up into the hill country, and came to the Valley of Eshcol and spied it out.

25“‘Then they took some of the fruit of the land in their hands and brought it down to us; and they reported back to us, and said, ‘It is a good land which the LORD our God is about to give us.’

26“‘Yet you were not willing to go up [to take possession of it], but rebelled against the command of the LORD your God.

27“‘You murmured *and* were ill-tempered (discontented) in your tents, and said, ‘Because the LORD hates us He has brought us from the land of Egypt to hand us over to the Amorites to destroy us.

POWERPOINT

In Deuteronomy 1:26–27, the Israelites spoke strong negative words against the Lord. Despite the miracles they had witnessed and the fact that they had God's promise that He would fight for them and bring them into the Promised Land, the people of Israel refused to trust Him and murmured and rebelled against Him. Since God is our Father, our Provider, and the One Who watches over us, when we complain about anything we are basically saying we don't like what God is doing, and we don't trust His leadership in our lives. Even if what is happening in our circumstances is not something God is doing, it is something He can fix if we will trust Him to do so.



28“Where can we go up? Our brothers (spies) have made our hearts melt [in fear] *and* demoralized us by saying, “The people are bigger and taller than we; the cities are large, and fortified [all the way up] to heaven. And besides, we saw the [giant-like] sons of the Anakim there.” ’

29“Then I said to you, ‘Do not be shocked, nor fear them.

30‘The LORD your God who goes before you will fight for you Himself, just as He did for you in Egypt before your [very] eyes,

31and in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried *and* protected you, just as a man carries his son, all along the way which you traveled until you arrived at this place.’

32“Yet in spite of this word, you did not trust [that is, confidently rely on and believe] the LORD your God,

33who went before you along the way, in fire by night and in a cloud by day, to seek a place for you to make camp and to show you the way in which you should go.

34“And the LORD heard the sound of your words, and He was angry and took an oath, saying,

35‘Not one of these men, this evil generation, shall see the good land which I swore (solemnly promised) to give to your fathers,

36except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him and to his children I will give the land on which he has walked, because he has followed the LORD completely [and remained true to Him].’

37“‘The LORD was angry with me also because of you, saying, ‘Not even you shall enter Canaan.

38“Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall enter there. Encourage *and* strengthen him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it.

39“Moreover, your little ones whom you said would become prey, and your sons, who today have no knowledge of good or evil, shall enter Canaan, and I will give it to them and they shall possess it.

40“But as for you, turn around and set out for the wilderness by way of the Red Sea (Sea of Reeds).’

41“Then you answered and said to me, ‘We have sinned against the LORD. We will go up and fight, just as the LORD our God has commanded us.’ So you equipped every man with weapons of war, and regarded it as easy to go up into the hill country.

42“‘But the LORD said to me, ‘Say to them, “Do not go up and do not fight, for I am not among you [because of your rebellion]; otherwise you will be [badly] defeated by your enemies.”’

43“‘So I spoke to you, but you would not listen. Instead you rebelled against the command of the LORD, and acted presumptuously and went up into the hill country.

44“‘Then the Amorites who lived in that hill country came out against you and chased you as bees do, and struck you down in Seir as far as Hormah.

45“‘And you returned and wept before the LORD; but the LORD would not listen to your voice nor pay attention to you.

46“So you stayed in Kadesh; many days you stayed there.

2 “THEN WE turned and set out for the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea, just as the LORD had told me; and we circled Mount Seir for many days.

2“And the LORD spoke to me, saying,

3‘You have circled this mountain long enough; turn northward,

4and command the people, saying, “You are passing through the territory of your brothers the sons of Esau (the Edomites), who live in Seir; and they will be afraid of you. So be very careful;

5do not provoke them, for I will not give you any of their land, not even *as little as* a footstep, because I have given Mount Seir to Esau as a possession.

6“‘You shall buy food from them with money so that you may [have something to] eat, and you shall also buy water from them with money so that you may [have something to] drink.

7“‘For the LORD your God has blessed you in all that you have done; He has known about your wanderings through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you; you have lacked nothing.”’

8“‘So we passed beyond our brothers the sons of Esau, who lived in Seir, away from the Arabah (wilderness) road, away from Elath and from Ezion-geber. Then we turned and passed through by the way of the Wilderness of Moab.

9“‘And the LORD said to me, ‘Do not harass [the

descendants of] Moab, nor provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of their land as a possession, because I have given Ar to the sons (Moab and Ammon) of Lot as a possession.’ [Gen 19:30–38]

¹⁰(The Emim lived there in times past, a people great and numerous, and as tall as the Anakim.

¹¹These also are regarded as Rephaim [an ancient people], as are the Anakim, but the Moabites call them Emim.

¹²The Horites also used to live in Seir, but the sons of Esau dispossessed them. They destroyed them from before them and settled in their place, just as Israel did in the land which the LORD gave them as their possession.)

¹³‘Now arise and cross the valley of the Zered.’ So we crossed the Zered Valley.

¹⁴‘Now thirty-eight years passed from the time we left Kadesh-barnea until we crossed the Zered Valley, until that entire generation of the men of war had died from within the camp, just as the LORD had sworn to them.

¹⁵‘Moreover the hand of the LORD was against them, to destroy them from within the camp, until they were all dead.

¹⁶‘So it came about when all the men of war had finally died from among the people,

¹⁷that the LORD spoke to me, saying,

¹⁸‘Today you are to pass through Ar, the border of Moab.

¹⁹‘When you come opposite the territory of the sons of Ammon, do not harass them nor provoke them, for I will not give you any of the land of the sons of Ammon as a possession, because I have given it to the sons of Lot as a possession.’

²⁰(It is also regarded as the land of the Rephaim [of giant stature], for Rephaim used to live there, but the Ammonites call them Zamzummin,

²¹a great, numerous people, and tall as the Anakim, but the LORD destroyed them before the sons of Ammon. And they dispossessed them and settled in their place,

²²just as He did for the sons of Esau, who live in Seir, when He destroyed the Horites from before them; and the sons of Esau (the Edomites) dispossessed them and settled in their place [and remain there] even to this day.

²³As for the Avvim, who lived in villages as far as Gaza, the Caphtorim (Cretans, later Philistines) who came from Caphtor (Crete) destroyed them and settled in their place.)

²⁴‘Now arise, continue on, and go through the valley of the Arnon. Look, I have handed over to you Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land. Begin! Take possession [of it] and fight with him in battle.

²⁵‘This day I will begin to put the dread and the fear of you on the peoples (pagans) under the whole heaven, who, when they hear the reports about you, will tremble and be in anguish because of you.’

²⁶“So I sent messengers from the Wilderness of Kedemoth to Sihon king of Heshbon with words of peace, saying,

²⁷‘Let me pass through your land [with my people]. I will travel [with them] only on the highway; I will not turn away to the right or to the left.

²⁸‘You will sell me food for money so that I [along with my people] will eat, and you will give me water for money so that I [along with my people] will drink; only let me [and my people]

travel through [the land] on foot,

²⁹just as the sons of Esau, who live in Seir, and the Moabites, who live in Ar, did for me, until I cross the Jordan into the land which the LORD our God is giving us.’

³⁰“But Sihon king of Heshbon was not willing for us to travel through his land; for the LORD your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, in order to hand him over to you, as he is today.

³¹“The LORD said to me, ‘Look, I have begun to hand over to you Sihon and his land. Begin! Take possession [of it], so that you may possess his land.’

³²“Then at Jahaz, Sihon and all his people came out to meet us in battle.

³³“So the LORD our God handed him over to us [and gave us the victory], and we defeated him and his sons and all his people.

³⁴“At the same time we took all his cities and utterly destroyed every city—men, women and children. We left no survivor.

³⁵“We took only the cattle as plunder for ourselves and the spoil of the cities which we had captured.

³⁶“From Aroer, which is on the edge of the Arnon Valley, and *from* the city which is in the valley, as far as Gilead, there was no city [whose wall was] too high *and* too strong for us; the LORD our God handed over everything to us.

³⁷“Only you did not go near the land of the sons of Ammon, all along the river Jabbok and the cities of the hill country, and wherever the LORD our God had forbidden us.

3 “THEN WE turned and went up the road toward Bashan, and at Edrei, Og king of Bashan, with all his people came out to meet us in battle.

²“And the LORD said to me, ‘Do not fear him, for I have handed him over to you, him and all his people and his land; and you shall do to him just as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon.’

³“So the LORD our God also handed over Og king of Bashan, and all his people, into our hand and we struck him until no survivor was left.

⁴“We captured all his cities at that time; there was not a city which we did not take from them: sixty cities, the whole region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan.

⁵“All these cities were fortified *and* unassailable with their high walls, gates, and bars; in addition, [there were] a very great number of unwallled villages.

⁶“We utterly destroyed them, just as we did to Sihon king of Heshbon, utterly destroying every city—the men, women, and children.

⁷“But we took all the cattle and the spoil of the cities as plunder for ourselves.

⁸“So we took the land at that time from the hand of the two kings [Sihon and Og] of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, from the valley of the Arnon to Mount Hermon

⁹(the Sidonians call Hermon Sirion, and the Amorites call it Senir):

¹⁰all the cities of the plain and all Gilead and all Bashan, as far as Salecah and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in

Bashan.”

¹¹(For only Og king of Bashan was left of the remnant of the [the giants known as the] Rephaim. Behold, his bed frame was a bed frame of iron; is it not in Rabbah of the Ammonites? It was nine cubits (12 ft.) long and four cubits (6 ft.) wide, using the cubit of a man [the forearm to the end of the middle finger].)

¹²“So we took possession of this land at that time. I gave *the territory* from Aroer, which is by the valley of the Arnon, along with half of the hill country of Gilead and its cities to the Reubenites and to the Gadites.

¹³“The rest of Gilead and all of Bashan, the kingdom of Og, I gave to the half-tribe of Manasseh, that is, all the region of Argob (concerning all Bashan, it is called the land of Rephaim.

¹⁴Jair the son (descendant) of Manasseh took all the region of Argob as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maacathites, *that is* Bashan, and called it after his own name, Havvoth (the villages of) Jair, *as it is called* to this day.)

¹⁵“I gave Gilead to Machir [of Manasseh].

¹⁶“To the Reubenites and Gadites I gave *the territory* from Gilead as far as the Valley of Arnon, with the middle of the Valley as a boundary, and as far as the Jabbok River, the boundary of the sons of Ammon;

¹⁷the Arabah also, with the Jordan as its boundary, from Chinnereth (the Sea of Galilee) as far as the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea (Dead Sea), at the foot of the slopes of Pisgah on the east.

¹⁸“Then I commanded you [Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh] at that time, saying, ‘The LORD your God has given you this land to possess; all you who are brave men

shall cross over [the Jordan] armed before your brothers, the sons of Israel.

¹⁹‘But your wives and your children and your cattle—I know that you have much livestock—shall remain in your cities which I have given you,

²⁰until the LORD gives rest to your fellow countrymen as [He has] to you, and they also possess the land which the LORD your God has given them beyond the Jordan. Then each of you may return to the land (possession) which I have given to you.’

²¹“I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, ‘Your eyes have seen everything that the LORD your God has done to these two kings [Sihon and Og]; so the LORD shall do the same to all the kingdoms into which you are about to cross.

²²‘Do not fear them, for it is the LORD your God who is fighting for you.’

²³“Then I pleaded with the LORD at that time [for His favor], saying,

²⁴‘O Lord GOD, You have only begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your mighty hand; for what god is there in heaven or on earth that can do such works and mighty acts (miracles) as Yours?’

²⁵‘I pray, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond the Jordan, that good hill country [with Hermon] and Lebanon.’

²⁶“But the LORD was angry with me because of you [and your rebellion at Meribah], and would not listen to me; and the LORD said to me, ‘Enough! Speak to Me no longer about this matter. [Num 20:8]

²⁷‘Go up to the top of [Mount] Pisgah and raise your eyes toward the west and north and south and east, and see it with your eyes, for you shall not cross this Jordan.

²⁸‘But command Joshua and encourage and strengthen him, for he shall go across and lead this people, and he will give them the land which you see as an inheritance.’

²⁹“So we stayed in the Valley opposite Beth-peor.

4 “NOW, O Israel, listen *and* pay attention to the statutes and the judgments (God’s legal decisions) which I am teaching you to do, so that you may live and go in and take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you.

²“You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, so that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I am commanding you.

³“Your eyes have seen what the LORD did at Baal-peor; for all the men who followed [and participated in the worship of] Baal of Peor, the LORD your God destroyed them from among you, [Num 25:1–9]

⁴but you who held tightly to the LORD your God are alive today, every one of you.

⁵“Look, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the LORD my God has commanded me, so that you may do them in the land which you are entering to possess.

⁶“So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your

understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’

⁷“For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God [is to us] whenever we call on Him?

⁸“Or what great nation has statutes and judgments so righteous (upright, just) as this whole law which I am placing before you today?

⁹“Only pay attention and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your grandchildren [impressing these things on their mind and penetrating their heart with these truths]—

Speak God's Word

*I pay attention and watch
myself closely so that I do not
forget the things my eyes have
seen and they do not depart
from my heart all the days of
my life. I make them known to
my children and my
grandchildren, impressing
these truths on their minds
and hearts.*

| adapted from DEUTERONOMY
4:9 |

¹⁰*especially* the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb (Mount Sinai), when the LORD said to me, ‘Assemble the people to Me and I will let them hear My words, so that they may learn to fear Me [with awe-filled reverence and profound respect] all the days they live on the land, and so that they may teach their children.’

¹¹“You approached and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the [very] heart of the heavens: darkness, cloud and thick gloom.

¹²“Then the LORD spoke to you from the midst of the fire;

you heard the sound of the words, but you saw no form—there was only a voice.

¹³“So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to follow, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.

¹⁴“The LORD commanded me at that time to teach you the statutes and judgments, so that you might do them in the land which you are going over to possess.

¹⁵“So pay attention *and* watch yourselves carefully—for you did not see any form [of God] on the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire—

¹⁶so that you do not act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved *or* sculpted image [to worship] in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female,

¹⁷the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, or of any winged bird that flies in the sky,

¹⁸the likeness of anything that crawls on the ground, or of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth.

¹⁹“And *beware* that you do not raise your eyes toward heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and let yourselves be led astray and worship them and serve them, [mere created bodies] which the LORD your God has allotted to [serve and benefit] all the peoples under the whole heaven.

²⁰“But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron [smelting] furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people for His own possession, as [you are] this day.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Let Emotions Subside Before You Decide

In Deuteronomy 4:21, we read that God is angry with Moses because of the way the Israelites had thought and acted toward Him. Thankfully Psalm 30:5 reminds us that God's "anger is but for a moment, but His favor is for a lifetime."

You and I can become angry at times too. In fact, anger is one of the strongest human emotions; it starts with a thought or feeling, and it grows and manifests in our words and actions. We all experience anger, and that is not a sin. What we do with the anger is what's important.

When you feel angry, don't act on those feelings. Resist the temptation to say what you would like to say or do what you would like to do, because that is what gets you into trouble, as it did Moses and kept him out of the Promised Land (see Num. 20:12; Deut. 4:21). Instead, follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, and do what you believe Jesus would do.

You may be thinking, But I can't help it; I'm angry! The truth is that you feel anger, but you don't have to let it control your behavior. Wait for emotions to subside and then decide what you should say and do.

²¹“Now the LORD was angry with me [at the waters of Meribah] because of you, and He swore [an oath] that I would

not cross the Jordan, and that I would not enter the good land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.

22“For I am going to die in this land, I am not going to cross the Jordan, but you shall cross over and take possession of this good land.

23“So be on your guard *and* watch yourselves, so that you do not forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He has made with you, and make for yourselves a carved *or* sculpted image in the form of anything which the LORD your God has forbidden you.

24“For the LORD your God is a consuming fire; He is a jealous (impassioned) God [demanding what is rightfully and uniquely His].

25“When you become the father of children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land, then if you corrupt yourselves by making a carved *or* sculpted image in the form of anything [for the purpose of worship], and do evil [things] in the sight of the LORD your God, provoking Him to anger,

26I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today, that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you are crossing the Jordan to possess. You shall not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed.

27“*The LORD will scatter and disperse you among the peoples (pagan nations), and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD drives you.*

28“*And there you will serve [false and foreign] gods, the work of human hands, [lifeless images of] wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell [the offerings of*

food given to them].

²⁹“But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find *Him* if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul.

³⁰“When you are in distress *and* tribulation and all these things come on you, in the latter days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that when I
seek You, I will find You when
I search for You with all my
heart and all my soul.*

• adapted from Deuteronomy 4:29

³¹“For the LORD your God is a merciful *and* compassionate God; He will not fail you, nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.

³²“Indeed, ask now about the days that are past, [those days] which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and ask from one end of the heavens to the

other. Has *anything* been done like this great thing, or has *anything* been heard like it?

³³“Did [any] people ever hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you heard, and [still] live?

³⁴“Or has any [man-made] god ever tried to go and take for himself a nation from within *another* nation by trials, by signs and wonders and by war and by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm and by great terrors, as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your [very] eyes?

³⁵“It was shown to you so that you might have [personal] knowledge *and* comprehend that the LORD is God; there is no other besides Him.

³⁶“Out of the heavens He let you hear His voice to discipline *and* admonish you; and on earth He let you see His great fire, and you heard His words from the midst of the fire.

³⁷“And because He loved your fathers, He chose their descendants who followed them, and brought you from Egypt with His Presence, with His great *and* awesome power,

³⁸dispossessing *and* driving out from before you nations, [nations that were] greater and mightier than you, to bring you in, to give you their land as an inheritance, as it is this day.

³⁹Therefore know *and* understand today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD is God in the heavens above and on the earth below; there is no other.

⁴⁰“So you shall keep His statutes and His commandments which I am commanding you today, so that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and so that you may live long on the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time.”

⁴¹Then Moses set apart three cities [of refuge] beyond the Jordan toward the rising of the sun (eastward),

⁴²so that someone who committed manslaughter could flee there, [that is, a person] who killed his neighbor unintentionally and without previously having hostility toward him, and that by escaping to one of these cities he might [claim the right of asylum and] save his life:

⁴³Bezer in the wilderness on the plateau for the Reubenites, and Ramoth in Gilead for the Gadites, and Golan in Bashan for the Manassites.

⁴⁴This is the law which Moses placed before the sons of Israel;

⁴⁵these are the testimonies (legal provisions) and the statutes and the judgments which Moses spoke to the sons of Israel when they came out of Egypt,

⁴⁶beyond the Jordan in the Valley opposite Beth-peor, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites who lived at Heshbon, whom Moses and the sons of Israel defeated when they came out from Egypt.

⁴⁷They took possession of his land and the land of Og king of Bashan, the two kings of the Amorites, who *reigned* across the Jordan to the east,

⁴⁸from Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of the [river] Arnon, as far as Mount Sion (that is, Hermon),

⁴⁹with all the Arabah (desert lowlands) across the Jordan to the east, even as far as the sea of the Arabah (the Dead Sea), at the foot of the slopes of Pisgah.

5 THEN MOSES summoned all Israel and said to them:

“Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments (legal decisions) which I am speaking today in your hearing, so that you may learn them and observe them carefully.

2“The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb.

3“The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, all of us who are alive here today.

4“The LORD spoke with you face to face at the mountain from the midst of the fire.

5“I was standing between the LORD and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the LORD; for you were afraid because of the fire and did not go up the mountain. He said,

6“I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

7“You shall have no other gods before Me.

8“You shall not make for yourself an idol [as an object to worship], or any likeness (form, manifestation) of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.

9“You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous (impassioned) God [demanding what is rightfully and uniquely mine], visiting (avenging) the iniquity (sin, guilt) of the fathers on the children [that is, calling the children to account for the sins of their fathers], to the third and the fourth *generations* of those who hate Me, [Is 42:8; 48:11]

10but showing graciousness *and* lovingkindness to thousands [of generations] of those who love Me and keep

My commandments.

¹¹‘You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain [that is, irreverently, in false affirmations or in ways that impugn the character of God]; for the LORD will not hold guiltless *nor* leave unpunished the one who takes His name in vain [disregarding its reverence and its power].

¹²‘Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy (set apart, dedicated to God), as the LORD your God commanded you.

¹³‘Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

¹⁴but the seventh day is a Sabbath [a day of rest dedicated] to the LORD your God; on that day you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock or the stranger who stays inside your [city] gates, so that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.

¹⁵‘You shall remember [with thoughtful concern] that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

¹⁶‘Honor (respect, obey, care for) your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that your days [on the earth] may be prolonged and so that it may go well with you in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

¹⁷‘You shall not murder.

¹⁸‘You shall not commit adultery. [Prov 6:25, 26; Matt 5:27, 28; Rom 1:24; Eph 5:3]

¹⁹‘You shall not steal. [Prov 11:1; 16:8; 21:6; 22:16; Jer 17:11; Mal 3:8]

²⁰‘You shall not give false testimony [that is, lie, withhold, or manipulate the truth] against your neighbor (any person). [Ex 23:1; Prov 19:9; 24:28]

²¹‘You shall not covet [that is, desire and seek to acquire] your neighbor’s wife, nor desire your neighbor’s house, his field, his male servant or his female servant, his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.’ [Luke 12:15; Col 3:5]

²²“The LORD spoke these words with a great voice to all your assembly at the mountain out of the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, and He added no more. He wrote these commandments on two tablets of stone and gave them to me.

²³“And when you heard the voice from the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, you approached me, all the leaders (heads) of your tribes and your elders;

²⁴and you said, ‘Behold, the LORD our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire; we have seen today that God speaks with man, yet he [still] lives.

²⁵‘Now then why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer, then we will die.

²⁶‘For who is there of all flesh (mankind) who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?

27‘You, Moses, go near and listen to everything that the LORD our God says; then speak to us everything that the LORD our God speaks to you, and we will listen and do it.’

28“‘The LORD heard your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me, ‘I have heard the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They have done well in all that they have spoken.

29‘Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear [and worship Me with awe-filled reverence and profound respect] and keep all My commandments always, so that it may go well with them and with their children forever!

30‘Go and say to them, “Return to your tents.”’

31‘But as for you, stand here by Me, and I will tell you all the commandments and the statutes and the judgments which you shall teach them, so that they may obey them in the land which I give them to possess.’

32“‘Therefore you shall pay attention *and* be careful to do just as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left [deviating from My commandments].

33“‘You shall walk [that is, live each and every day] in all the ways which the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live and so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long in the land which you will possess.

6 “NOW THIS is the command; the statutes and the judgments (precepts) which the LORD your God has commanded me to teach you, so that you might do (follow,

obey) them in the land which you are crossing over [the Jordan] to possess,

²so that you and your son and your grandson may fear *and* worship the LORD your God [with awe-filled reverence and profound respect], to keep [and actively do] all His statutes and His commandments which I am commanding you, all the days of your life, so that your days may be prolonged.

Speak God's Word

*I fear and worship the Lord
my God, to keep all His
statutes and His
commandments.... I love the
Lord with all my heart and
mind and with all my soul
and with all my strength.*

| *adapted from* DEUTERONOMY
6:2, 5 |

³“Therefore listen, O Israel, and be careful to do *them*, that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly [in numbers], as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.

⁴“Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one [the only God]!

⁵“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart *and* mind and with all your soul and with all your strength [your entire being].

⁶“These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be [written] on your heart *and* mind.

⁷“You shall teach them diligently to your children

[impressing God's precepts on their minds and penetrating their hearts with His truths] and shall speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down and when you get up.

⁸“And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand (forearm), and they shall be used as bands (frontals, frontlets) on your forehead.

⁹“You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

¹⁰“Then it shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore (solemnly promised) to [give] your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—to give you, [a land with] great and splendid cities which you did not build,

¹¹and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn (excavated) cisterns (wells) which you did not dig out, and vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you eat and are full *and* satisfied,

¹²then beware that you do not forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

¹³“You shall fear [only] the LORD your God; and you shall serve Him [with awe-filled reverence and profound respect] and swear [oaths] by His name [alone].

¹⁴“You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you,

¹⁵for the LORD your God who is among you is a jealous (impassioned) God [demanding what is rightfully and uniquely His]—otherwise the anger of the LORD your God will be kindled

and burn against you, and He will destroy you from the face of the earth.

¹⁶“You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah. [Ex 17:7]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Don't Let the Enemy Steal Your Destiny

In Deuteronomy 7:1–2, God was leading the Israelites to possess the land He had promised them, just as He is leading you and me into the abundant life He has promised us. Many enemy nations came against the Israelites, just as our enemy, the devil, comes against us. God told the Israelites to “utterly destroy” the ungodly enemy nations and to “not make a covenant (treaty) with them nor show mercy and compassion to them.” If we will develop this same mind-set and plan of action toward our enemy and deal with ungodly thoughts, words, and actions, we will find ourselves in position to receive God’s promises and to reach our destinies.

Negative thoughts and words are our enemies because they hinder us from being the people we want to be. We cannot show mercy; we have to resist them in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Be firm, steadfast, and resist the enemy at his onset (see 1 Pet. 5:8–9).

¹⁷“You shall diligently keep [foremost in your thoughts and actively do] the commandments of the LORD your God, and His testimonies and His statutes which He has commanded you.

¹⁸“You shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, so that it may be well with you and that you may go in

and possess the good land which the LORD swore to [give] your fathers,

¹⁹by driving out all your enemies from before you, as the LORD has spoken.

²⁰“When your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What *is the meaning* of the testimonies and statutes and judgments (precepts) which the LORD our God has commanded you?’

²¹then you shall say to your son, ‘We were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt, and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

²²‘Moreover, the LORD showed great and terrible signs and wonders before our eyes against Egypt, Pharaoh and all his household;

²³He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land which He had sworn to [give] our fathers.’

²⁴“So the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear [and worship] the LORD our God [with awe-filled reverence and profound respect] for our good always and so that He might preserve us alive, as it is today.

²⁵“It will be [considered] righteousness for us [that is, right standing with God] if we are careful to observe all this commandment before the LORD our God—just as He has commanded us.

1 “WHEN THE LORD your God brings you into the land which you are entering to possess, and has cleared away many nations before you, the Hittite and the Girgashite and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and

the Jebusite, seven nations greater and mightier than you,

²and when the LORD your God gives them over to you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall not make a covenant (treaty) with them nor show mercy *and* compassion to them.

³“You shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughter to his son, nor shall you take his daughter for your son;

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Little by Little

As I look back from the time I seriously began to follow Jesus Christ to the present, and remember all the things God brought me through, I realize that He held my hand and let me advance in small steps. I had times of great discouragement—as we all do. I remember times of bitter tears over my personal failures. But God kept nudging me forward.

That's the secret of living the victorious Christian life—we move ahead little by little over months and years. The same is true in the battle for the mind. We don't roust Satan in one big blow and then live in victory forever. We win one small battle, and then we're ready to move on to the next one. We may have a few major victories that come suddenly, but the fight to destroy Satan's strongholds comes mostly by daily diligence that keeps us moving forward.

I found the idea of winning little by little discouraging until I realized God works in this way for our own protection. If our victory came all at once, we would be tempted to take our success for granted instead of being thankful to God.

During the four hundred years since Jacob and his sons had left the land, others moved in and occupied it even though it did not truly belong to them. The children of Israel had to fight for every foot of ground, even though it was their inheritance. Jesus has provided many wonderful things for us, but we too must fight the good fight of faith in order to possess our inheritance.

God delivers us little by little (see Deut. 7:22), lest we enter into pride and begin to think we can have victory without leaning entirely on God. What if God suddenly gave us full, complete victory, and we never struggled again; how would that affect us? No doubt pride would creep in. Our attitude might then be to look down on others who have not been as victorious as we have been. Many of us could even be tempted to feel superior.

God has a wonderful plan for each of us. As we remain vigilant and trust Him, He takes us slowly forward, showing us the way, encouraging us. We always have new horizons to reach for, and that makes our journey with God exciting!

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God, please forgive me for being impatient. Help me to realize that as I press forward and call on You, I will see Your loving and caring hand leading me forward—little by little. Amen.

⁴for they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the LORD will be kindled *and* burn against you and He will quickly destroy you.

⁵“But this is how you shall deal with them: you shall tear down their altars and smash to pieces their *sacred* pillars, and cut down their Asherim (symbols of the goddess Asherah), and burn their carved *or* sculpted images in the fire.

⁶“For you are a holy people [set apart] to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be a people for His own possession [that is, His very special treasure].

⁷“The LORD did not love you and choose you because you were greater in number than any of the *other* peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples.

⁸“But because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed (bought) you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

⁹“Therefore know [without any doubt] *and* understand that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who is keeping His covenant and His [steadfast] lovingkindness to a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments;

¹⁰but repays those who hate Him to their faces, by destroying them; He will not hesitate with him who hates Him, He will repay him to his face.

¹¹“Therefore, you shall keep (follow, obey) the

commandment and the statutes and judgments (precepts) which I am commanding you today.

¹²“Then it shall come about, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the [steadfast] lovingkindness which He swore to your fathers.

¹³“He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land, your grain and your new wine and your [olive] oil, the offspring of your cattle and the young of your flock, in the land which He swore to your fathers to give you.

¹⁴“You shall be blessed above all peoples; there will be no male or female barren (childless, infertile) among you or among your cattle.

¹⁵“The LORD will take away from you all sickness; and He will not subject you to any of the harmful diseases of Egypt which you have known, but He will impose them on all [those] who hate you.

¹⁶“And you shall consume all the peoples whom the LORD your God will give over to you; your eye shall not pity them, nor shall you serve their gods, for that would be a [deadly] trap to you.

¹⁷“If you say in your heart, ‘These nations are greater than I am; how can I dispossess them?’

¹⁸you shall not be afraid of them; you shall remember [with confidence] what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt—

¹⁹the great trials which you saw with your own eyes, and the signs, the wonders, the mighty hand and the outstretched

arm by which the LORD your God brought you out. So shall the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid.

²⁰“Moreover, the LORD your God will send the hornet (His terror) against them, until those who are left and hide themselves from you perish.

²¹“You shall not dread them, for the LORD your God is in your midst, a great and awesome God.

²²“The LORD your God will clear away these nations before you little by little; you will not be able to put an end to them quickly, for [if you did] the wild animals would become too numerous for you.

²³“But the LORD your God will hand them over to you, and will confuse them with a great panic until they are destroyed.

²⁴“And He will hand over their kings to you, and you will make their name perish from under heaven; no man will be able to stand before you until you have destroyed them.

²⁵“You shall burn the carved *and* sculpted images of their gods in the fire. You shall not covet the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, so that you will not be ensnared by it [in a deadly trap], for it is an abomination (repulsive) to the LORD your God.

²⁶“You shall not bring an abomination (idol) into your house, and like it come under the ban (doomed to destruction); you shall utterly detest and you shall utterly hate it, for it is something banned.

8 “EVERY COMMANDMENT that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, so that you may live and

multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore [to give] to your fathers.

²“And you shall remember [always] all the ways which the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, so that He might humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart (mind), whether you would keep His commandments or not.

³“He humbled you and allowed you to be hungry and fed you with manna, [a substance] which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, so that He might make you understand [by personal experience] that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every *word* that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.

⁴“Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your feet swell these forty years.

⁵“Therefore, know in your heart (be fully cognizant) that the LORD your God disciplines *and* instructs you just as a man disciplines *and* instructs his son.

⁶“Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk [that is, to live each and every day] in His ways and fear [and worship] Him [with awe-filled reverence and profound respect]. [Prov 8:13]

⁷“For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills;

⁸a land of wheat and barley, and vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey;

⁹a land where you will eat bread without shortage, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones are iron, and out of

whose hills you can dig copper.

¹⁰“When you have eaten and are satisfied, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.

¹¹“Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by failing to keep His commandments and His judgments (precepts) and His statutes which I am commanding you today;

¹²otherwise, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived *in them*,

Speak God's Word

*I remember and respect the
Lord my God, for it is He who
gives me the power to make
wealth, that He may confirm
His covenant which He
promised to my fathers.*

| adapted from DEUTERONOMY
8:18 |

¹³and when your herds and flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have increases,

¹⁴then your heart will become lifted up [by self-conceit and arrogance] and you will forget the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

¹⁵“He led you through the great and terrible wilderness, *with its* fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water; it was He who brought water for you out of the flinty rock.

¹⁶“He fed you manna in the wilderness, [a substance] which your fathers did not know, so that He might humble you [by dependence on Him] and that He might test you, to do good [things] for you at the end.

¹⁷“Otherwise, you may say in your heart, ‘My power and

the strength of my hand made me this wealth.’

¹⁸“But you shall remember [with profound respect] the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore (solemnly promised) to your fathers, as it is this day.

¹⁹“And it shall come about if you ever forget the LORD your God and follow other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you will most certainly perish.

²⁰“Like the nations which the LORD causes to perish before you, so shall you perish; because you would not listen to *and* obey the voice of the LORD your God.

9 “HEAR, O Israel! You are crossing the Jordan today to go in to dispossess nations greater and more powerful than you, great cities fortified to heaven,

²a people great and tall, sons of Anakim, whom you know and of whom you have heard *it said*, ‘Who can stand before the sons of Anak?’

³“So know today [with confident assurance] that the LORD your God is crossing [the Jordan] before you like a devouring fire. He will destroy them and He will subdue them before you, and you shall drive them out and destroy them quickly, just as the LORD has promised you.

⁴“Do not say in your heart when the LORD your God has driven them out before you, ‘Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,’ but because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD is dispossessing

them before you.

⁵“It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD your God is driving them out before you, and to confirm the oath which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

⁶“Know [without any doubt], that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked (stubborn, obstinate) people.

⁷“Remember [with remorse] and do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness; from the day you left the land of Egypt until you arrived in this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD.

⁸“And at Horeb (Sinai) you provoked the LORD to wrath, and the LORD was so angry with you that He would have destroyed you.

⁹“When I went up the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which the LORD made with you, I remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights; I did not eat food or drink water.

¹⁰“The LORD gave me the two tablets of stone written with the finger of God; and on them *were written* all the words which the LORD had spoken to you at the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly.

¹¹“It came about at the end of forty days and forty nights that the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant.

¹²“Then the LORD said to me, ‘Arise, go down from here quickly, for your people whom you brought from Egypt have acted corruptly. They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them; they have made (cast) a molten image for themselves.’

¹³“Furthermore, the LORD said to me, ‘I have seen this people, and indeed, they are stiff-necked (stubborn, obstinate) people.

¹⁴“Let Me alone, so that I may destroy them and wipe out their name from under heaven; and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they.’

¹⁵“So I turned and came down from the mountain while the mountain was burning with fire, and the two tablets of the covenant were in my two hands.

¹⁶“And I saw that you had indeed sinned against the LORD your God. You had made for yourselves a molten calf (idol). You had turned aside quickly from the way which the LORD had commanded you. [Ex 32:1–10]

¹⁷“So I took hold of the two tablets and threw them from my two hands and smashed them before your very eyes!

¹⁸“Then, as before, I fell down before the LORD for [another] forty days and forty nights; I did not eat food or drink water, because of all the sin you had committed by doing what was evil in the sight of the LORD to provoke Him to anger.

¹⁹“For I was afraid of the anger and absolute fury which the LORD held against you, [enough divine fury] to destroy you, but the LORD listened to me that time also.

²⁰“The LORD was very angry with Aaron, angry [enough]

to destroy him, so I also prayed for Aaron at the same time.

²¹“I took your sinful *thing*, the calf which you had made, and burned it in the fire and thoroughly crushed it, grinding the metal thoroughly until it was as fine as dust; and I threw its dust into the brook that came down from the mountain.

²²“At Taberah also and at Massah and at Kibroth-hattaavah you provoked the LORD to wrath.

²³“And when the LORD sent you from Kadesh-barnea, saying, ‘Go up and take possession of the land which I have given you,’ then you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God, and you did not believe *and* rely on Him, nor did you obey His voice.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Passion for the Things of God

After the people of Israel were delivered from Egypt, God repeatedly told them, “What does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear [and worship] the LORD your God [with awe-filled reverence and profound respect], to walk... in all His ways and to love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deut. 10:12).

God is looking for people who are passionate about the things He is passionate about. He is looking for people who will wholeheartedly pursue Him. He is also looking for people who will love others at their jobs, in their neighborhoods, and in their homes, and for people who will help the lost, the poor, and the needy. In short, God is looking for people He can work with and through. If you are willing to put aside self-will and start wanting what God wants, you are the type of person He is searching for.

²⁴“You have been rebellious against the LORD from the [first] day that I knew you.

²⁵“So I fell down *and* lay face down before the LORD forty days and nights because the LORD had said He would destroy you.

²⁶“Then I prayed to the LORD and said, ‘O Lord GOD, do not destroy Your people, even Your inheritance, whom You

have redeemed through Your greatness, whom You have brought from Egypt with a mighty hand.

²⁷‘Remember [with compassion] Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; do not look at the stubbornness of this people or at their wickedness or at their sin,

²⁸so that the [people of the] land from which You brought us will not say, “Because the LORD was not capable of bringing them into the land which He had promised them and because He hated them He has brought them out to the wilderness [in order] to kill them.”

²⁹‘Yet they are Your people and Your inheritance, whom You have brought out by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm.’

10 “AT THAT time the LORD said to me, ‘Cut out for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and come up to Me on the mountain, and make an ark (chest) of wood for yourself.

²‘I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you shattered, and you shall put them in the ark.’

³“So I made an ark of acacia wood and cut out two tablets of stone like the first, and went up the mountain with the two tablets in my hand.

⁴“The LORD wrote on the tablets, like the first writing, the Ten Commandments which the LORD had spoken to you on the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly; then the LORD gave them to me.

⁵“Then I turned and came down from the mountain and put the tablets in the ark which I had made; and they are there, just

as the LORD commanded me.”

⁶(Now the sons of Israel traveled from the wells of the sons of Jaakan to Moserah. There Aaron died and there he was buried and Eleazar his son ministered as priest in his place.

⁷From there they traveled to Gudgodah, and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land of brooks of water.

⁸At that time the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to serve Him and to bless in His name until this day.

⁹Therefore, Levi does not have a portion or inheritance [of tribal land] with his brothers; the LORD is his inheritance, as the LORD your God has promised him.)

¹⁰“And I stayed on the mountain, like the first time, forty days and nights, and the LORD listened to me at that time also; the LORD was not willing to destroy you.

¹¹“Then the LORD said to me, ‘Arise, go on your journey ahead of the people, so that they may go in and take possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give to them.’

¹²“And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear [and worship] the LORD your God [with awe-filled reverence and profound respect], to walk [that is, to live each and every day] in all His ways and to love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul [your choices, your thoughts, your whole being],

¹³and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?

¹⁴“Behold, the heavens and the highest of heavens belong

to the LORD your God, the earth and all that is in it.

¹⁵“Yet the LORD had a delight in loving your fathers *and* set His affection on them, and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day.

¹⁶“So circumcise [that is, remove sin from] your heart, and be stiff-necked (stubborn, obstinate) no longer.

¹⁷“For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe.

¹⁸“He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the stranger (resident alien, foreigner) by giving him food and clothing.

¹⁹“Therefore, show your love for the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

²⁰“You shall fear [and worship] the LORD your God [with awe-filled reverence and profound respect]; you shall serve Him and cling to Him [hold tightly to Him, be united with Him], and you shall swear [oaths] by His name.

²¹“He is your praise *and* glory; He is your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things which you have seen with your own eyes.

²²“Your fathers went down to Egypt, seventy persons [in all], and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven.

11 “THEREFORE YOU shall love the LORD your God, and always keep His charge, His statutes, His precepts, and His commandments [it is your obligation to Him].

²“Know this day that I am not *speaking* to your children who have not known [by personal experience] and who have not seen [firsthand] the instruction *and* discipline of the LORD your God—His greatness, His mighty hand and His outstretched arm;

³and His signs and His works which He did in the midst of Egypt to Pharaoh the king of Egypt and to all his land;

⁴and what He did to the army of Egypt, to its horses and its chariots, when He made the water of the ^{*}Red Sea engulf them as they pursued you, and how the LORD completely destroyed them;

⁵and what He did to you in the wilderness until you came to this place;

⁶and what He did to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben, when the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, their households, their tents, and every living thing that followed them, in the midst of all Israel. [Num 26:9, 10]

⁷“For your eyes have seen all the great work of the LORD which He did.

⁸“Therefore, you shall keep all the commandments which I am commanding you today, so that you may be strong and go in and take possession of the land which you are crossing over [the Jordan] to possess;

⁹so that you may live long on the land which the LORD swore (solemnly promised) to your fathers to give to them and to their descendants, a land [of great abundance,] flowing with milk and honey.

¹⁰“For the land which you are entering to possess is not

like the land of Egypt from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and watered it with your foot like a garden of vegetables.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Love the Lord Your God

When the Pharisees asked Jesus what was the most important commandment of all, He remembered Deuteronomy 11:13 and responded: Love the Lord with all your heart and soul and mind (see Matt. 22:37–38).

We can't simply love God when we need Him to help us; we can't love Him only when it's convenient or popular; we shouldn't pay attention to Him just when we're at church or because we think He might punish us if we don't. We are to love Him because He is wonderful and amazing—not out of fear or obligation. And we are to love Him passionately. That's what “with all your heart” means.

God is good, and He deserves our love! Determine to seek and love God with all your heart from this moment on.

¹¹“But the land into which you are about to cross to possess, a land of hills and valleys, drinks water from the rain of heaven,

¹²a land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

¹³“It shall come about, if you listen obediently *and* pay attention to My commandments which I command you today—to love the LORD your God and to serve Him with all your heart

and with all your soul [your choices, your thoughts, your whole being]—

¹⁴that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early [fall] rain and the late [spring] rain, so that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your [olive] oil.

¹⁵“And He will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied.

¹⁶“Beware that your hearts are not deceived, and that you do not turn away [from the LORD] and serve other gods and worship them,

¹⁷or [else] the LORD’s anger will be kindled *and* burn against you, and He will shut up the heavens so that there will be no rain and the land will not yield its fruit; and you will perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you.

¹⁸“Therefore, you shall impress these words of mine on your heart and on your soul, and tie them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as bands (frontals, frontlets) on your forehead.

¹⁹“You shall teach them [diligently] to your children [impressing God’s precepts on their minds and penetrating their hearts with His truths], speaking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road and when you lie down and when you rise up.

²⁰“You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates,

²¹so that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens are above the earth.

²²“For if you are careful to keep all this commandment which I am commanding you to do, to love the LORD your God, to walk [that is, to live each and every day] in all His ways and to hold tightly to Him—

²³then the LORD will drive out all these nations from before you, and you shall dispossess nations greater and mightier than you.

²⁴“Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall become yours; your territory shall be from the wilderness to Lebanon, and from the river, the river Euphrates, as far as the western sea (the Mediterranean).

²⁵“No man will be able to stand before you; the LORD your God will lay the fear and the dread of you on all the land on which you set foot, just as He has spoken to you.

²⁶“Behold, today I am setting before you a blessing and a curse—

²⁷the blessing, if you listen to *and* obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I am commanding you today;

²⁸and the curse, if you do not listen to *and* obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I am commanding you today, by following (acknowledging, worshiping) other gods which you have not known.

²⁹“It shall come about, when the LORD your God brings you into the land which you are entering to possess, that you shall place the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. [Josh 8:30–35]

³⁰“Are they not across the Jordan, west of the road, toward

the sunset, in the land of the Canaanites who live in the Arabah, opposite Gilgal, beside the oaks of Moreh?

³¹“For you are about to cross the Jordan to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and you shall possess it and live in it,

³²and you shall be careful to do all the statutes and the judgments which I am setting before you today.

12 “THESE ARE the statutes and judgments (precepts) which you shall be careful to do in the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess as long as you live on the earth.

²“You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess serve their gods, on the high mountains and the hills and under every green [leafy] tree.

³“You shall tear down their altars and smash their [idolatrous] pillars and burn their Asherim in the fire; you shall cut down the carved *and* sculpted images of their gods and obliterate their name from that place.

⁴“You shall not act like this toward the LORD your God.

⁵“But you shall seek *the* LORD at the place which the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes to establish His Name there for His dwelling [place], and there you shall come [to worship Him].

⁶“There you shall bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the contribution of your hand, your votive (pledged, vowed) offerings, your freewill (voluntary) offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock.

⁷“And there you and your households shall eat before the LORD your God, and rejoice in all to which you put your hand, in which the LORD your God has blessed you.

⁸“You shall not do at all what we are doing here [in the camp] today, every man doing whatever is right in his [own] eyes.

⁹“For you have not yet come to the resting place and to the inheritance which the LORD your God is giving you.

¹⁰“When you cross the Jordan and live in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies around you so that you live in security,

¹¹then it shall come about that the place which the LORD your God will choose for His Name [and Presence] to dwell; there you shall bring everything that I am commanding you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes and the [voluntary] contribution of your hand [as a first gift from the fruits of the ground], and all your choice votive offerings which you vow to the LORD.

¹²“And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your sons and your daughters, and your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your [city] gates, since he has no portion or inheritance with you.

¹³“Be careful that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every [cultic] place you see,

¹⁴but [only] in the place which the LORD will choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do everything that I am commanding you.

¹⁵“However, you may slaughter and eat meat within any of your [city] gates, whatever you wish, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you [as His generous provision for daily life]. The [ceremonially] unclean and the clean may eat it, such as the gazelle and the deer.

¹⁶“Only you shall not eat the blood; you are to pour it out on the ground like water.

¹⁷“You are forbidden to eat within your [city] gates the tithe of your grain or new wine or oil, or the firstborn of your herd or flock, or any of your votive offerings, or your freewill offerings, or the contribution of your hand.

¹⁸“But you shall eat them before the LORD your God in the place which the LORD your God will choose, you and your son and your daughter, and your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your [city] gates; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God in all that you undertake.

¹⁹“Be careful that you do not neglect the Levite [who serves God] as long as you live in your land.

²⁰“When the LORD your God extends your territory, as He promised you, and you say, ‘I will eat meat,’ because you want to eat meat, then you may eat meat, whatever you wish.

²¹“If the place which the LORD your God chooses to put His Name (Presence) is too far away from you, then you may slaughter [animals] from your herd or flock which the LORD has given you, just as I have commanded you; and you may eat within your [city] gates whatever you wish.

²²“Just as the gazelle or the deer is eaten, so you may eat it [but not make it an offering]; the [ceremonially] unclean and the clean alike may eat it.

23“Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life (soul), and you shall not eat the life with the meat.

24“You shall not eat it; you shall pour it out on the ground like water.

25“You shall not eat it, so that all may be well with you and with your children after you, because you will be doing what is right in the sight of the LORD.

26“However, you shall take your holy things which you have [to offer] and your votive (pledged, vowed) offerings, you shall take *them* and go to the place which the LORD will choose.

27“And you shall offer your burnt offerings, the meat and the blood, on the altar of the LORD your God; and the blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out on the altar of the LORD your God, and you shall eat the meat.

28“Be careful to listen to all these words which I am commanding you, so that it may be well with you and with your children after you forever, because you will be doing what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God.

29“When the LORD your God cuts off *and* destroys before you the nations which you are going in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and settle in their land,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Do What's Right

“Doing what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God” (Deut. 12:28) in all situations should always be our choice, even when we do not feel like doing so. For example, if people have hurt you, you may not feel like being nice and talking to them, but as you choose to do what is right, God will heal your emotions. Our part is to pray for the people who hurt us and continue treating them the way we believe Jesus would treat them (see Matt. 5:44), while we trust God to take care of us.

We usually want to feel better before we do what is right, but God wants us to do what is right first, no matter how we feel. Doing the right thing while we feel wronged is extremely important for spiritual growth. When we do the right thing when it's hard or when we're hurting, we grow spiritually and will enjoy more emotional stability the next time we are faced with a difficult situation.

³⁰beware that you are not lured (ensnared) into following them, after they have been destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire about their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods, so that I too may do likewise?’

³¹“You shall not behave this way toward the LORD your God, for they have done for their gods every repulsive thing

which the LORD hates; for they even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire [as sacrifices] to their gods.

³²“Everything I command you, you shall be careful to do it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.

13 “IF A prophet arises among you, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or a wonder,

²and the sign or the wonder which he spoke (foretold) to you comes to pass, and if he says, ‘Let us follow after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve *and* worship them,’

³you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart *and* mind and all your soul [your entire being].

⁴“You shall walk after the LORD your God and you shall fear [and worship] Him [with awe-filled reverence and profound respect], and you shall keep His commandments and you shall listen to His voice, and you shall serve Him, and cling to Him.

⁵“But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled rebellion against the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to draw you away from the way in which the LORD your God has commanded you to walk. So you shall remove the evil from among you.

⁶“If your brother, the son of your mother, or your son or daughter, or the wife you cherish, or your friend who is as [precious to you as] your own life (soul), entices you secretly,

saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods' (*gods* whom neither you nor your fathers have known,

Speak God's Word

*I will walk after the Lord my
God and fear and worship
Him with awe-filled
reverence. I will keep His
commandments and listen to
His voice, and I will serve
Him and cling to Him.*

| *adapted from* DEUTERONOMY
13:4 |

⁷of the gods of the peoples who are around you, near you or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other),

⁸you shall not consent to him or listen to him; and your eye shall not pity him, nor shall you spare him or conceal him.

⁹“Instead, you shall most certainly execute him; your hand shall be first [to be raised] against him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people.

¹⁰“So you shall stone him to death with stones, because he has tried to draw you away from the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery.

¹¹“Then all Israel will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such a wicked thing among you.

¹²“If you hear [it said] in one of your cities, which the LORD your God gives you to live in,

¹³that some worthless *and* evil men have gone out from among you and have tempted the inhabitants of their city [to sin], saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods’ (whom you have not known),

¹⁴then you shall investigate and search out [witnesses] and ask thorough *questions*. If it is true and the matter is established that this loathsome thing has been done among you,

¹⁵you shall most certainly strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying it and all that is in it, even its livestock with the edge of the sword.

¹⁶“Then you shall collect all its spoil (plunder) into the middle of its open square and burn the city and set fire to the spoil as a whole burnt offering to the LORD your God. It shall be a ruin forever. It shall not be built again.

¹⁷“Nothing from that which is put under the ban (designated for destruction) shall cling to your hand, so that the LORD may turn away from His burning anger and show mercy to you, and have compassion on you and make you increase, just as He swore to your fathers,

¹⁸because you have listened to *and* obeyed the voice of the LORD your God, keeping all His commandments which I am commanding you today, and doing what is right in the eyes of the LORD your God.

14 “YOU ARE the sons of the LORD your God; you shall not

cut yourselves nor shave your forehead for the sake of the dead,

²for you are a holy people [set apart] to the LORD your God; and the LORD has chosen you out of all the peoples who are on the earth to be a people for His own possession.

³“You shall not eat anything that is detestable [to the LORD and forbidden by Him].

⁴“These are the animals that you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat,

⁵the deer, the gazelle, the roebuck, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope and the mountain sheep.

⁶“Among the animals, you may eat any animal that has the divided hoof [that is, a hoof] split into two parts [especially at its distal extremity] and that chews the cud.

⁷“However, you are not to eat any of these [animals] among those which chew the cud, or among those that divide the hoof in two: the camel, the hare and the shaphan, for though they chew the cud, they do not split the hoof; they are unclean for you.

⁸“The swine, because it has a divided hoof but *does* not *chew* the cud; it is unclean for you. You shall not eat their meat nor touch their carcasses.

⁹“Of all [creatures] that are in the waters, you may eat these: anything that has fins and scales you may eat,

¹⁰but you may not eat anything that does not have fins and scales; it is unclean for you.

¹¹“You may eat any clean bird.

¹²“But these are the ones which you shall not eat: the

eagle, the vulture, and the black buzzard,

¹³and the red kite, the falcon, and the birds of prey of any variety,

¹⁴and every raven of any variety,

¹⁵and the ostrich, the owl, the seagull, the hawk of any variety,

¹⁶the little owl, the great owl, the long-eared owl,

¹⁷the pelican, the carrion vulture, the cormorant,

¹⁸the stork, and the heron of any variety, and the hoopoe, and the bat.

¹⁹“And all flying insects are unclean for you; they shall not be eaten.

²⁰“You may eat any clean bird.

²¹“You shall not eat anything that dies *on its own*. You may give it to the stranger (resident alien, foreigner) who is in your [city] gates, so that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner [since they are not under God’s law], but you are a people holy (set apart) to the LORD your God. You shall not boil a young goat *or* a lamb in its mother’s milk.

²²“Every year you shall certainly tithe [a tenth] of all the yield of your seed which is produced by your field.

²³“You shall eat the tithe (tenth) of your grain, your new wine, your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and your flock before the LORD your God in the place where He chooses to establish His Name (Presence), so that you may learn to fear [and worship] the LORD your God [with awe-filled reverence and profound respect] always.

²⁴“If the place where the LORD your God chooses to set His

Name (Presence) is a great distance from you and you are not able to carry *your tithe*, because the LORD your God has blessed you [with such an abundance],

²⁵then you shall exchange *your tithe* for money, and take the money in your hand and go to the place [of worship] which the LORD your God chooses.

²⁶“You may spend the money for anything your heart desires: for oxen, or sheep, or wine, or [other] strong drink, or anything else you want. You shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice, you and your household.

²⁷“Also you shall not neglect the Levite who is within your [city] gates, for he does not have a share [of land] or an inheritance among you.

²⁸“At the end of every third year you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce for that year, and shall store it up within your [city] gates.

²⁹“The Levite, because he has no share [of land] or an inheritance among you, and the stranger, and the orphan and the widow who are within your [city] gates, shall come and eat and be satisfied, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

15 “AT THE end of every seven years you shall grant a release (remission, pardon) *from debt*.

²“This is the regulation for the release: every creditor shall forgive what he has loaned to his neighbor; he shall not require repayment from his neighbor and his brother, because the LORD’s release has been proclaimed.

³“You may require repayment from a foreigner, but whatever of yours is with your brother [Israelite] your hand shall release.

⁴“However, there will be no poor among you, since the LORD will most certainly bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess,

⁵if only you will listen to *and* obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all these commandments which I am commanding you today.

⁶“When the LORD your God blesses you as He has promised you, then you will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow; and you will rule over many nations, but they will not rule over you.

⁷“If there is a poor man among you, one of your fellow Israelites, in any of your cities in the land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not be heartless, nor close-fisted with your poor brother;

⁸but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend to him whatever he needs.

⁹“Beware that there is no wicked thought in your heart, saying, ‘The seventh year, the year of release (remission, pardon), is approaching,’ and your eye is hostile (unsympathetic) toward your poor brother, and you give him nothing [since he would not have to repay you]; for he may cry out to the LORD against you, and it will become a sin for you.

¹⁰“You shall freely *and* generously give to him, and your heart shall not be resentful when you give to him, because for this [generous] thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings.

¹¹“For the poor will never cease to be in the land; therefore I command you, saying, ‘You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy, and to your poor in your land.’

¹²“If your fellow Israelite, a Hebrew man or woman, is sold to you, and serves you for six years, then in the seventh year you shall set him free [from your service].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Compassion Toward the Poor and Needy

Helping the poor and needy is not only a nice thing to do, but according to the Bible, we have a responsibility to extend kindness and compassion to those who need it (see Deut. 15:11). God cares deeply for the poor and needy and seems to have a special place in His heart for the widow and the orphan because they are often unable to meet all their needs. God gives us hearts of compassion, and when needs arise we should resist any temptation to close our hearts—we need to open wide our hearts and our hands to help the poor.

When we give to the poor, the Bible says that we lend to the Lord (see Prov. 19:17). Anything we give to help hurting people, God will return many times over. Not only will He meet our needs, but our joy will increase as a result of giving in love. I urge you to share what you have with those who are less fortunate than you are.

¹³“When you set him free, you shall not let him go away empty-handed.

¹⁴“You shall give him generous provisions from your flock, from your threshing floor and from your wine press; you shall give to him as the LORD your God has blessed you.

¹⁵“And you shall remember *and* thoughtfully consider that you were [once] a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD

your God redeemed you; therefore, I am commanding you these things today.

¹⁶“Now if the servant says to you, ‘I will not leave you,’ because he loves you and your household, since he is doing well with you;

¹⁷then take an awl and pierce it through his ear into the door, and he shall [willingly] be your servant always. Also you shall do the same for your maidservant. [Ex 21:6]

¹⁸“It shall not seem hard to you when you set him free, for he has served you six years *with* double the service of a hired man; so the LORD your God will bless you in everything you do.

¹⁹“You shall consecrate (set apart) to the LORD your God all the firstborn males that are born of your herd and flock. You shall not work with the firstborn of your herd, nor shear the firstborn of your flock.

²⁰“You and your household shall eat it every year before the LORD your God in the place [for worship] which the LORD chooses.

²¹“But if it has any defect *or* injury, *such as* lameness or blindness, or any serious defect, you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD your God.

²²“You shall eat it within your [city] gates; the [ceremonially] unclean and the clean alike *may eat it*, as [if it were] a gazelle or a deer.

²³“Only you shall not eat its blood; you are to pour it out on the ground like water.

16 “OBSERVE THE month of Abib and celebrate the Passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night.

²“You shall sacrifice the Passover [lamb] to the LORD your God from the flock or the herd, in the place where the LORD chooses to establish His Name (Presence).

³“You shall not eat leavened bread with it; *instead*, for seven days you shall eat the Passover with unleavened bread, the bread of affliction (for you left the land of Egypt in haste); [do this] so that all the days of your life you may remember [thoughtfully] the day when you came out of the land of Egypt.

⁴“For seven days no leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory, and none of the meat which you sacrificed the evening of the first day shall remain overnight until morning.

⁵“You are not allowed to sacrifice the Passover [lamb] in any of your cities which the LORD your God is giving you;

⁶but at the place where the LORD your God chooses to establish His Name (Presence), you shall sacrifice the Passover [lamb] in the evening at sunset, at the time that you came out of Egypt.

⁷“You shall cook and eat it in the place which the LORD your God chooses. In the morning you are to return to your tents.

⁸“For six days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a celebration to the LORD your God; so you shall do no work [on that day].

⁹“You shall count seven weeks for yourself; you shall begin to count seven weeks from the time you first put the

sickle to the standing grain.

¹⁰“Then you shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with a tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give [to Him] just as the LORD your God blesses you;

¹¹and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite who is within your [city] gates, and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are among you, at the place where the LORD your God chooses to establish His Name (Presence).

¹²“You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and you shall be careful to obey these statutes.

¹³“You shall celebrate the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles) seven days, when you have gathered in [the grain] from your threshing floor and [the wine] from your wine vat.

¹⁴“You shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are within your city.

¹⁵“Seven days you shall celebrate a feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful.

¹⁶“Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, at the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover) and at the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) and at the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles), and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed.

¹⁷“Every man shall give as he is able, in accordance with the blessing which the LORD your God has given you.

¹⁸“You shall appoint judges and officers in all your cities (gates) which the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Go the Extra Mile

Deuteronomy 16:17 tells us, “Every man shall give as he is able, in accordance with the blessing which the LORD your God has given you.” And what has He given us? “Superabundantly more than all that we dare ask or think [infinitely beyond our greatest prayers, hopes, or dreams]” (Eph. 3:20). So if we want to be like Him, we need to always go the extra mile, always do more than we have to do, always give more than enough, and always be generous.

Because human nature is selfish and self-centered, generous giving does not come naturally to us. We have to build into our thinking the mind-set that we are generous—think it and speak it! I encourage you to say to yourself often, “God has given me more than I could ask or think. I have a mind-set of abundance and I am generous to others.”

Opportunities to give are all around you, and finding out how you can bless another person is as easy as using your ears. If you simply listen to people, you’ll soon know what they need or would like.

¹⁹“You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous.

²⁰“You shall pursue justice, *and only* justice [that which is

uncompromisingly righteous], so that you may live and take possession of the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

²¹“You shall not plant for yourself an Asherah of any kind of tree *or* wood beside the altar of the LORD your God, which you shall make.

²²“You shall not set up for yourself a *sacred* pillar which the LORD your God hates.

17 “YOU SHALL not sacrifice to the LORD your God an ox or sheep with a blemish or any defect, for that is a detestable thing to the LORD your God.

²“If there is discovered among you, within any of your cities, which the LORD your God is giving you, a man or a woman who does evil in the sight of the LORD your God, by transgressing (violating) His covenant,

³and has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the heavenly host, [doing these things] which I have commanded not to do,

⁴and if it is told to you and you hear about it, then you shall investigate thoroughly [all the charges]. If it is confirmed beyond doubt that this detestable thing has been done in Israel,

⁵then you shall bring that man or that woman who has done this evil thing to the gates [of your city] and you shall stone the man or the woman to death.

⁶“On the evidence of two or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of [only] one witness.

⁷“The hand of the witnesses shall be the first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall remove the evil from among you.

⁸“If any case is too difficult for you to judge—between one kind of homicide and another, between one kind of lawsuit and another, between one kind of assault and another, being controversial issues in your courts—then you shall arise and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses.

⁹“So you shall come to the Levitical priests or to the judge who is *in office* at that time, and you shall consult them and they will declare to you the verdict in the case.

¹⁰“You shall act in accordance with the terms of the verdict which they declare to you from that place which the LORD chooses. You shall be careful to act in accordance with all of their instructions.

¹¹“You shall act in accordance with the law which they teach you and the judgment which they tell you. You shall not turn aside from their verdict, to the right or to the left.

¹²“The man who acts presumptuously *and* insolently by not listening to the priest who stands there to serve the LORD your God, nor to the judge, that man shall die; so you shall remove the evil from Israel.

¹³“Then all the people will hear and be afraid, and will not act presumptuously again.

¹⁴“When you enter the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and you take possession of it and live there, and you say, ‘I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me,’

¹⁵you shall most certainly set a king over you whom the

LORD your God chooses. You shall set a king over you from among your countrymen (brothers); you may not choose a foreigner [to rule] over you who is not your countryman.

¹⁶“Further, he shall not acquire many [war] horses for himself, nor make the people return to Egypt in order to acquire horses [to expand his military power], since the LORD said to you, ‘You shall never return that way again.’

¹⁷“He shall not acquire multiple wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away [from God]; nor [for the same reason] shall he acquire great amounts of silver and gold.

¹⁸“Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests.

¹⁹“And it shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear [and worship] the LORD his God [with awe-filled reverence and profound respect], by carefully obeying (keeping foremost in his thoughts and actively doing) all the words of this law and these statutes,

²⁰so that his heart will not be lifted up above his countrymen [by a false sense of self-importance and self-reliance] and that he will not turn away (deviate) from the commandment, to the right or to the left, so that he and his sons may continue [to reign] for a long time in his kingdom in Israel.

18 “THE LEVITICAL priests, the entire tribe of Levi, shall own [privately] no portion [of land] or inheritance with Israel; they shall eat the LORD’s offerings by fire and His portion.

²“They shall have no inheritance [of land] among their countrymen (brothers, brethren); the LORD is their inheritance, as He promised them.

³“Now this shall be the priests’ portion from the people, from those offering a sacrifice, either an ox or a sheep: they shall give to the priest the shoulder and the two cheeks and the stomach.

⁴“You shall also give him the first fruits of your grain, your new wine [the first of the season], and your [olive] oil, and the first sheared fleece of your sheep.

⁵“For the LORD your God has chosen him, him and his sons from all your tribes, to stand and serve in the name of the LORD forever.

⁶“Now if a Levite comes from any of your cities throughout Israel where he resides, and comes whenever he wishes to [the sanctuary] the place which the LORD chooses;

⁷then he shall serve in the name of the LORD his God, like all his fellow Levites who stand there before the LORD.

⁸“They shall have equal portions to eat, except *what they receive* from the sale of their fathers’ *estates*. [Jer 32:6–15]

⁹“When you enter the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable (repulsive) practices of those nations.

¹⁰“There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or daughter pass through the fire [as a sacrifice], one who uses divination *and* fortune-telling, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer,

¹¹or one who casts a charm *or* spell, or a medium, or a

spiritist, or a necromancer [who seeks the dead].

¹²“For everyone who does these things is utterly repulsive to the LORD; and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God is driving them out before you.

¹³“You shall be blameless (complete, perfect) before the LORD your God.

¹⁴“For these nations which you shall dispossess listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners *and* fortune-tellers, but as for you, the LORD your God has not allowed you to do so.

¹⁵“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me [Moses] from among you, from your countrymen (brothers, brethren). You shall listen to him. [Matt 21:11; John 1:21]

¹⁶“This is according to all that you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb (Mount Sinai) on the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me not hear the voice of the LORD my God again, nor see this great fire anymore, so that I will not die.’

¹⁷“The LORD said to me, ‘They have spoken well.

¹⁸‘I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

¹⁹‘It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him [and there will be consequences].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Press Toward Perfection

Deuteronomy 18:13 says we are to be “blameless (complete, perfect)” before the Lord. We need to understand that we cannot make ourselves blameless or achieve perfection our own strength, but that we do have a responsibility to press toward the mark of perfection (see Phil. 3:12). The Bible teaches us we will not attain perfection until Jesus, the Perfect One, comes to take us to live with Him for eternity (see 1 Cor. 13:9–10). We can grow; we can change and do better and better; but we won’t reach the place of perfection here on earth because if we did we would no longer need Jesus.

We can have perfect hearts toward God by fully wanting His will and doing all we can to work with the Holy Spirit toward the goal of perfection. God sees your heart, and He counts you as perfect even while you are making the journey toward perfection.

²⁰“But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods—that prophet shall die.”

²¹“If you say in your heart, ‘How will we know *and* recognize the word which the LORD has not spoken?’

²²“When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD and the thing does not happen or come true, that is the thing which the

LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

19 “WHEN THE LORD your God cuts off (destroys) the nations whose land He is giving you, and you dispossess them and live in their cities and in their houses,

²you shall designate three cities for yourself in the central area of the land, which the LORD your God is giving you to possess.

³“You shall prepare *and* maintain for yourself the roads [to these cities], and divide the territory of your land into three parts, so that anyone who kills another unintentionally may escape there [for asylum].

⁴“Now this is the case of the offender (manslayer) who may escape there and live [protected from vengeance]: when he kills his neighbor unintentionally, not having hated him previously

⁵as [for example] when *a man* goes into the forest with his neighbor to cut wood, and his hand swings the axe to cut down the tree, but the iron *head* slips off the wooden handle and hits his companion and he dies—the offender may escape to one of these cities and live;

⁶otherwise the avenger of blood might pursue the offender in the heat of anger, and overtake him, because it is a long way, and take his life, even though he did not deserve to die, since he did not hate his neighbor beforehand.

⁷“Therefore, I command you, saying, ‘You shall set aside three cities [of refuge] for yourself.’

⁸“If the LORD your God enlarges your border, as He has sworn to your fathers to do, and gives you all the land which He promised to give to your fathers—

⁹if you keep *and* carefully observe all these commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the LORD your God, and to walk [that is, to live each and every day] always in His ways—then you shall add three more cities [of refuge] for yourself, besides these three,

¹⁰so that innocent blood will not be shed [by blood avengers] in your land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, and blood guilt will not be on you [for the death of an innocent man].

¹¹“But if there is a man who hates his neighbor and lies in wait *and* ambush for him and attacks him and strikes him down so that he dies, and the assailant escapes to one of these cities,

¹²then the elders of his own city shall send for him and have him taken back from there and turn him over to the avenger of blood, so that he may be put to death.

¹³“You shall not pity him [the guilty one], but you shall purge the blood of the innocent from Israel, so that it may go well with you.

¹⁴“You shall not move your neighbor’s boundary mark, which the forefathers [who first divided the territory] have set, in the land which you will inherit in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess.

¹⁵“A single witness shall not appear *in a trial* against a man for any wrong or any sin which he has committed; [only] on the testimony *or* evidence of two or three witnesses shall a charge be confirmed.

¹⁶“If a malicious witness rises up against a man to [falsely] accuse him of wrongdoing,

¹⁷then both parties to the controversy shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who will be *in office* at that time.

¹⁸“The judges shall investigate thoroughly, and if the witness is a false witness, and he has accused his brother falsely,

¹⁹then you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother. So you shall remove the evil from among you.

²⁰“Those who remain will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such an evil thing among you.

²¹“You shall not show pity [to the guilty one]: *it shall be* life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

20 “WHEN YOU go out to battle against your enemies and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt, is with you.

²“When you approach the battle, the priest shall come forward and speak to the people,

³and shall say to them, ‘Hear, O Israel: you are advancing today to battle against your enemies. Do not lack courage. Do not be afraid, or panic, or tremble [in terror] before them,

⁴for the LORD your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.’ [1 Sam 17:45]

⁵“The officers shall also speak to the soldiers, saying, ‘What man is there who has built a new house and has not yet dedicated it? Let him go and return to his house, otherwise he might die in the battle and another man would dedicate it.

⁶‘What man has planted a vineyard and has not put it to use [harvesting its fruit]? Let him go and return to his house, otherwise he might die in the battle and another man would begin to use its fruit.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

A Strong Heart

Deuteronomy 20:1–4 is a great passage of encouragement to the Israelites when they were tempted to be afraid of their enemies and the battles they would face against them. It says “do not be afraid of them” (Deut. 20:1) and “do not lack courage. Do not be afraid, or panic, or tremble” (Deut. 20:3). In other words, the people were to be strong and brave, not fainthearted. Fainthearted people are people who give up easily. They have to have everything a certain way or they lose their strength and quit. Fainthearted people are quickly discouraged and depressed, and their feelings are easily hurt. Everything bothers them, and they can be described as “touchy.” When they face difficult situations, they say in their hearts, “I can’t do this. It’s just too hard.”

Proverbs 24:10 teaches us that if we faint or are slack in the day of distress, our strength is limited. We can never stand against the enemy if we are fainthearted. And if we want to enjoy the power of a positive mind, we cannot be wimpy or give up easily.

All of us have to resist becoming weary and quitting when the enemy hassles us. With God’s strength, we don’t have to faint in our minds and give up, no matter what kind of adversity we face. The best way to fight the enemy, especially in times of challenge and stress, is to stay calm, maintain a peaceful attitude, keep doing what is right, and be courageous. We

need to remember what Moses said to the Israelites when he knew the battles ahead would cause them to fear and want to give up: “the LORD your God... is with you.... the LORD your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies” (Deut.20:1–4).

With powerful words such as these to encourage us, we can take courage and refuse to give in to fear, confident that God’s power can keep us strong and keep our hearts from fainting.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that You are
the One who goes with me, to
fight for me against my
enemies and to save me.*

• adapted from Deuteronomy 20:4

⁷‘And who is the man who is engaged (legally promised) to a woman and has not married her? Let him go and return to his house, otherwise he might die in the battle and another man would marry her.’

8“Then the officers shall speak further to the soldiers and say, ‘Who is the man who is afraid and lacks courage? Let him go and return to his house, so that he does not cause his brothers’ courage to fail like his own.’

9“And it shall be when the officers have finished speaking to the soldiers, they shall appoint commanders of armies over them.

10“When you advance to a city to fight against it, you shall [first] offer it terms of peace.

11“If that city accepts your terms of peace and opens *its gates* to you, then all the people who are found in it shall become your forced labor and shall serve you.

12“However, if it does not make peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall lay siege to it.

13“When the LORD your God gives it into your hand, you shall strike down all the men in it with the edge of the sword.

14“Only the women and the children and the animals and everything that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as plunder for yourself; and you shall use the spoil of your enemies which the LORD your God has given you.

15“That is what you shall do to all the cities that are very far away from you, which are not among the cities of these nations nearby [which you are to dispossess].

16“Only in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not leave alive anything that breathes.

17“But you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, just as the LORD your God has commanded you,

¹⁸so that they will not teach you to act in accordance with all the detestable practices which they have done [in worship and service] for their gods, and in this way cause you to sin against the LORD your God.

¹⁹“When you besiege a city for a ^{*}long time, making war against it in order to capture it, you shall not destroy its [fruit-bearing] trees by swinging an axe against them; for you may eat from them, and you shall not cut them down. For is the tree of the field a man, that it should be besieged (destroyed) by you?

²⁰“Only the trees which you know are not fruit trees shall you destroy and cut down, so that you may build siegeworks against the city that is making war with you until it falls.

21 “IF SOMEONE is found slain, lying in the field, in the land which the LORD your God gives you to possess, and it is not known who has killed him,

²then your elders and judges shall go out and measure *the distance* to the cities which are around the dead person.

³“It shall be that the elders of the city which is nearest to the dead man shall take a heifer of the herd, one which has not been worked and which has not pulled in a yoke;

⁴and the elders of that city shall bring the heifer down to a [river] valley with running water, which has not been plowed or planted, and shall break the heifer’s neck there in the valley.

⁵“Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall approach, for the LORD your God has chosen them to serve Him and to bless in the Name (Presence) of the LORD; and every dispute and every

assault (violent crime) shall be settled by them.

⁶“All the elders of that city nearest to the dead man shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley;

⁷and they shall respond, and say, ‘Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it.

⁸‘Forgive Your people Israel whom You have redeemed, O LORD, and do not put the guilt of innocent blood among Your people Israel.’ And the guilt of blood shall be forgiven them.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Avoiding Frustration

I spent a lot of years frustrated most of the time, and thankfully, I have learned how to avoid it. Frustration is always caused from the works of the flesh—our human energy trying to do what only God can do. Once we stop trying to change things we cannot change, frustration disappears. We can either struggle on our own or trust God.

Even when we come to the point that we want to change, we cannot do it alone. For any change in behavior to last, it must come from the heart. I can muster enough discipline to change some of my behavior, but only God can change my heart from the inside out.

The Bible says that *when* God gives your enemies over to you, *then* you must utterly destroy them (see Deut. 7:2). When I first read this, I was struck by the realization that I cannot destroy my enemies of anger, selfishness, bitterness, jealousy, and many others until God gives them to me. God deals with things in our lives one at a time—if you get ahead of God, you will have no success; you will get very frustrated and

discouraged and want to give up.

The Israelites could not leave the bondage of Egypt until God's perfect time came. Joshua could not take Jericho until the exact right day. Jesus wasn't raised from the dead until the third day. Why not the first day? The simple, but often difficult, answer to receive is that it was just not the right time yet. We can believe that God is working, even when we don't see any evidence that He is. That is what faith is.

God has a perfect way, a perfect plan, and a perfect time, and He will not be rushed. All things work together for good in due time.

Faith, patience, and prayer working together accomplish great things, and we keep our peace while those things are getting done. God can do in a moment what we cannot accomplish in a lifetime!

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Wise and powerful God, I thank You that I can release my frustrations and stop trying to change what only You can change. Forgive me for struggling on and on in my own strength. Help me to rest in Your perfect plan, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

⁹“So shall you remove the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when you do what is right in the sight of the LORD.

¹⁰“When you go out to battle against your enemies, and the LORD your God hands them over to you and you lead them away captive,

¹¹and you see a beautiful woman among the captives, and desire her and would take her as your wife,

¹²then you shall bring her [home] to your house, and she shall shave her head and trim her nails [in preparation for mourning].

¹³“She shall take off the clothes of her captivity and remain in your house, and weep (mourn) for her father and her mother a full month. After that you may go in to her and be her husband and she shall be your wife.

¹⁴“But it shall be that if you have no delight *and* take no pleasure in her, then you shall let her go wherever she wishes. You certainly shall not sell her for money; you shall not deal with her as a slave *or* mistreat her, because you have humbled her [by forced marriage].

¹⁵“If a man has two wives, one loved and the other unloved, and both the loved and the unloved have born him sons, and the firstborn son belongs to the unloved *wife*,

¹⁶then on the day when he wills his possessions to his sons, he cannot treat the son of his loved wife as firstborn in place of the son of the unloved wife—the [actual] firstborn.

¹⁷“Instead he shall acknowledge the son of the unloved as the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he has,

for he was the beginning of his strength (generative power); to him belongs the right of the firstborn.

¹⁸“If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or of his mother, and when they reprimand *and* discipline him, he will not listen to them,

¹⁹then his father and mother shall take hold of him, and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his hometown.

²⁰“They shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey us, he is a glutton and a drunkard.’ [Prov 23:20–22]

²¹“Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall remove the evil from among you, and all Israel will hear of it and be afraid.

²²“And if a man has committed a sin worthy of death, and he is put to death and [afterward] you hang him on a tree [as a public example], [Josh 10:26, 27]

²³his body shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall most certainly bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is cursed by God), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance. [Gal 3:13]

22 “YOU SHALL not see your countryman’s ox or his sheep straying away *or* being stolen, and ignore [your duty to help] them; you shall certainly take them back to him. [Prov 24:12]

²“If your countryman is not nearby or you do not know him, you shall bring the animal to your house, and it shall stay

with you until he searches for it; then you shall return it to him.

³“You shall do this with his donkey or with his garment or with anything that your countryman has lost and you have found. You are not allowed to ignore [your duty to help] them.

⁴“You shall not see your countryman’s donkey or his ox fall down along the road, and ignore [your duty to help] them; you shall certainly help him lift it up.

⁵“A woman shall not wear a man’s clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman’s clothing; for whoever does these things is utterly repulsive to the LORD your God.

⁶“If you happen to come upon a bird’s nest along the road, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, and the mother [bird] is sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young.

⁷“You shall certainly let the mother go, but you may take the young for yourself, so that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days.

⁸“When you build a new house, you shall make a railing (parapet) around your [flat] roof, so that you do not bring the guilt of [innocent] blood on your house if someone falls from it.

⁹“You shall not sow your vineyard with two kinds of seed, or everything produced by the seed which you have sown and the yield of the vineyard will become defiled [and banned for use].

¹⁰“You shall not plow with an ox [a clean animal] and a donkey [an unclean animal] together. [2 Cor 6:14–16]

¹¹“You shall not wear a fabric made of wool and linen blended together [a fabric pagans believed to be magical]. [Ezek 44:18; Rev 19:8]

¹²“You shall make tassels for yourself on the four corners of your outer garment with which you cover yourself. [Num 15:37–40]

¹³“If any man takes a wife and goes in to her and then scorns *and* hates her,

¹⁴and charges her [without cause] with shameful behavior and publicly defames her, and says, ‘I took this woman, but when I approached her, I did not find in her evidence of virginity,’

¹⁵then the young woman’s father and her mother shall get and bring out the evidence of her virginity to the elders of the city at the gate [where court is held].

¹⁶“The father of the young woman shall say to the elders, ‘I gave my daughter to this man as a wife, but he hates her *and* has turned against her;

¹⁷and behold, he has made baseless charges against her, saying, “I did not find in your daughter the evidence of her virginity.” But this is the evidence of my daughter’s virginity.’ And they shall spread out the garment before the elders of the city.

¹⁸“Then the elders of that city shall take the man and reprimand him,

¹⁹and they shall fine him a hundred *shekels* of silver and give it to the father of the young woman, because he publicly defamed a virgin of Israel. And she shall remain his wife; he is not allowed to divorce her as long as he lives.

²⁰“But if this charge is true that the evidence of virginity was not found in the young woman,

²¹then they shall bring her out to the doorway of her

father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death because she has committed a deliberate sin in Israel by playing the prostitute in her father's house. So you shall remove the evil from among you.

²²“If a man is intimate with a woman who is another man's wife, they shall both be put to death, the man who lay with the woman, and the woman. So you shall remove the evil from Israel.

²³“If a young woman who is a virgin is engaged (legally betrothed) to a man, and *another* man finds her in the city and is intimate with her,

²⁴then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city and stone them to death—the young woman because she did not cry out for help [though she was] in the city, and the man because he has violated his neighbor's [promised] wife. So you shall remove the evil from among you.

²⁵“However, if the man finds the girl who is engaged (legally betrothed) in the [open] field, and seizes her and is intimate with her [by force], then only the man who lies with her shall be put to death.

²⁶“But you shall do nothing to the young woman; she has committed no sin worthy of death, for this is the same as when a man attacks his neighbor and murders him.

²⁷When he found her in the [open] field, the engaged girl [may have] cried out for help, but there was no one to [hear and] save her.

²⁸“If a man finds a girl who is a virgin, who is not engaged, and seizes her and is intimate with her and they are discovered,

²⁹then the man who was intimate with her shall give fifty

shekels of silver to the girl's father, and she shall become his wife because he has violated her; he can never divorce her.

³⁰“A man shall not take his father's [former] wife, so that he will not expose his father's wife.

23 “HE WHO has been castrated by *having his testicles* crushed or his male organ cut off shall not enter the congregation of the LORD.

²“A person of illegitimate birth shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; none of his *descendants*, even to the tenth generation.

³“An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; none of their *descendants*, even to the tenth generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the LORD,

⁴because they did not meet you with bread (food) and water on the road as you came out of Egypt, and because they hired [to act] against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you.

⁵“Nevertheless, the LORD your God was not willing to listen to Balaam, but the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you because the LORD your God has loved you.

⁶“You shall never seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days.

⁷“You shall not detest an Edomite, for he is your brother [Esau's descendant]. You shall not detest an Egyptian, because you were a stranger (resident alien, foreigner) in his land.

⁸“Their children of the third generation who are born to

them may enter the assembly of the LORD.

⁹“When you go out as an army [to fight] against your enemies, you shall keep yourselves from every evil [thing].

¹⁰“If there is any man among you who is [ceremonially] unclean because of nocturnal emission, then he must go outside the camp; he shall not come back to the camp.

¹¹“But when evening comes, he shall bathe in water, and at sundown he may return to the camp.

¹²“You shall also have a place outside the camp to which you may go,

¹³and you shall have a spade among your tools, and when you [prepare to] sit down outside [to relieve yourself], you shall dig *a hole* with it and shall turn and cover up your waste.

¹⁴“Since the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp to rescue you and to defeat your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy (undefiled); and He must not see anything indecent among you or He will turn away from you.

¹⁵“You shall not hand over to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you.

¹⁶“He shall live among you, in the place he chooses in one of your cities where it pleases him; you shall not mistreat *or* oppress him.

¹⁷“There shall be no cult prostitute among the daughters of Israel, nor shall there be a cult prostitute (a sodomite) among the sons of Israel.

¹⁸“You shall not bring the wages of a prostitute or the price of a dog [that is, a male prostitute] into the house of the LORD your God *as payment* for any vow, for both of these [the gift

and the giver] are utterly repulsive to the LORD your God.

19“‘You shall not charge interest to your fellow Israelite—interest on money, food or anything that may be loaned for interest.

20“‘You may charge interest to a foreigner, but to your fellow Israelite you shall not charge interest, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all that you undertake in the land which you are about to enter to possess.

21“‘When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it, for He will most certainly require it of you, and a delay would cause you to sin.

22“‘But if you refrain from making a vow, that would not be [counted as] sin in you.

23“‘You shall be careful to perform that [vow] which passes your lips, just as you have made a voluntary vow to the LORD your God, just as you have promised with your own words (mouth).

24“‘When you enter your neighbor’s vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes, as many as you please, but you shall not put any in your basket [to take with you].

25“‘When you come into the standing grain of your neighbor, you may pluck the ears of grain with your hand, but you shall not wield a sickle in your neighbor’s standing grain [to harvest it].

24 “WHEN A man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she loses his favor because he has found something indecent *or* unacceptable about her, and he writes

her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house,

²and after she leaves his house, she goes and becomes another man's wife,

³and if the latter husband *turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife,

⁴then her former husband who [first] sent her away may not take her again as his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an outrage before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.

⁵“When a man takes a new wife, he shall not go out [to fight] with the army nor be charged with any duty; he shall be free at home for one year and shall bring happiness to his wife whom he has taken.

⁶“No one shall take a handmill or an upper millstone [used to grind grain into bread] as security [for a debt], for he would be taking a [person's] life in pledge.

⁷“If a man is caught kidnapping any of his countrymen from the sons of Israel, and he treats him violently or sells him [as a slave], then that thief shall die. So you shall remove the evil from among you.

⁸“Be careful during an outbreak of leprosy, that you diligently observe and do according to all that the Levitical priests teach you; just as I have commanded them, so you shall be careful to do. [Lev 13:14, 15]

⁹“Remember [with thoughtful concern] what the LORD your God did to Miriam on the road as you came out of Egypt. [Num

12:10]

¹⁰“When you lend your neighbor anything, you shall not go into his house to get his pledge (security deposit).

¹¹“You shall stand outside, and the man to whom you lend shall bring the pledge out to you.

¹²“If the man is poor, you shall not keep his pledge overnight.

¹³“You shall certainly restore the pledge (security deposit) to him at sunset, so that he may sleep in his garment and bless you; and it will be credited to you as righteousness (right standing) before the LORD your God.

¹⁴“You shall not take advantage of a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether [he is] one of your countrymen or one of the strangers (resident aliens, foreigners) who is in your land inside your cities.

¹⁵“You shall give him his wages on the day that he earns them before the sun sets—for he is poor and is ^{*}counting on it—so that he does not cry out to the LORD against you, and it becomes a sin for you.

¹⁶“The fathers shall not be put to death for [the sins of] their children, nor shall the children be put to death for their fathers; [only] for his own sin shall anyone be put to death.

¹⁷“You shall not pervert the justice due a stranger or an orphan, nor seize (impound) a widow’s garment as security [for a loan].

¹⁸“But you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I am commanding you to do this thing.

¹⁹“When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf [of grain] in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, for the orphan, and for the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

²⁰“When you beat [the olives off of] your olive tree, do not search through the branches again; [whatever is left] shall be for the stranger, for the orphan, and for the widow.

²¹“When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean it afterward; it shall be for the stranger, for the orphan, and for the widow.

²²“You shall [thoughtfully] remember [the fact] that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this thing.

25 “IF THERE is a controversy between men, and they go to court, and the judges decide [the issue] between them, and they judge in favor of the innocent and condemn the guilty,

²then it shall be that if the guilty man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall make him lie down and be beaten in his presence with a [certain] number of stripes in proportion to his offense.

³“He may have him beaten forty times, but no more. He is not to be beaten with more stripes than these and he is not to be degraded [that is, treated like an animal] in your sight.

⁴“You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing [to prevent him from eating any of the grain]. [1 Cor 9:9, 10; 1 Tim 5:17, 18]

⁵“If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, the widow of the deceased shall not be *married* outside *the family* to a stranger. Her husband’s brother shall be intimate with her after taking her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her.

⁶“It shall be that her firstborn [son] will be given the name of the dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out of Israel.

⁷“But if the man does not want to marry his brother’s [widowed] wife, then she shall go up to the gate [of the city, where court is held] to the elders, and say, ‘My brother-in-law refuses to continue his brother’s name in Israel; he is not willing to perform the duty of a husband’s brother.’

⁸“Then the elders of his city will summon him and speak to him. And if he stands firm and says, ‘I do not want to marry her,’

POWERPOINT

Amalek's attack on the Israelites is a type of the method Satan uses to assault, hinder, and stop believers today. It is easy to become weary in well doing. When the enemy attacks you in times of weakness or fatigue, stir up your courage, trust God for strength, and rise up against him with the truth of God's Word.



⁹then his brother's widow shall approach him in the presence of the elders, and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face; and she shall answer and say, 'So it is done to that man who does not build up his brother's household.'

¹⁰"In Israel his [family] name shall be, 'The house of him whose sandal was removed.'

¹¹"If [two] men, a man and his countryman, are fighting and the wife of one approaches to rescue her husband from the

man who is striking him, and she reaches out with her hand and grabs the aggressor's genitals,

¹²then you shall cut off her hand; you shall not show pity [for her].

¹³“You shall not have in your bag inaccurate weights, a heavy and a light [so you can cheat others].

¹⁴“You shall not have in your house inaccurate measures, a large and a small.

¹⁵“You shall have a perfect (full) and just weight, and a perfect and just measure, so that your days may be long in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

¹⁶“For everyone who does such things, everyone who acts unjustly [without personal integrity] is utterly repulsive to the LORD your God.

¹⁷“Remember what Amalek did to you along the road when you came from Egypt,

¹⁸how he met you along the road and attacked all the stragglers at your rear when you were tired and weary; and he did not ^{*}fear God. [Ex 17:14]

¹⁹“Therefore when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance to possess, you shall wipe out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you must not forget.

26 “THEN IT shall be, when you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance, and you take

possession of it and live in it,

²that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground which you harvest from the land that the LORD your God gives you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place where the LORD your God chooses to establish His Name (Presence).

³“You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time and say to him, ‘I declare this day to the LORD my God that I have entered the land which the LORD swore to our fathers to give us.’

⁴“Then the priest will take the basket from you and place it before the altar of the LORD your God.

⁵“And you shall say before the LORD your God, ‘My father [Jacob] was a wandering Aramean, and he [along with his family] went down to Egypt and lived there [as strangers], few in number; but while there he became a great, mighty and populous nation.

⁶“And the Egyptians treated us badly and oppressed us, and imposed hard labor on us.

⁷“Then we cried out to the LORD, the God of our fathers for help, and He heard our voice and saw our suffering and our labor and our [cruel] oppression;

⁸and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with great terror [suffered by the Egyptians] and with signs and with wonders;

⁹and He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

¹⁰“And now, look, I have brought the first of the produce of

the ground which You, O LORD, have given me.’ And you shall place it before the LORD your God, and shall worship before the LORD your God;

¹¹and you and the Levite and the stranger (resident alien, foreigner) among you shall rejoice in all the good which the LORD your God has given you and your household.

¹²“When you have finished paying all the tithe of your produce the third year, [which is] the year of tithing, then you shall give it to the Levite, to the stranger, to the orphan, and to the widow, so that they may eat within the gates of your cities and be satisfied.

¹³“You shall say before the LORD your God, ‘I have removed the sacred *portion* (the tithe) from my house and also have given it to the Levite, to the stranger, to the orphan, and to the widow, in accordance with all that You have commanded me. I have not transgressed or forgotten any of Your commandments.

¹⁴‘I have not eaten from the tithe while mourning, nor have I removed any of it when I was [ceremonially] unclean [making the tithe ceremonially unclean], nor offered any of it to the dead. I have listened to the voice of the LORD my God; I have done *everything* in accordance with all that You have commanded me.

¹⁵‘Look down from Your holy dwelling above, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel, and the land which You have given us, as You have sworn to our fathers, a land [of plenty] flowing with milk and honey.’

¹⁶“This day the LORD your God commands you to do these statutes and judgments (precepts). Therefore, you shall be

careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul (your entire being).

¹⁷“Today you have [openly] declared the LORD to be your God, and that you will walk [that is, live each and every day] in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments, and His judgments (precepts), and listen to His voice.

Speak God's Word

*I openly declare that the Lord
is my God, and that I will
walk in His ways, keep His
commandments, and listen to
His voice.*

| adapted from DEUTERONOMY
26:17 |

¹⁸“Today the LORD has declared that you are His people, His treasured possession, just as He promised you, and that you are to keep all His commandments;

¹⁹and that He will set you high above all the nations which He has made, for praise, fame, and honor: and that you shall be a holy people [set apart and consecrated] to the LORD your God, just as He has spoken.”

27 THEN MOSES and the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying, “Keep (remember, obey) all the commandments which I am commanding you today.

²“So it shall be on the day when you cross the Jordan to [enter] the land which the LORD your God gives you, that you

shall set up for yourself large stones and coat them with plaster (lime, whitewash).

³“You shall write on the stones all the words of this law when you cross over, so that you may go into the land which the LORD your God gives you, a land [of plenty] flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers has promised you.

⁴“Now when you cross the Jordan you shall set up these stones on Mount Ebal, just as I am commanding you today and coat them with plaster.

⁵“There you shall build an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones; you shall not use an iron tool on them.

⁶“You shall build the altar of the LORD your God with whole [uncut] stones, and offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God;

⁷and you shall sacrifice peace offerings and shall eat there, and shall rejoice before the LORD your God.

⁸“And you shall write very clearly on the stones all the words of this law.”

⁹Then Moses and the Levitical priests said to all Israel, “Be silent and listen, O Israel! This day you have become a people for the LORD your God.

¹⁰“So you shall obey the voice of the LORD your God, and do His commandments and statutes which I am commanding you today.”

¹¹Moses also commanded the people that day, saying,

¹²“These [tribes] shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people when you have crossed the Jordan: Simeon, Levi,

Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin.

POWERPOINT

Deuteronomy 27:10 talks about obeying the voice and the commandments of the Lord. We do this by attending to God's Word—meditating on it, pondering it, writing it on the tablets of our hearts, and rehearsing it in our thinking. The basic idea is that if we want to do what God's Word says, we must spend time thinking about it. The old saying, "Practice makes perfect" is true. We really do not expect to be experts at anything in life without a lot of practice, and the same principle applies to our walk with God.



¹³“These [tribes] shall stand on Mount Ebal to *pronounce* the curse [for disobedience]: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.

14“‘The Levites shall answer with a loud voice to all the men of Israel:

15‘Cursed is the man who makes a carved or cast image (idol), a repulsive thing to the LORD, the work of the hands of the artisan, and sets it up in secret.’ All the people shall answer and say, ‘Amen.’

16‘Cursed is he who dishonors (treats with contempt) his father or his mother.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

17‘Cursed is he who moves his neighbor’s boundary mark.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

18‘Cursed is he who misleads a blind person on the road.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

19‘Cursed is he who distorts (perverts) the justice due to a stranger, an orphan, and a widow.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

20‘Cursed is he who is intimate with his father’s [former] wife, because he has violated what belongs to his father.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

21‘Cursed is he who is intimate with any animal.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

22‘Cursed is he who is intimate with his [half] sister, whether his father’s or his mother’s daughter.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

23‘Cursed is he who is intimate with his mother-in-law.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

24‘Cursed is he who strikes his neighbor in secret.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

25‘Cursed is he who accepts a bribe to strike down an

innocent person.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

²⁶‘Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them [keeping them, taking them to heart as the rule of his life].’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

28 “NOW IT shall be, if you diligently listen to *and* obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all of His commandments which I am commanding you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth.

²“All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you pay attention to the voice of the LORD your God.

³“You *will be* blessed in the city, and you *will be* blessed in the field.

POWERPOINT

Deuteronomy 28 provides details about the blessings we can expect if we obey the Lord and the problems that will arise when we do not obey Him. This teaches us that God definitely has a good plan for our lives; He wants us to experience His blessings. Just as God wants us to obey Him and live in His blessings, the enemy wants us to disregard and disobey God and to live with the unpleasant consequences of that disobedience. The choice is ours.



KEYS to a Victorious Life

Agree with God

The battles of the mind often intensify when we feel stressed. When we are under pressure, we don't always think as clearly as we normally do and the enemy takes advantage of that. So not only does God have a plan for your life, the enemy also has a plan for you. God wants you to agree with His plan, and Satan wants you to agree with his because the Bible says when people come into agreement, power increases (see Matt. 18:19).

When the enemy tries to tell you that you don't have any future or you've made too many mistakes, you need to say, "God is the God of a second chance. I not only have a future, but I've got a good future. God is going to do great things in my life." If the enemy can get you to agree with him, you will have what he wants you to have; but if you stay in agreement with God, He will establish you as His own and be your God and you will receive what He wants you to have (see Deut. 29:1-13). Who are you going to agree with?

⁴"The offspring of your body and the produce of your ground and the offspring of your animals, the offspring of your herd and the young of your flock *will be blessed*.

⁵"Your basket and your kneading bowl *will be blessed*.

⁶"You *will be blessed* when you come in and you *will be*

blessed when you go out.

⁷“The LORD will cause the enemies who rise up against you to be defeated before you; they will come out against you one way, but flee before you seven ways.

⁸“The LORD will command the blessing upon you in your storehouses and in all that you undertake, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

⁹“The LORD will establish you as a people holy [and set apart] to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk [that is, live your life each and every day] in His ways.

¹⁰“So all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will be afraid of you.

¹¹“The LORD will give you great prosperity, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your livestock and the produce of your ground, in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you.

¹²“The LORD will open for you His good treasure house, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand; and you will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow.

¹³“The LORD will make you the head (leader) and not the tail (follower); and you will be above only, and you will not be beneath, if you listen *and* pay attention to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I am commanding you today, to observe them carefully.

¹⁴“Do not turn aside from any of the words which I am commanding you today, to the right or to the left, to follow and serve other gods.

¹⁵“But it shall come about, if you do not listen to *and* obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today, then all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:

¹⁶“You *will be* cursed in the city and cursed in the field.

Speak God's Word

I am the head and not the tail; and I will be above only, not beneath, because I listen and pay attention to the commandments of the Lord and observe them carefully.

| adapted from DEUTERONOMY
28:13 |

¹⁷“Your basket and your kneading bowl *will be* cursed.

¹⁸“The offspring of your body and the produce of your land, the offspring of your herd and the young of your flock *will be* cursed.

¹⁹“You *will be* cursed when you come in and you *will be* cursed when you go out.

²⁰“The LORD will send upon you curses, confusion, and rebuke in everything that you undertake to do, until you are destroyed, perishing quickly because of the evil of your deeds, because you have turned away from Me.

²¹“The LORD will make the pestilence *and* plague cling to you until He has consumed *and* eliminated you from the land which you are entering to possess.

22“‘The LORD will strike you with consumption [causing you to waste away] and with fever and with inflammation and with fiery heat and with the sword and with blight and with mildew [on your crops]; and they will pursue you until you perish.

23“‘The heaven which is over your head shall be bronze [giving no rain and blocking all prayers], and the earth which is under you, iron [hard to plow and yielding no produce].

24“‘The LORD will make the rain of your land powder and dust; from heaven it will come down on you until you are destroyed.

25“‘The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you will go out against them one way, but flee before them seven ways, and you will be *an example of* terror to all the kingdoms of the earth [when they see your destruction]. [2 Chr 29:8]

26“‘Your carcasses will be food for all the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth, and there will be no one to frighten them away.

27“‘The LORD will strike you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors and with the scab and the itch that you cannot heal.

28“‘The LORD will strike you with madness and with blindness and with bewilderment of heart *and* mind;

29and you will be groping at noon [in broad daylight], just as the blind grope in the darkness, and nothing you do will prosper; but you will only be oppressed *and* exploited and robbed continually, with no one to save you.

30“‘You will be pledged to marry a wife, but another man will

be intimate with her [before you]; you will build a house, but you will not live in it; you will plant a vineyard, but you will not use its fruit.

³¹“Your ox will be slaughtered before your eyes, but you will not eat any of it; your donkey will be torn away from you, and it will not be returned to you; your sheep will be given to your enemies, and you will have no one to save you.

³²“Your sons and daughters will be given to another people, while your eyes look on and long for them continually; but there will be nothing you can do. [2 Chr 29:9]

³³“A people whom you do not know will eat the produce of your land and all the products of your labors, and you will never be anything but oppressed *and* exploited and crushed continually. [Judg 6:1–6; 13:1]

³⁴You shall be driven mad by the sight of the things you see.

³⁵“The LORD will strike you on the knees and on the legs with sore boils that you cannot heal, from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head.

³⁶“The LORD will bring you and your king, whom you appoint over you, to a nation which you and your fathers have never known; there you will [be forced to] serve other gods, [lifeless gods of] wood and stone. [2 Kin 17:4, 6; 24:12, 14; 25:7, 11; Dan 6:11, 12]

³⁷“And you will become a horror, a proverb [a mere object lesson], and a taunt [a derisive joke] among all the people to which the LORD drives you.

³⁸“You will bring out a great quantity of seed to the field, but you will gather in little, because the locusts will consume it.

[Hag 1:6]

³⁹“You will plant vineyards and cultivate them, but you will not drink the wine or gather *the grapes*, because the worm will eat them.

⁴⁰“You will have olive trees throughout your territory but you will not anoint yourselves with the oil, because your olives will drop off.

⁴¹“You will have sons and daughters, but they will not be yours [for long], because they will go into captivity. [Lam 1:5]

⁴²“The cricket will take possession of all your trees and the produce of your ground. [Joel 1:4]

⁴³“The stranger who lives among you will rise above you higher and higher, and you will go down lower and lower.

⁴⁴“He will lend to you [out of his affluence], but you will not lend to him [because of your poverty]; he will be the head, and you the tail.

⁴⁵“So all these curses will come on you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God by keeping His commandments and His statutes which He has commanded you.

⁴⁶“They will be a sign and a wonder to you and your descendants forever.

⁴⁷“Because you did not serve the LORD your God with a heart full of joy and gladness for the abundance of all things [with which He blessed you],

⁴⁸you will therefore serve your enemies whom the LORD sends against you, in hunger and in thirst, in nakedness and in lack of all things; and He will put an iron yoke [of slavery] on

your neck until He has destroyed you.

⁴⁹“The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, [as swift] as the eagle swoops down [to attack], a nation whose language you will not understand,

⁵⁰a defiant nation who will have no respect for the old, nor show favor to the young,

⁵¹and it will eat the offspring of your herd and the produce of your ground until you are destroyed, who will leave you no grain, new wine, or oil, nor the offspring of your herd or the young of your flock until they have caused you to perish.

⁵²“They will besiege you in all your cities until your high and fortified walls in which you trusted come down throughout your land; and they will besiege you in all your cities throughout your land which the LORD your God has given you.

⁵³“Then you will eat the offspring of your own body [to avoid starvation], the flesh of your sons and daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, during the siege and the misery by which your enemy will oppress you. [2 Kin 6:24–29]

⁵⁴“The man who is most refined and well-bred among you will be cruel *and* hostile toward his brother and toward the wife he cherishes and toward the rest of his children who remain,

⁵⁵so that he will not give *even* one of them any of the flesh of his children which he will eat, because he has nothing else left, during the siege and the misery by which your enemy will oppress you in all your cities.

⁵⁶“The most refined and well-bred woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground because she is so delicate and pampered, will be cruel *and* hostile toward the husband she cherishes and toward her son

and daughter,

⁵⁷and toward her afterbirth that comes from between her legs and toward the children whom she bears; for she will eat them secretly for lack of anything else, during the siege and the misery by which your enemy will oppress you in your cities.

⁵⁸“If you are not careful to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, to fear *and* honor with reverence this glorious and awesome name, the LORD your God,

⁵⁹then the LORD will bring extraordinary plagues on you and your descendants, even severe and lasting plagues, and miserable and chronic sicknesses.

⁶⁰“Moreover, He will bring on you all the diseases of Egypt of which you were afraid, and they will cling to you.

⁶¹“Also the LORD will bring on you every sickness and every plague which is not written in this book of this law, until you are destroyed.

⁶²“Because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God, you who were as numerous as the stars of heaven shall be left few in number.

⁶³“It shall come about that just as the LORD delighted over you to make you prosper and multiply, so the LORD will delight over you to bring you to ruin and destruction; and you will be uprooted [violently] from the land which you are entering to possess.

⁶⁴“And the LORD will scatter you among all the nations, from one end of the earth to the other; and there you will [be forced to] serve other gods, [lifeless gods of] wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. [Dan 3:6]

⁶⁵“Among those nations you will find no peace (rest), and

there will be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and a despairing soul.

⁶⁶“Your life will hang in doubt before you; night and day you will be filled with anxiety and have no assurance of living.

⁶⁷“In the morning you will say, ‘I wish it were evening!’ and in the evening you will say, ‘I wish it were morning!’—because of the dread in your heart with which you tremble, and because of the sight of your eyes which you will see.

⁶⁸“The LORD will bring you back to Egypt in ships, by the way about which I said to you, ‘You will never see it again!’ And there you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no one to buy you. [Hos 8:13]

29 THESE ARE the words of the covenant which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the sons of Israel in the land of Moab, in addition to the covenant which He made with them at Horeb (Sinai).

²Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, “You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, to all his servants, and to all his land;

³the great trials [of Pharaoh] which your eyes have seen, the signs and those great wonders.

⁴“Yet to this day the LORD has not given you a heart *and* mind to understand, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear.

⁵“I have led you in the wilderness forty years; your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn

out on your feet.

⁶“You have not eaten bread, nor have you drunk wine or strong drink, so that you might know that I am the LORD your God [on whom you must depend].

⁷“When you reached this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon and Og the king of Bashan came out to meet us in battle, but we defeated them;

⁸and we took their land and gave it as an inheritance to the tribe of Reuben, the tribe of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

⁹“So keep the words of this covenant and obey them, so that you may prosper *and* be successful in everything that you do.

¹⁰“All of you stand today before the LORD your God—your chiefs, your tribes, your elders and your officers, *even* all the men of Israel,

¹¹your little ones, your wives, and the stranger (resident alien, foreigner) who is in your camps, from the one who chops *and* gathers your firewood to the one who draws your water—

¹²so that you may enter into the covenant of the LORD your God, and into His oath *and* agreement which the LORD your God is making with you today,

¹³so that He may establish you today as His people and that He may be your God, just as He spoke to you and as He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

¹⁴“It is not with you alone that I am making this covenant and this oath,

¹⁵but with those [future Israelites] who are not here with us today, as well as with those who stand here with us today in

the presence of the LORD our God

¹⁶(for you know how we lived in the land of Egypt, and how we passed through the nations along the way;

¹⁷and you have seen their detestable acts and their [repulsive] idols of wood and stone, [lifeless images] of silver and gold, which *they had* with them),

¹⁸so that there will not be among you a man or woman, or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the LORD our God, to go and serve the [false] gods of these nations; so that there will not be among you a root [of idolatry] bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood (bitterness).

¹⁹“It will happen that when he (a renegade) hears the words of this oath, and he imagines himself as blessed, saying, ‘I will have peace *and* safety even though I walk within the stubbornness of my heart [rejecting God and His law], in order that the watered *land* dwindles away along with the dry [destroying everything],’

²⁰the LORD will not be willing to forgive him, but then the anger of the LORD and His jealousy will burn against that man, and every curse which is written in this book will rest on him; the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven.

²¹“Then the LORD will single him out for disaster from all the tribes of Israel [making an example of him], according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this Book of the Law.

²²“Now the next generation, your children who come after you and the foreigner who comes from a distant land, when they see the plagues of this land and the diseases with which the LORD has afflicted it, will say,

²³‘The whole land is brimstone and salt, a burning waste, unsown and unproductive, and no grass grows in it; it is like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the LORD overthrew in His anger and wrath.’

²⁴“All the nations will say, ‘Why has the LORD done this thing to this land? Why this great outburst of anger?’

²⁵“Then *people* will say, ‘It is because they abandoned (broke) the covenant of the LORD, the God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt.

²⁶‘For they went and served other gods and worshiped them, [false] gods whom they have not known and whom He had not allotted (given) to them.

²⁷‘So the anger of the LORD burned against this land, bringing on it every curse that is written in this book;

²⁸and the LORD uprooted them from their land in anger and in wrath and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is this day.’

²⁹“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things which are revealed *and* disclosed belong to us and to our children forever, so that we may do all of the words of this law.

30 “SO IT shall be when all these things have come on you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you,

²and you have returned to the LORD your God and have listened to *and* obeyed His voice with all your heart and with all your soul, in accordance with everything that I am commanding you today, you and your children,

³then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes [in your return from exile], and have compassion on you, and will gather you together again from all the peoples (nations) where He has scattered you.

⁴“Even if any of your dispersed are at the ends of the earth, the LORD your God will gather you together from there, and from there He will bring you back.

⁵“The LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you will take possession of it; and He shall make you prosper and multiply—even more than your fathers.

⁶“And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the hearts of your descendants [that is, He will remove the desire to sin from your heart], so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and all your soul, so that you may live [as a recipient of His blessing].

⁷“The LORD your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who have persecuted you.

⁸“And you shall again listen to *and* obey the voice of the LORD, and do all His commandments which I command you today.

⁹“Then the LORD your God shall make you abundantly prosperous in everything that you do, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your cattle and in the produce of

your land; for the LORD will again delight over you for good, just as He delighted over your fathers,

¹⁰if you listen to *and* obey the voice of the LORD your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this Book of the Law, and if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul (your entire being).

¹¹“For this commandment which I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



I thank You, Lord, that Your Word is very near to me, in my mouth and in my heart so that I may obey it.

• adapted from Deuteronomy
30:14

POWERPOINT

In Deuteronomy 30:19, the Lord told His people that He set before them life and death and told them to *choose* life. You and I will have many choices to make throughout our lives.

Once we decide to be like-minded with God, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we will then need to *choose* and *continue to choose* right thoughts that line up with His Word and His will for our lives. Our thoughts become our words, and our words become our actions, so it is vitally important that we *choose* life-generating thoughts. When we do, we will begin to enjoy the life God wants us to live.



¹²“It is not [a secret hidden] in heaven, that you should

say, ‘Who will go up to heaven for us and bring it to us, so that we may hear it and obey it?’

¹³“Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will cross the sea for us and bring it to us, so that we may hear it and obey it?’

¹⁴“But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, so that you may obey it.

¹⁵“Listen closely, I have set before you today life and prosperity (good), and death and adversity (evil);

¹⁶in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk [that is, to live each and every day] in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments (precepts), so that you will live and multiply, and that the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you are entering to possess.

¹⁷“But if your heart turns away and you will not hear *and* obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them,

¹⁸I declare to you today that you will certainly perish. You will not live long in the land which you cross the Jordan to enter and possess.

¹⁹“I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore, you shall choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants,

²⁰by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding closely to Him; for He is your life [your good life, your abundant life, your fulfillment] and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD promised

(swore) to give to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

31 SO MOSES went and spoke these words to all Israel.

²And he said to them, “I am a hundred and twenty years old today; I am no longer able to come in and go out [as your spiritual and military leader], and the LORD has said to me, ‘You shall not cross this Jordan.’”

³“It is the LORD your God who will cross ahead of you; He will destroy these nations before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua is the one who will go across before you [to lead you], just as the LORD has said.

⁴“The LORD will do to them just as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, and to their land, when He destroyed them.

⁵“The LORD will hand them over to you, and you shall do to them in accordance with all the commandments which I have commanded you.

⁶“Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble in dread before them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not fail you or abandon you.”

⁷Then Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all [the people of] Israel, “Be strong and courageous, for you will go with this people into the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you will give it to them as an inheritance.

Speak God's Word

*I am strong and courageous;
I am not afraid, for it is the
Lord my God who goes with
me. He will not fail me or
abandon me.*

| *adapted from* DEUTERONOMY
31:6 |

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Take Responsibility for Your Thinking

Over a six-year period, a young man named Nathan was fired from four jobs. He was also unable to keep friends. He was difficult to get along with, complained frequently, and seemed to darken any atmosphere within a few minutes. “Life threw me under the bus” was a favorite self-pitying statement of his. He blamed his parents, teachers, and peers for his lot in life.

The truth was that Nathan was fired from his jobs because he was a very negative-thinking person. He also felt entitled and thought he deserved better treatment than others without doing his part to deserve it. Unfortunately, this process will repeat itself again and again unless he is willing to stop blaming others for his problems and take responsibility for the changes he needs to make.

Although we do not always have the power to change every unpleasant circumstance, we do have the power to change our outlook. We can look out at life from our inmost

being with our hearts filled with positive thoughts and attitudes, or we can allow the events of life to shape our thoughts and attitudes. This is a decision only we can make.

In Deuteronomy 30:19, God says: “I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore, you shall choose life in order that you may live.”

Life offers us blessings and curses, good and evil, and it is our responsibility to choose the good if that is what we want to have. This is what it means to be free! We have free choice, but we should also realize that each choice brings a consequence, and we cannot have one without the other. No matter what happened in your life prior to your being able to make your own choices, the fact is that if you make good choices, the results of those choices will ultimately overturn anything bad that has taken place previously. We can overcome evil with good (see Rom. 12:21). Through strong faith in God and good choices, we can turn our lives around for the greater good.

God offers each of us an opportunity to have a good life. His promises are for all who will believe! We all believe something; why not make it something good?

APRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord God of heaven, I thank You for setting before me life and blessing. I choose life today, and I believe that You are working good for me as I make good choices and obey Your voice. Thank You for Your abundant promises in Jesus' name. Amen.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, for going
before me in every situation
and for being with me. I know
that You will not fail me or
abandon me. I will not fear or
be dismayed.*

• adapted from Deuteronomy 31:8

⁸“It is the LORD who goes before you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or abandon you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”

⁹So Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel.

¹⁰Then Moses commanded them, saying, “At the end of *every* seven years, at the time of year when debts are forgiven, at the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles),

¹¹when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God

in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all [the people of] Israel so that they may hear.

¹²“Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the stranger (resident alien, foreigner) within your cities, so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God [with awe-filled reverence and profound respect], and be careful to obey all the words of this law.

¹³“Their children, who have not known [the law], will hear and learn to fear [and worship] the LORD your God, as long as you live in the land which you are crossing the Jordan to possess.”

¹⁴Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, the time for you to die is near; call Joshua, and present yourselves at the Tent of Meeting, so that I may commission him.” So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves at the Tent of Meeting.

¹⁵Then the LORD appeared in the tent in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood beside the doorway of the tent.

¹⁶The LORD said to Moses, “Behold, you are about to lie down [in death] with your fathers; and this people will arise and play the prostitute (commit apostasy) with the foreign gods [of the people] of the land, where they go to be among them. They will abandon (turn away from) Me and break My covenant which I have made with them.

¹⁷“Then My anger will be kindled *and* burn against them in that day, and I will abandon (turn away from) them and hide My face from them. They will be devoured, and many evils and troubles will come on them, so that they will say in that day, ‘Is it not because our God is not among us that these evils have come on us?’

¹⁸“But I will certainly hide My face [from them] in that day because of all the evil which they will do, for they will turn to other gods [to worship lifeless idols, to honor handmade relics].

¹⁹“Now then, write this song for yourselves, and teach it to the sons of Israel; put it in their mouth, so that this song may be a witness for Me against the sons of Israel.

²⁰“For when I bring them into the land which I have sworn to their fathers, a land [of plenty] flowing with milk and honey, and they have eaten and are satisfied and become prosperous, then they will turn to other gods and serve them, and despise *and* reject Me and break My covenant.

²¹“Then it shall come about, when many evils and troubles have come on them, that this [sacred] song will confront them as a witness; for it will not be forgotten from the mouth of their descendants. For I know their inclination which is developing even now, before I bring them into the land which I have sworn *to give them.*”

²²So Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the children of Israel. [Deut 32:1–43]

²³Then He commanded *and* commissioned Joshua, the son of Nun, and said, “Be strong and courageous, for you will bring the sons of Israel into the land which I have sworn to give them, and I will be with you.”

²⁴And when Moses completely finished writing the words of this law in a book,

²⁵he commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying,

²⁶“Take this Book of the Law and put it beside the ark of

the covenant of the LORD your God, so that it may remain there as a witness against you.

27“For I know your rebellion *and* contention and your stubbornness; behold, while I am still alive with you today, you have been rebellious against the LORD; how much more, then, after my death?

28“Assemble before me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, so that I may speak these words in their hearing and call heaven and earth as witnesses against them.

29“For I know that after my death you will behave corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will come upon you in the latter days, because you will do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands.”

30Then Moses spoke in the hearing of all the congregation of Israel the words of this song, until they were ended:

32 “LISTEN, O heavens, and I will speak;

And let the earth hear the words of my mouth.

2“Let my teaching drop as the rain,

My speech distill as the dew,

As the light rain upon the tender grass,

And as the spring showers upon the herb.

3“For I proclaim the name [and presence] of the LORD;

Ascribe greatness *and* honor to our God!

4“The Rock! His work is perfect,

For all His ways are just;

A God of faithfulness without iniquity (injustice),
Just and upright is He.

⁵“They (Israel) have acted corruptly toward Him.
They are not His children, because of their [moral] defect;
But are a perverse and crooked generation.

⁶“Do you thus repay the LORD,
O foolish and unwise people?
Is not He your Father who has acquired you [as His own]?
He has made you and established you [as a nation].

⁷“Remember the days of old,
Consider the years of many generations.
Ask your father, and he will inform you,
Your elders, and they will tell you.

⁸“When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance,
When He separated the sons of man,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Trust God's Faithfulness

Moses could look back over his life experiences and sing, "The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness without iniquity (injustice), just and upright is He" (Deut. 32:4). Life wasn't always fair to Moses, and isn't always fair to us, but God is faithful. He heals the wounds of the brokenhearted; He provides for those in need, and He helps us in every way. We may not know why things happen the way they do, but we can know God. We can know His love, forgiveness, and mercy.

When we are sad and emotionally distraught, one of the very simple yet profound things that helps is this: Focus on and be thankful for the good things you do have rather than dwelling on the injustices you've suffered. You might think, I've heard that a thousand times! But are you doing it? Knowledge without action doesn't produce the same results we get when we do act on what we know. Trust God's love for you and His faithfulness in your life, and choose to be thankful!

He set the boundaries of the peoples

According to the number of the sons of Israel.

⁹"For the LORD's portion *and* chosen share is His people;
Jacob (Israel) is the allotment of His inheritance.

¹⁰"He found him in a desert land,

- In the howling wasteland of a wilderness;
He kept circling him, He took care of him,
He protected him as the apple of His eye.
- ¹¹“As an eagle that protects its nest,
That flutters over its young,
He spread out His wings and took them,
He carried them on His pinions. [Luke 13:34]
- ¹²“So the LORD alone led him;
There was no foreign god with him.
- ¹³“He made him (Israel) ride on the high places of the earth,
And he ate the produce of the field;
And He made him suck honey from the rock,
And [olive] oil from the flinty rock,
- ¹⁴Butter *and* curds of cows, and milk of the flock,
With fat of lambs,
And rams, the breed of Bashan, and goats,
With the finest of the wheat;
And you drank wine, the blood of grapes.
- ¹⁵“But Jeshurun (Israel) became fat and kicked [at God].
You became fat, thick, sleek, *and* obstinate!
Then he abandoned God who had made him,
And scorned the Rock of his salvation.
- ¹⁶“They provoked Him to jealousy with strange *gods* [by
denying Him the honor and loyalty that is rightfully and
uniquely His];
And with repulsive acts they provoked Him to anger.
- ¹⁷“They sacrificed to demons, not to God,

To gods whom they have not known,
New *gods* who came lately,
Whom your fathers never feared.

18“You were unmindful of the Rock who bore you,
And you forgot the God who gave you birth.

19“The LORD saw it, and rejected them,
Out of indignation with His sons and His daughters.

20“Then He said, ‘I will hide My face from them,
I will see what their end *shall be*;
For they are a perverse generation,
Sons in whom there is no faithfulness.

21‘They have made Me jealous with what is not God;
They have provoked Me to anger with their idols.
So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people;
I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.

22‘For a fire is kindled by My anger,
And it burns to the depths of Sheol (the place of the dead,
the nether world),
It devours the earth with its yield,
And sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.

23‘I will heap misfortunes on them;
I will use My arrows on them.

24‘They will be wasted by hunger, and consumed by plague
And a bitter destruction;
And I will send the teeth of beasts against them,
With the venom of crawling things of the dust.

25‘Outside the sword will bereave,

And inside [the chambers] terror—
For both young man and virgin,
For the nursing child and the man of gray hair.

26“ I would have said, “I will cut them to pieces [scattering
them far away],

I will remove the memory of them from men,”

27Had I not feared the provocation of the enemy,
That their adversaries would misjudge,
That they would say, “Our [own] hand has prevailed,
And the LORD has not done all this.” ’

28“For they are a nation devoid of counsel,
And there is no understanding in them.

29“O that they were wise, that they understood this,
That they could discern their future *and* ultimate fate!

30“How could one chase a thousand,
And two put ten thousand to flight,
Unless their Rock had sold them,
And the LORD had given them up?

31“For their rock is not like our Rock,
Even our enemies themselves judge this.

32“For their vine is from the vine of Sodom,
And from the fields of Gomorrah;
Their grapes are grapes of poison,
Their clusters, bitter.

33“Their wine is the venom of serpents,
And the deadly poison of vipers.

- 34‘Is it not laid up in store with Me,
Sealed up in My treasuries?
- 35‘Vengeance is Mine, and retribution,
In due time their foot will slip;
For the day of their disaster is at hand,
And their doom hurries to meet them.’
- 36‘For the LORD will vindicate His people,
And will have compassion on His servants,
When He sees that their strength (hand) is gone,
And none remains, whether bond or free.
- 37‘And He will say, ‘Where are their gods,
The rock in which they took refuge?
- 38‘Who ate the fat of their sacrifices,
And drank the wine of their drink offering?
Let them rise up and help you,
Let them be your hiding place!
- 39‘See now that I, I am He,
And there is no god besides Me;
It is I who put to death and I who give life.
I have wounded and it is I who heal,
And there is no one who can deliver from [the power of] My
hand.
- 40‘Indeed, I lift up My hand to heaven,
And say (swear an oath), as I live forever,
- 41‘If I sharpen the lightning of My sword,
And My hand takes hold of judgment,
I will render vengeance on My adversaries,

And I will repay those who hate Me.

42‘I will make My arrows drunk with blood,
And My sword will devour flesh,
With the blood of the slain and the captives,
From the heads of the leaders of the enemy.’

43“Rejoice, O nations, with His people;
For He will avenge the blood of His servants,
And will render vengeance on His adversaries,
And will atone for His land *and* His people.”

44Then Moses came and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people, he and Joshua the son of Nun.

45When Moses had finished speaking all these words to all [the people of] Israel,

46he said to them, “Take to heart all the words of warning which I am speaking to you today; and you shall command your children to observe them carefully—to do all the words of this law.

47“For it is not an empty *or* trivial matter for you; indeed it is your [very] life. By [honoring and obeying] this word you will live long in the land, which you are crossing the Jordan to possess.”

48And the LORD said to Moses that very same day,

49“Go up to this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab opposite Jericho, and look at the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the sons of Israel as a possession.

50“Then die on the mountain which you climb, and be gathered to your people [in death], just as Aaron your brother

died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people,

⁵¹because you broke faith with Me among of the sons of Israel at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, in the Wilderness of Zin, and because you did not treat Me as holy among of the sons of Israel. [Num 20:8–12; 27:14]

⁵²“For you shall see the land opposite you from a distance, but you shall not go there, into the land which I am giving to the children of Israel.”

33 THIS IS the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the sons of Israel before his death.

²He said,

“The LORD came from Sinai,
And dawned on them from Seir;
He shone forth from Mount Paran,
And He came from among ten thousand holy ones;
At His right hand was a flaming fire, a law, for them.

³“Indeed, He loves His people;
All Your holy ones are in Your hand.
They followed in Your steps;
They accept *and* receive direction from You.

⁴“Moses commanded us with a law,
As a possession for the assembly of Jacob.

⁵“The LORD was King in Jeshurun (Israel),
When the heads of the people were gathered,
The tribes of Israel together.

⁶“May [the tribe of] Reuben live and not die out,
But let his men be few.”

⁷And [Moses said] this of Judah:

“Hear, O LORD, the voice of Judah,
And bring him to his people.
With his hands he contended for them,
And may You be a help against his enemies.”

⁸Of Levi he said,

“Your Thummim and Your Urim belong to Your godly man
[Aaron],
Whom You tested *and* proved at Massah,
With whom You contended at the waters of Meribah; [Num
20:1–13]

⁹Who said of his father and mother,

‘I did not consider them’;
Nor did he acknowledge his brothers,
Nor did he regard his own sons,
For the priests observed Your word,
And kept Your covenant.

¹⁰“The priests shall teach Your ordinances (judgments) to
Jacob,

And Your law to Israel.
They shall put incense before You,
And whole burnt offerings on Your altar.

¹¹“O LORD, bless Levi’s substance (ability),

And accept *and* take pleasure in the work of his hands;

Crush *and* shatter the loins of those who rise up against him,
And of those who hate him, so that they do not rise *again*.”

¹²Of Benjamin he said,

“May the beloved of the LORD dwell in safety by Him;
He shields *and* covers him all the day long,
And he dwells between His shoulders.”

¹³And of Joseph he said,

“Blessed by the LORD be his land,
With the precious things of heaven, with the dew,
And from the deep *water* that lies beneath,

¹⁴With the precious fruits of the sun,
And with the precious produce of the months.

¹⁵“With the best things of the ancient mountains,
And with the precious things of the everlasting hills,

¹⁶With the precious things of the earth and its fullness,
And the favor *and* goodwill of Him who dwelt in the bush.
Let *these blessings* come upon the head of Joseph,
And upon the crown of the head of him who was
distinguished [as a prince] among his brothers. [Ex 3:4]

¹⁷“His majesty is like a firstborn young bull,
And his horns like the horns of the wild ox;
With them he will gore the peoples,
All of them together, to the ends of the earth.
And those are the ten thousands of Ephraim,
And those are the thousands of Manasseh.”

¹⁸Of Zebulun he said,

“Rejoice, Zebulun, in your interests abroad,
And, Issachar, in your tents [at home].

¹⁹“They will call the peoples to the mountain (Mount Carmel);
There they will offer sacrifices of righteousness;
For they will draw out the abundance of the seas,
And the hidden treasures of the sand.”

²⁰Of Gad he said,

“Blessed is the one who enlarges Gad;
He lurks like a lioness,
And tears the arm and the crown of the head.

²¹“He selected the best [land] for himself,
For there the leader’s portion was reserved;
Yet he came with the leaders of the people;
He carried out the justice (righteous will) of the LORD,
And His ordinances (judgments) with Israel.” [Num 32:29–
33]

²²Of Dan he said,

“Dan is a lion’s cub,
That leaps forth from Bashan.”

²³Of Naphtali he said,

“O Naphtali, satisfied with favor,
And full of the blessing of the LORD,
Take possession of the sea [of Galilee] and the south.”

²⁴Of Asher he said,

“More blessed than sons is Asher;
May he be favored by his brothers,
And may he dip his foot in oil.

POWERPOINT

No matter what your
circumstances, remember that
there is no one like our God,
Who comes to your help. He
comes to where you are and
with His loving arms lifts you
up and drives out the enemy
before you. As you lean on the
arm of the Lord, you will
experience His presence and
His victory.



Speak God's Word

*The eternal God is my refuge
and dwelling place, and
underneath are the
everlasting arms.*

| *adapted from* DEUTERONOMY
33:27 |

- 25“Your strongholds will be iron and bronze,
And as your days are, so will your strength, your rest *and*
security be.
- 26“There is none like the God of Jeshurun (Israel),
Who rides the heavens to your help,
And through the skies in His majestic glory.
- 27“*The eternal God is your refuge and dwelling place,*
And underneath are the everlasting arms;
He drove out the enemy from before you,
And said, ‘Destroy!’
- 28“*So Israel dwells in safety and security,*
The fountain of Jacob alone *and* secluded,
In a land of grain and new wine;
His heavens also drop down dew.

²⁹“Happy *and* blessed are you, O Israel;
Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD,
The Shield of your help,
And the Sword of your majesty!
Your enemies will cringe before you,
And you will tread on their high places [tramping down
their idolatrous altars].”

34 NOW MOSES went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is opposite Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land, from Gilead to Dan,

²and all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah to the western sea (Mediterranean Sea),

³and the Negev (South country) and the plain in the Valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar.

⁴Then the LORD said to him, “This is the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there.”

⁵So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD.

⁶And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows where his burial place is to this day.

⁷Although Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eyesight was not dim, nor his natural

strength abated. [Deut 31:2]

⁸So the sons of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab for thirty days; then the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.

⁹Now Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; so the sons of Israel listened to him and did as the LORD commanded Moses.

¹⁰Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face,

¹¹[none equal to him] in all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land,

¹²and in all the mighty power and all the great *and* terrible deeds which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

Joshua

Author: |
Uncertain; attributed
to Joshua
Date: | 1400 BC–
1375 BC

We see in the book of Joshua that even though God showed the Israelites the good life they could have in the Promised Land, the enemies in the land first had to be defeated. The Israelites fought against other people, but you and I often battle in our minds as we continue to believe for what God has promised us, even though we may encounter setbacks as we move toward it.

To possess the promises that God has given you, it's important to study His Word so you know what He has provided. No matter how the enemy comes against you, continue to renew your mind with the Word and keep believing for your promise until it comes to pass.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM JOSHUA:

Thinking about the promises of God over and over helps us to renew our minds to the promises we find in His Word. This activity is called “meditating” in Joshua and in other places in the Word, and I encourage you to take time to do it regularly (see Joshua 1:8).

God is a God of miracles. He can always make a way when, naturally speaking, there seems to be no way (see Joshua 3:15–17).

When God wants to give you a victory or a breakthrough, He often also gives you a strategy. As you do what He has asked you to do, victory is sure (see Joshua 6:2–3, 16).

You can choose today whom you will serve. I hope that you and your house will choose to serve the Lord (see Joshua 24:15).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM JOSHUA:

I have given you every place on which the sole of your foot treads, just as I promised to Moses. | Joshua 1:3

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not be terrified or dismayed (intimidated), for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go. | Joshua 1:9

Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the LORD your God has promised concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you; not one of them has failed. | Joshua 23:14

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

1 NOW IT happened after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant (attendant), saying, [Deut 34:4–8]

²“Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise [to take his place], cross over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel.

³“I have given you every place on which the sole of your foot treads, just as I promised to Moses.

⁴“From the wilderness [of Arabia in the south] and this Lebanon [in the north], even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates [in the east], all the land of the Hittites (Canaan), and as far as the Great [Mediterranean] Sea toward the west shall be your territory.

⁵“No man will [be able to] stand before you [to oppose you] as long as you live. Just as I was [present] with Moses, so will I be with you; I will not fail you or abandon you.

⁶“Be strong *and* confident and courageous, for you will give this people as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers (ancestors) to give them.

⁷“Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do

[everything] in accordance with the entire law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may prosper *and* be successful wherever you go.

⁸“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall read [and meditate on] it day and night, so that you may be careful to do [everything] in accordance with all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will be successful.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Lord, I pray that Your Word will never depart from my mouth, because I will read and meditate on it day and night and I will be careful to do everything written in it. Then You will make my way prosperous and give me success.

• adapted from Joshua 1:8

Speak God's Word

*I will be strong and
courageous! I will not be
terrified or intimidated by
anyone or anything, for the
Lord my God is with me
wherever I go.*

| adapted from JOSHUA 1:9 |

⁹“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not be terrified or dismayed (intimidated), for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

¹⁰Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying,

¹¹“Go throughout the camp and command the people, saying, ‘Prepare your provisions, for within three days you are to cross this [river] Jordan, to go in to take possession of the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess [as an inheritance].’”

¹²To the Reubenites and to the Gadites and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said,

¹³“Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, ‘The LORD your God is giving

you rest (peace) and will give you this land [east of the Jordan].’

¹⁴“Your wives, your children, and your cattle shall [be allowed to] stay in the land which Moses gave you on this [eastern] side of the Jordan, but you shall go across [the river] before your brothers (the other tribes) armed for battle, all your brave warriors, and you shall help them [conquer and take possession of their land],

¹⁵until the LORD gives your brothers rest, as *He has given* you, and they also take possession of the land which the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall [be allowed to] return to your own land, and take possession of that which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise.”

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Meditating on God's Word

To meditate on God's Word means to ponder it and give it our full attention. We meditate when we pause to reflect on a word, a phrase, or a concept. The words of Scripture are there for us to savor and enjoy. Meditating on God's Word is more about quality than quantity. Getting a deep understanding of one verse of Scripture is more important than reading five chapters and not understanding much.

Meditating on God's Word requires discipline. One of the best habits we can develop is to set aside time each day just to sit and think about God's Word and the wonderful promises He has made to those who believe in Him. Solomon says, "My son, pay attention to my words *and* be willing to learn; open your ears to my sayings. Do not let them escape from your sight; keep them in the center of your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and healing *and* health to all their flesh" (Prov. 4:20–22).

Contemplating the meaning of Scripture is God's command to all of us, and it is a requirement for true success. I think of

God's instructions to Joshua as he prepared to lead at least two million people into the Promised Land. He promised to be with Joshua and urged him to be very courageous. Then He said, "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall read [and meditate on] it day and night, so that you may be careful to do [everything] in accordance with all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will be successful" (Josh. 1:8).

Joshua's primary responsibility was to contemplate the commands of God. By immersing himself in the law, he was learning to understand the mind of God more fully. God went on to say that if Joshua kept his mind and heart on the law, he would be prosperous and successful.

God doesn't want the enemy to fill your mind with ungodly thinking because He knows the enemy can control your life if he controls your thoughts. Decide right now that you will resist the enemy's efforts to influence your thoughts by filling your mind with the truth of God's Word, meditating on it every day.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Father God, You have told me to meditate on Your Word, and I ask You to help me do that. I want Your Word to be the focus of my life. As I meditate on Your Word regularly, I believe I will see good progress in my life. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Don't Let Fear Stop You

You may remember that in Genesis 12:1, God gave Abram a tall order. In so many words He said, "Pack up and leave everyone you know and everything you are comfortable with and go to a place I will show you."

I can't imagine that Abram didn't feel fear trying to prevent him from obeying God, but if he had bowed his knee to fear, the rest of the story would never have come to pass. He would never have experienced God as his shield, his great compensation, and he would never have received his exceedingly great reward (see Gen. 15:1).

In the same way, had Joshua not overcome his fear and not been obedient to God's command to lead His people into the Promised Land, neither he nor they would ever have enjoyed all that God planned and prepared for them (see Josh. 1:8–9).

There is power in God's Word to equip us to stop bowing our knees in fear to the devil's desires. We can do what God wants us to do, even if we have to do it afraid. We need to keep saying: "Lord, strengthen me. This is what You have told me to do, and with Your help I am going to do it, because it is Your revealed will for me. I am determined that my life is not going to be ruled by fear but by Your Word."

God doesn't always deliver us "from" things; often He walks us "through" them (see Isa. 43:2).

¹⁶They answered Joshua, saying, “All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go.

¹⁷“Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so will we obey you; only may the LORD your God be with you as He was with Moses.

¹⁸“Any man who rebels against your command and does not obey everything that you command him, shall be put to death; only be strong and courageous.”

! REMEMBER, God always
leads you in triumph in
Christ!

2 JOSHUA THE son of Nun sent two men as scouts secretly from Shittim, saying, “Go, view the land, especially Jericho [the walled city].” So they went and came to the house of a prostitute named Rahab, and lodged there.

²Now the king of Jericho was told, “Behold, men from the sons of Israel have come here tonight to spy *and* search out the land.”

³So the king of Jericho sent *word* to Rahab, saying, “Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, because they have come [as spies] to search out all the land.”

⁴But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them;

so she said, “Yes, two men came to me, but I did not know where they were from.

⁵“When *it was time* to close the [city] gate at dark, the men left; I do not know where they went. Pursue them quickly, for [if you do] you will overtake them.”

⁶But [in fact] she had brought the scouts up to the roof and had hidden them under the stalks of flax which she had laid in order on the roof [to dry].

⁷So the [king’s] men pursued them on the road to the Jordan as far as the fords [east of Jericho]; as soon as the pursuers had gone out after them, the gate [of the city] was shut.

⁸Now before the two men lay down [to sleep], Rahab came up to them on the roof,

⁹and she said to the men, “I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror *and* dread of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted [in despair] because of you.

¹⁰“For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan [on the east], to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed.

¹¹“When we heard it, our hearts melted [in despair], and a [fighting] spirit no longer remained in any man because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. [Heb 11:31]

¹²“And now, please swear [an oath] to me by the LORD, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show

kindness to my father's household (family), and give me a pledge of truth *and* faithfulness,

¹³and spare my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, along with everyone who belongs to them, and let us all live."

¹⁴So the men said to her, "Our lives for yours if you do not tell [anyone about] this business of ours; then when the LORD gives us the land we will show you kindness and faithfulness [and keep our agreement with you]."

¹⁵Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was built into the city wall, so that she was living on the wall.

¹⁶And she said to them, "Go [west] to the hill country, so that the pursuers [who have headed east] will not encounter you; hide yourselves there for three days until the pursuers return. Then afterward you can go your way."

¹⁷The men said to her, "*We shall be blameless and* free from this oath which you have made us swear,

¹⁸unless, when we come into the land, you tie this cord of scarlet thread in the window through which you let us down, and bring into the house your father and your mother and your brothers and all your father's household [so that they will be safe].

¹⁹"But if anyone goes out the doors of your house into the street, his blood *shall be* on his own head [that is, his own responsibility], and we *shall be* blameless *and* free [from our oath]; however, if a hand is *laid* on anyone who is with you in the house, his blood *shall be* on our head.

²⁰"But if you tell [anyone] this business of ours, we shall

be blameless *and* free from the oath which you made us swear.”

²¹She said, “According to your words, so be it.” Then Rahab sent them off, and they departed; and she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

²²They left and went [on their way] to the hill country [west of Jericho], and stayed there [hidden in the caves] three days until the pursuers returned. The pursuers had searched all along the road but had not found *them*.

²³Then the two men turned back and came down from the hill country and crossed over [the Jordan] and came to Joshua the son of Nun [at Shittim], and told him everything that had happened to them.

²⁴They said to Joshua, “Certainly the LORD has given all the land into our hands; for all the inhabitants of the land have melted [in despair] because of us.”

3 JOSHUA GOT up early in the morning; then he and all the children of Israel set out from Shittim and came to the Jordan, and they spent the night there before they crossed [the river].

²And it happened at the end of three days that the officers went throughout the camp,

³and they commanded the people, “When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God being carried by the Levitical priests, then you shall set out from where you are and follow it.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Embrace New Experiences

As Israel is finally about to cross the Jordan and enter into the Promised Land, pay particular attention to these words in Joshua 3:4: “you have not passed this way before.” This was all new territory to them and it was full of numerous enemies and new challenges.

Whether it is a job, a place to live, a relationship, an addition to your family, a position of influence, an exercise program, a church, a hobby, or a way of serving your community—if you have “not passed this way before,” it is new to you. You may not know how to get where you need to go or what to do when you arrive, but if you follow God, you will arrive at your destination and He will direct you in everything you need to do. You have no need to be afraid of new things because God is always with you and He will never leave you. Be courageous and trust Him to help you.

⁴“However, there shall be a distance between you and it of about 2,000 cubits (3,000 ft.) by measurement. Do not come near it, so that you may [be able to see the ark and] know the way you are to go, for you have not passed this way before.”

⁵Then Joshua said to the people, “Sanctify yourselves [for His purpose], for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders (miracles) among you.”

⁶Joshua said to the priests, “Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over [the river] ahead of the people.” So they took up the ark of the covenant and went on ahead of the people.

⁷The LORD said to Joshua, “This day I will begin to magnify *and* exalt you in the sight of all Israel, so that they may know that just as I was with Moses, I will [also] be with you.

⁸“You shall command the priests who carry the ark of the covenant, saying, ‘When you come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand *still* in the Jordan.’”

⁹Joshua said to the Israelites, “Come here, and listen to the words of the LORD your God.”

¹⁰Joshua said, “By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will, without fail, drive out from before you the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Hivite, the Perizzite, the Girgashite, the Amorite, and the Jebusite.

¹¹“Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over ahead of you [leading the way] into the Jordan.

¹²“So now take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man from each tribe.

¹³“When the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, [come to] rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan flowing down from above will be cut off, and they will stand in one mass [of water].”

¹⁴So when the people set out from their tents to cross over the Jordan with the priests who were carrying the ark of the covenant before the people,

¹⁵and when those who were carrying the ark came up to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests carrying the ark were submerged at the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all of its banks throughout the time of harvest),

¹⁶the waters which were flowing down from above stopped and rose up in one mass a great distance away at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan. Those [waters] flowing downward toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. So the people crossed [the river] opposite Jericho. [Ps 114]

¹⁷And while all [the people of] Israel crossed over on dry ground, the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan [riverbed], until all the nation had finished crossing over the Jordan.

4 SO IT was when all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua,

²“Take for yourselves the twelve men [chosen] from among the people, one man from each tribe,

³and command them, ‘Pick up for yourselves twelve stones [one each] from here out of the midst of the Jordan, from the place where the priests’ feet are standing firm; carry them over with you and lay them down at the place where you will spend the night tonight.’”

⁴Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the sons of Israel, one man from each tribe;

⁵and Joshua said to them, “Cross over again to the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and each of

you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel,

⁶so that this may be a sign among you; when your children ask later, ‘What do these stones mean to you?’

⁷then you shall say to them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall become a memorial for Israel forever.”

⁸So the [twelve men chosen from the] sons of Israel did as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones out of the midst of the Jordan, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel, just as the LORD had spoken to Joshua; and they carried them over with them to the place where they were spending the night and put them down there.

⁹Then Joshua set up [a second monument of] twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan at the place where the feet of the priests who carried the ark of the covenant were standing, and they are there to this day.

¹⁰For the priests who carried the ark were standing in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished that the LORD had commanded Joshua to tell the people, in accordance with everything that Moses had commanded Joshua. The people hurried and crossed [the dry riverbed];

¹¹and when all the people had finished crossing, the ark of the LORD and the priests crossed over in the presence of the people.

¹²The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh crossed over armed for battle before the [other] sons of Israel, just as Moses had spoken to them;

¹³about 40,000 [men] armed *and* equipped for war crossed for battle before the LORD to the desert plains of Jericho.

¹⁴On that day the LORD magnified *and* exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; so they feared him [with profound awe and reverence], just as they had feared Moses all the days of his life.

¹⁵Now the LORD said to Joshua,

¹⁶“Order the priests carrying the ark of the Testimony to come up out of the Jordan.”

¹⁷So Joshua commanded the priests, saying, “Come up out of the Jordan.”

¹⁸When the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD had come up from the midst of the Jordan, and the soles of their feet were raised up to the dry land, the waters of the Jordan returned to their place, and flowed over all its banks as before.

¹⁹Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth [day] of the first month and encamped at Gilgal on the eastern border of Jericho.

²⁰And those twelve stones which they had taken from the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal.

²¹He said to the sons of Israel, “When your children ask their fathers in time to come, ‘What do these stones mean?’

²²then you shall let your children know, ‘Israel crossed this Jordan on dry ground.’

²³“For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you crossed over, just as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had

crossed;

²⁴so that all the peoples of the earth may know [without any doubt] *and* acknowledge that the hand of the LORD is mighty *and* extraordinarily powerful, so that you will fear the LORD your God [and obey and worship Him with profound awe and reverence] forever.”

5 NOW IT happened when all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan before the Israelites until they had crossed over, their hearts melted [in despair], and there was no [fighting] spirit in them any longer because of the Israelites [and what God had done for them].

²At that time the LORD said to Joshua, “Make for yourself flint knives and circumcise the [new generation of the] sons of Israel as [was done] before.”

³So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth.

⁴This is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, had died in the wilderness along the way after they left Egypt.

⁵All the males who came out were circumcised, but all the males who were born in the wilderness on the way as they left Egypt had not been circumcised.

⁶For the Israelites walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, *that is*, the men of war who came out of

Egypt, died because they did not listen to the voice of the LORD; to them the LORD had sworn [an oath] that He would not let them see the land which He had promised to their fathers to give us, a land [of abundance] flowing with milk and honey.

⁷So it was their uncircumcised sons whom He raised up in their place, whom Joshua circumcised, because circumcision had not been performed on the way.

⁸Then, when they had finished circumcising all [the males of] the nation, they stayed in their places in the camp until they were healed.

⁹Then the LORD said to Joshua, “This day I have rolled away the reproach (derision, ridicule) of Egypt from you.” So the name of that place is called Gilgal (rolling) to this day.

POWERPOINT

The word *reproach* means
“blame, disgrace, shame.”

When God said He would “roll away” the reproach of Egypt from the Israelites, He was making a point I want to make sure we understand. Egypt represents the world. After a few years of being in the world and becoming worldly, we all need the reproach of worldly influences rolled away. God’s rolling away the reproach from us means that each of us must receive for ourselves the forgiveness He offers for all our sins. That is the beginning of being able to live the good life that God truly wants us to live.



¹⁰While the Israelites camped at Gilgal they observed the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month on

the desert plains of Jericho.

¹¹On the day after Passover, on that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land, unleavened bread, and roasted *grain*. [Lev 23:14]

¹²And the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten some of the produce of the land, so that the Israelites no longer had manna, but they ate some of the produce of the land of Canaan during that year.

¹³Now when Joshua was by Jericho, he looked up, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his drawn sword in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us or for our adversaries?”

¹⁴He said, “No; rather I have come now as captain of the army of the LORD.” Then Joshua fell with his face toward the earth and bowed down, and said to him, “What does my lord have to say to his servant?”

¹⁵The captain of the LORD’s army said to Joshua, “Remove your sandals from your feet, because the place where you are standing is holy (set apart to the LORD).” And Joshua did so. [Ex 3:5]

6 NOW JERICHO [a fortified city with high walls] was tightly closed because [of the people’s fear] of the sons of Israel; no one went out or came in.

²The LORD said to Joshua, “See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and the mighty warriors.

³“Now you shall march around the city, all the men of war circling the city once. You shall do this [once each day] for six

days.

⁴“Also, seven priests shall carry seven trumpets [made] of rams’ horns ahead of the ark; then on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets.

⁵“When they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall cry out with a great shout (battle cry); and the wall of the city will fall down in its place, and the people shall go up, each man [going] straight ahead [climbing over the rubble].”

⁶So Joshua the son of Nun called for the priests and said to them, “Take up the ark of the covenant, and have seven priests carry seven trumpets *made* of rams’ horns ahead of the ark of the LORD.”

⁷He said to the people, “Go forward! March around the city, and let the armed men go ahead of the ark of the LORD.”

⁸And it was so, that when Joshua had spoken to the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets *made* of rams’ horns went on before the LORD and blew the trumpets; then the ark of the covenant of the LORD went behind them.

⁹The armed men went in front of the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard came after the ark, while the priests continued to blow the trumpets.

¹⁰But Joshua commanded the people, “You shall not shout [the battle cry] nor let your voice be heard nor let a word come out of your mouth, until the day I tell you to shout. Then you shall shout!”

¹¹So Joshua had the ark of the LORD taken around the city [on the first day], circling it once; then they came back into the

camp and spent the night in the camp.

¹²Then Joshua got up early in the morning [on the second day], and the priests took up the ark of the LORD.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Regardless of Your Past, You Have a Great Future

Rahab was a woman with a dark past, yet she was courageous enough to hide and protect the Israelite spies (see Josh. 6:17). When the Israelites destroyed Jericho, they spared her life and later she amazingly ended up in the bloodline of David and Jesus (see Matt. 1:5).

We all have a past, but we also all have a future. We need to put the past behind us and look forward to good things to come. So how do we forget what lies behind us—the situations in our pasts, especially those things causing us to feel guilty? The apostle Paul knew the one thing that would help us most in life was to forget the past (see Phil. 3:13). We stop thinking and talking about it and keep pressing forward.

One of the best things you can do for yourself is to stop living in the past mentally and emotionally, and believe by faith that good things are ahead. Don't focus on things you can no longer do anything about, and don't waste time in regret. Even though we make mistakes in life, we can recover and still enjoy an amazing life through Christ. Get excited! Good things are coming!

¹³The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets *made of rams' horns* ahead of the ark of the LORD went on continually,

blowing the trumpets; and the armed men went ahead of them and the rear guard came after the ark of the LORD, while the priests continued to blow the trumpets.

¹⁴On the second day they marched around the city once, and returned to the camp; they did this for six days.

¹⁵Then on the seventh day they got up early at daybreak and marched around the city in the same way seven times; only on that day they marched around the city seven times.

¹⁶And the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city.

¹⁷"The city and everything that is in it shall be under the ban [that is, designated to be destroyed as a form of tribute] to the LORD; only Rahab the prostitute and all [the people] who are with her in her house shall [be allowed to] live, because she hid *and* protected the messengers (scouts) whom we sent.

¹⁸"But as for you, keep yourselves [away] from the things under the ban [which are to be destroyed], so that you do not covet *them* and take some of the things under the ban [for personal gain], and put the camp of Israel under the ban (doomed to destruction), and bring disaster upon it.

¹⁹"All the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron are holy (consecrated) to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD."

²⁰So the people shouted [the battle cry], and the priests blew the trumpets. When the people heard the sound of the trumpet, they raised a great shout and the wall [of Jericho] fell down, so that the sons of Israel went up into the city, every man straight ahead [climbing over the rubble], and they

overthrew the city.

²¹Then they utterly destroyed everything that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword.

²²But Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, “Go into the prostitute’s house and bring the woman and all that she has out of there, as you have sworn to her.”

²³So the young men, the spies, went in and brought out Rahab and her father and her mother and her brothers and everything that she had; they also brought out all her relatives and allowed them to stay outside the camp of Israel [at Gilgal during the time required for ceremonial cleansing]. [Num 31:19]

²⁴Then they completely burned the city and everything that was in it. They put only the silver and the gold, and the articles of bronze and of iron, into the treasury of the house (tabernacle) of the LORD.

²⁵So Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her father’s household and everything that she had; and she has lived among Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers (scouts) whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

²⁶Then Joshua made them take an oath at that time, saying, “Cursed before the LORD is the man who rises up and rebuilds this city, Jericho; with *the loss of* his firstborn he shall lay its foundation, and with *the loss of* his youngest son he shall set up its gates.” [1 Kin 16:34]

²⁷So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame was in all the land.

7 BUT THE sons of Israel acted unfaithfully *and* violated their obligation in regard to the things [off limits] under the ban [those things belonging to the LORD], for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, from the tribe of Judah, took some of the things under the ban [for personal gain]. Therefore the anger of the LORD burned against the Israelites.

²Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel, and said to them, “Go up and spy out the land.” So the men went up and spied out Ai.

³Then they returned to Joshua and said to him, “Do not make all the people go up [to fight]; have *only* about two thousand or three thousand men go up and attack Ai; do not make the entire army go up there, for they [of Ai] are few.”

⁴So about three thousand men from the sons of Israel went up there, but they fled [in retreat] from the men of Ai.

⁵The men of Ai killed about thirty-six of Israel’s men, and chased them from the gate as far as [the bluffs of] Shebarim and struck them down as they descended [the steep pass], so the hearts of the people melted [in despair and began to doubt God’s promise] and became like water (disheartened).

POWERPOINT

After the men of Ai killed Israelite soldiers, Joshua and the men of Israel began to doubt that God was really sending them into the Promised Land. Doubt causes a person to waver between two opinions, whereas unbelief leads to disobedience. Doubt comes in the form of thoughts that are in opposition to the Word of God. This is why knowing God's Word is so important for us. The better we know the Word, the more quickly we can recognize when the enemy is lying to us in order to steal what God has provided and planned for us.



⁶Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD until evening, he and the

elders of Israel; and [with great sorrow] they put dust on their heads.

⁷Joshua said, “Alas, O Lord GOD, why have You brought this people across the Jordan at all, only to hand us over to the Amorites, to destroy us? If only we had been willing to live beyond the Jordan!

⁸“O Lord, what can I say now that [the army of] Israel has turned back [in retreat and fled] before their enemies?

⁹“For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear about it, and will surround us and cut off our name from the earth. And what will You do for Your great name [to keep it from dishonor]?”

¹⁰So the LORD said to Joshua, “Get up! Why is it that you have fallen on your face?

¹¹“Israel has sinned; they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them [to keep]. They have even taken some of the things under the ban, and they have both stolen and denied [the theft]. Moreover, they have also put *the stolen objects* among their own things.

¹²“That is why the soldiers of Israel could not stand [and defend themselves] before their enemies; they turned their backs [and ran] before them, because they have become accursed. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy the things under the ban from among you.

¹³“Rise up! Consecrate the people and say, ‘Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: “There are things under the ban among you, O Israel. You cannot stand [victorious] before your enemies until you remove the things under the ban from among you.”’

¹⁴“In the morning you shall come forward by your tribes. And it shall be that the tribe which the LORD chooses *by lot* shall come forward by families, and the family which the LORD chooses shall come forward by [separate] households, and the household which the LORD chooses shall come forward man by man.

¹⁵“It shall be that the one who is chosen with the things under the ban shall be [killed and his body] burned with fire, he and all that belongs to him, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he has done a disgraceful *and* disobedient thing in Israel.” [Josh 7:25]

¹⁶So Joshua got up early in the morning and had Israel come forward by tribes, and the tribe of Judah was chosen [by lot].

¹⁷He had the families of Judah come forward, and the family of the Zerahites was chosen; and he had the family of the Zerahites come forward man by man, and Zabdi was chosen.

¹⁸He brought his household forward man by man; and Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was chosen.

¹⁹Then Joshua said to Achan, “My son, I implore you, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and give praise to Him [in recognition of His righteous judgments]; and tell me now what you have done. Do not hide it from me.”

²⁰So Achan answered Joshua and said, “In truth, I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel, and this is what I have done:

²¹when I saw among the spoils [in Jericho] a beautiful robe from Shinar (southern Babylon) and two hundred shekels of

silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels, I wanted them and took them. Behold, they are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath.”

²²So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and they saw the stolen objects hidden in his tent, with the silver underneath.

²³And they took them from the tent and brought them to Joshua and to all the sons of Israel, and spread them out before the LORD.

²⁴Then Joshua and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the [royal] robe, the bar of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and everything that he had; and they brought them up to the Valley of Achor (Disaster).

²⁵Joshua said, “Why have you brought disaster on us? The LORD will bring you disaster this day.” Then all Israel stoned them [to death] with stones; afterward they burned their bodies in the fire.

²⁶Then they piled up over him a great heap of stones that remains to this day. Then the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Achor (Disaster) to this day.

8 NOW THE LORD said to Joshua, “Do not fear or be dismayed (intimidated). Take all the men of war with you and set out, go up to Ai; see, I have given the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land into your hand.

²“You shall do [the same] to Ai and its king as you did to

Jericho and its king; [except that] you shall take only its spoil and its cattle as plunder for yourselves. Set up an ambush for the city behind it [on the west side].”

³So Joshua set out with all the people of war to go up against Ai; then Joshua chose thirty thousand valiant men, and sent them out at night.

⁴He commanded them, saying, “Listen closely, you are going to lie in wait *and* ambush the city from behind it. Do not go very far away from the city, but all of you be ready.

⁵“Then I and all the people who are with me will approach the city. And when they come out to meet us [for battle] as [they did] the first time, we will run away from them.

POWERPOINT

Neither a situation that reminds us of what the Israelites faced at Ai nor one that reminds us of Jericho should cause us to fear as long as Jesus, the Mighty Warrior, the Captain of the Host, is leading us. God has promised to provide for His own. He has assured us, just as He did Joshua, that we will triumph if we listen to Him and obey. Whatever obstacles are before you, do not be afraid, because the Lord is with you.



⁶“They will come out after us until we have lured them away from the city, because they will say, ‘They are running from us as [they did] before.’ So we will run from them.

⁷“Then you will emerge from the ambush and take possession of the city, for the LORD your God will hand it over to you.

⁸“When you have taken the city, you shall set it on fire; you shall do [exactly] as the LORD commanded. See, I have commanded you.”

⁹So Joshua sent them off, and they went to the place for the ambush and stayed [hidden] between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai; but Joshua spent that night among the people [in Gilgal].

¹⁰Now Joshua got up early in the morning and assembled the people, and went up with the elders of Israel before the people to Ai.

¹¹Then all the fighting men who were with him went up and advanced and arrived in front of the city, and camped on the north side of Ai. Now there was a ravine between them and Ai.

¹²And Joshua took about five thousand men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city.

¹³So they stationed the people, all the army—the main encampment that was north of the city, and their rear guard on the west side of the city—and Joshua spent that night in the valley.

¹⁴Now when the king [and the people] of Ai saw it, the men of the city hurried and got up early and went out to meet Israel in battle, the king and all his people at the appointed [time and] place before the desert plain (the Arabah). But he did not know that there was an ambush against him [waiting] behind the city [on the west side].

¹⁵So Joshua and all Israel pretended to be defeated by them, and ran toward the wilderness.

¹⁶Then all the people who were in the city were called together to pursue them, and they pursued Joshua and were

lured away from the city.

¹⁷Not a man was left in Ai or Bethel who had not gone out after Israel; so they left the city open *and* unguarded and they pursued Israel.

¹⁸Then the LORD said to Joshua, “Reach out with the spear that is in your hand [and point it] toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand.” So Joshua reached out with the spear in his hand [and pointed it] toward the city.

¹⁹The [men in] ambush emerged quickly from their [hiding] place, and when Joshua stretched out his hand they ran and entered the city and captured it, and quickly set the city on fire.

²⁰When the men of Ai turned back and looked, behold, the smoke of the city was ascending toward the sky, and they had no opportunity to run this way or that way. Then the people who had been running to the wilderness turned back toward the pursuers.

²¹When Joshua and all Israel saw that the [men in] ambush had taken the city and that the smoke of the city was ascending, they turned back and struck down the men of Ai.

²²Then the others came out of the city to confront the men of Ai [as they returned], so that they were *trapped* in the midst of Israel, some on this side and some on that side; then Israel struck them until none of them survived or escaped.

²³But they took the king of Ai alive and brought him to Joshua.

²⁴When Israel had finished killing all the inhabitants of Ai in the field in the wilderness where they pursued them, and they had all fallen by the edge of the sword until they were destroyed, then all Israel returned to Ai and struck it with the

edge of the sword.

²⁵And all who fell that day, both men and women, were twelve thousand, all the people of Ai.

²⁶For Joshua did not withdraw his hand with which he stretched out the spear until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai.

²⁷Israel took only the livestock and the spoil of that city as plunder for themselves, according to the word of the LORD which He had commanded Joshua.

²⁸So Joshua burned Ai and made it a rubbish heap forever, a desolation until this day.

²⁹He hanged [the body of] the king of Ai on a tree [leaving it there] until evening; at sunset Joshua gave a command and they took the body down from the tree and dumped it at the entrance of the city gate, and piled a great heap of stones over it *that stands* to this day.

³⁰Then Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal,

³¹just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the sons of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, an altar of uncut stones on which no one has wielded an iron *tool*; and they offered on it burnt offerings to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings.

³²And there, in the presence of the sons of Israel, Joshua wrote on the stones a copy of the Law of Moses which *Moses* had written.

³³All Israel, the stranger as well as the native born [among them], with their elders and officers and their judges, stood on either side of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the

ark of the covenant of the LORD. Half of them *stood* in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded at first to bless the people of Israel.

³⁴Then afterward Joshua read all the words of the law, the blessing and curse, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law.

³⁵There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before the entire assembly of Israel, including the women and the children and the foreigners who were living among them.

9 NOW WHEN all the kings who were beyond the Jordan, in the hill country and in the lowland [at the western edge of the hills of Judea], and all along the coast of the Great [Mediterranean] Sea toward Lebanon, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, heard of this [army and its victories over Jericho and Ai],

²they gathered together with one purpose to fight with Joshua and with Israel.

³But when the people of Gibeon [the Hivites] heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai,

⁴they too acted craftily *and* cunningly, and set out and took along provisions, but took worn-out sacks on their donkeys, and wineskins (leather bottles) that were worn out and split open and patched together,

⁵and worn-out and patched sandals on their feet, and worn-

out clothes; and all their supply of food was dry and had turned to crumbs.

⁶They went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and said to him and the men of Israel, “We have come from a far country; so now, make a covenant (treaty) with us.”

⁷But the men of Israel said to the Hivites, “Perhaps you are living within our land; how then can we make a covenant (treaty) with you?”

⁸They said to Joshua, “We are your servants.” Then Joshua said to them, “Who are you, and where do you come from?”

⁹They said to him, “Your servants have come from a country that is very far away because of the fame of the LORD your God; for we have heard the news about Him and all [the remarkable things] that He did in Egypt,

¹⁰and everything that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon the king of Heshbon and to Og the king of Bashan who *lived* in Ashtaroth.

¹¹“So our elders and all the residents of our country said to us, ‘Take provisions for the journey and go to meet the sons of Israel and say to them, “We are your servants; now make a covenant (treaty) with us.”’

¹²“This bread of ours was hot (fresh) when we took it along as our provision from our houses on the day we left to come to you; now look, it is dry and has turned to crumbs.

¹³“These wineskins which we filled were new, and look, they are split; our clothes and our sandals are worn out because of the very long journey [that we had to make].”

¹⁴So the men [of Israel] took some of their own provisions [and offered them in friendship], and [foolishly] did not ask for the counsel of the LORD.

¹⁵Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant (treaty) with them, to let them live; and the leaders of the congregation [of Israel] swore *an oath* to them.

¹⁶It happened that three days after they had made a covenant (treaty) with them, the Israelites heard that they were [actually] their neighbors and that they were living among them.

¹⁷Then the sons of Israel set out and came to their cities on the third day. Now the cities [of the Hivites] were Gibeon and Chephirah and Beeroth and Kiriath-jearim.

¹⁸But the sons of Israel did not strike them because the leaders of the congregation had sworn to them by the LORD the God of Israel [to spare them]. And all the congregation murmured [expressing great dissatisfaction] against the leaders.

¹⁹But all the leaders said to the whole congregation, “We have sworn to them by the LORD, the God of Israel, so now we cannot touch them.

²⁰“This [is what] we will do to them: we will let them live, so that the wrath [of God] does not come upon us for [violating] the oath which we have sworn to them.”

²¹The leaders said to them, “Let them live [as our slaves].” So they became the cutters *and* gatherers of firewood and water carriers for the entire congregation, just as the leaders had said of them.

²²Joshua called the [Hivite] men and said, “Why did you

deceive us, saying, ‘We *live* very far away from you,’ when [in fact] you live among us?

²³“Now therefore, you are cursed, and you shall always be slaves, both cutters *and* gatherers of firewood and water carriers for the house of my God.”

²⁴They replied to Joshua and said, “Because your servants were told in no uncertain terms that the LORD your God commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the land’s inhabitants before you, we feared greatly for our lives because of you, and so we did this [deceptive] thing.

²⁵“Now look, we are in your hands; do to us as it seems good and right in your sight.”

²⁶So that is what he did to them; he rescued them from the hands of the Israelites and they did not kill them.

²⁷Now on that day Joshua made them cutters *and* gatherers of firewood and water carriers for the congregation and for the altar of the LORD, to this day, in the place which He would choose.

10 WHEN ADONI-ZEDEK king of Jerusalem heard that Joshua had captured Ai, and had utterly destroyed it—as he had done to Jericho and its king, so he had done to Ai and its king—and that the residents of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were [living] among them,

²he [and his people] feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, like one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all its men were mighty.

³So Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem sent *word* to Hoham king of Hebron, and to Piram king of Jarmuth, to Japhia king of Lachish, and to Debir king of Eglon, saying,

⁴“Come up to me and help me, and let us attack Gibeon [with a combined army], because it has made peace with Joshua and with the sons (people) of Israel.”

⁵Then the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon, gathered together and went up, they with all their armies, and they camped by Gibeon and fought against it.

⁶So the men of Gibeon sent *word* to Joshua at the camp in Gilgal, saying, “Do not abandon your servants; come up to us quickly and save us and help us, for all [five of] the kings of the Amorites who live in the hill country have assembled against us.”

⁷So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the men of valor.

⁸The LORD said to Joshua, “Do not fear them, because I have given them into your hand; not one of them shall stand before you.”

⁹So Joshua came upon them suddenly, [surprising them] by marching [uphill] all night from Gilgal.

¹⁰And the LORD caused them to panic *and* be confused before Israel, and He struck them dead in a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goes up to Beth-horon and struck them as far as Azekah and Makkedah.

¹¹As they fled before Israel, while they were at the descent of Beth-horon, the LORD threw down large stones [of hail] from

heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. More [Amorites] died because of the hailstones than those whom the sons of Israel killed with the sword.

¹²Then Joshua spoke to the LORD on the day when the LORD handed over the Amorites to the sons of Israel, and Joshua said in the sight of Israel,

“Sun, stand still at Gibeon,
And moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.”

¹³So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped,
Until the nation [of Israel] took vengeance upon their enemies.

Is it not written in the Book of Jashar? So the sun stood still in the middle of the sky and was in no hurry to go down for about a whole day.

¹⁴There has not been a day like that before it or after it, when the LORD listened to (heeded) the voice of a man; for the LORD was fighting for Israel.

¹⁵Then Joshua and all Israel with him returned to the camp at Gilgal.

¹⁶Now these five [Amorite] kings fled and hid themselves in the cave at Makkedah.

¹⁷And Joshua was told, “The five kings have been found and are hidden in the cave at Makkedah.”

¹⁸Joshua said, “Roll large stones against the mouth of the cave, and assign men by it to guard them,

¹⁹but do not stay there yourselves; pursue your enemies and attack them from the rear. Do not allow them to enter their cities, for the LORD your God has given them into your hand.”

²⁰Now when Joshua and the sons of Israel had finished striking the Amorites dead in a very great defeat, until they were wiped out, and the surviving remnant among them had entered the fortified cities,

²¹all the people returned to the camp to Joshua at Makkedah in peace. No one uttered a [threatening] word against any of the sons of Israel.

²²Then Joshua said, “Open the mouth of the cave and bring out to me those five [Amorite] kings from the cave.”

²³They did so, and brought these five [Amorite] kings out of the cave to him—the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon.

²⁴When they brought these kings out to Joshua, Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and told the commanders of the men of war who had gone with him, “Come up close, put your feet on the necks of these kings.” So they came forward and put their feet on the necks [of the five kings].

²⁵Joshua said to them, “Do not fear or be dismayed (intimidated)! Be strong and courageous, for this is what the LORD will do to all your enemies against whom you [are about to] fight.”

²⁶Then afterward Joshua struck them [with his sword] and put them to death, and he hung them on five trees; and they hung on the trees until evening.

²⁷At sunset Joshua gave a command, and they took the bodies down from the trees and threw them into the cave where the kings had hidden themselves, and placed large stones over the mouth of the cave, [where they remain] to this very day.

²⁸Now Joshua captured Makkedah on that day, and struck

it and its king with the edge of the sword; he utterly destroyed it and everyone who was in it. He left no survivor. So he did to the king of Makkedah just as he had done to the king of Jericho. [Josh 6:21]

²⁹Then Joshua and all Israel with him went on from Makkedah to Libnah, and fought against Libnah.

³⁰The LORD gave it also along with its king into the hands of Israel, and Joshua struck it and every person who was in it with the edge of the sword. He left no survivor in it. So he did to the king of Libnah just as he had done to the king of Jericho.

³¹And Joshua and all Israel with him moved on from Libnah to Lachish, and they camped by it and fought against it.

³²The LORD gave Lachish into the hands of Israel; and Joshua captured it on the second day, and struck it and every person who was in it with the edge of the sword, just as he had done to Libnah.

³³Then Horam king of Gezer went up to help Lachish, and Joshua struck him and his people down until he had left him no survivor.

³⁴And Joshua and all Israel with him went on from Lachish to Eglon, and they camped by it and fought against it.

³⁵They captured it on that day and struck it with the edge of the sword; and on that day he utterly destroyed every person who was in it, just as he had done to Lachish.

³⁶Then Joshua and all Israel with him went up from Eglon to Hebron, and they fought against it

³⁷and captured it and struck it and its king and all its cities and all the persons who were in it with the edge of the sword. He left no survivor, just as he had done to Eglon. He utterly

destroyed it and every person who was in it.

³⁸Then Joshua and all Israel with him returned to Debir, and fought against it.

³⁹He captured it with its king and all its cities, and they struck them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed every person who was in it. He left no survivor. Just as he had done to Hebron, so Joshua did to Debir and its king, as he had done also to Libnah and its king.

⁴⁰So Joshua struck all the land, the hill country, the Negev (South country) and the lowland and the slopes [that descend to the Dead Sea] and all their kings. He left no survivor, but he utterly destroyed all who breathed, just as the LORD, the God of Israel, had commanded. [Deut 20:16]

⁴¹Joshua struck them from Kadesh-barnea even as far as Gaza, and all the country of Goshen even as far as Gibeon.

⁴²Joshua captured all these kings and their land at one time, because the LORD, the God of Israel, fought for Israel.

⁴³So Joshua and all Israel with him returned to the camp at Gilgal.

11 THEN WHEN Jabin king of Hazor heard [of Israel's other victories] he sent *word* to Jobab king of Madon, and to the king of Shimron, and to the king of Achshaph,

²and to the kings who were in the north, in the hill country, and in the Arabah [the plain] south of Chinnereth (the Sea of Galilee) and in the lowland and on the hills of Dor on the west;

³to the Canaanite in the east and in the west, and to the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, and the Jebusite in the hill

country, and the Hivite at the foot of [Mount] Hermon in the land of Mizpeh.

⁴They went out, they and all their armies with them, as many people as the sand on the seashore, with very many horses and chariots.

⁵So all these kings met and they came and encamped together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel.

⁶Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid because of them, for tomorrow by this time I am going to hand over all of them slain [by the sword] to Israel; you shall hamstring (disable) their horses and set fire to their chariots."

⁷So Joshua and all the people of war with him came against them suddenly by the waters of Merom, and attacked them.

⁸The LORD handed them over to Israel, who struck them and pursued them as far as Great Sidon and Misrephoth-maim and eastward as far as the Valley of Mizpeh; they struck them down until no survivor was left.

⁹Joshua did to them as the LORD had told him; he hamstrung (disabled) their horses and set fire to their chariots.

¹⁰At that time Joshua turned back and captured Hazor and struck its king dead with the sword; for Hazor previously was the head of all these kingdoms.

¹¹They struck all the people who were in it with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them; there was no one left who breathed. And he set fire to Hazor.

POWERPOINT

Joshua fought many battles in order to finally possess the Promised Land. Courage means having a good attitude in the face of dangerous and frightening circumstances. Events in my own life led me to understand that “Do not be afraid” means “Do not run; face it,” and then take whatever actions God leads me to take. You can do the same.



¹²Joshua captured all the cities of these kings, and all their kings, and he struck them with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded. [Deut 20:16]

¹³But Israel did not burn any of the cities that stood [walled and fortified] on their mounds, except Hazor alone, which Joshua burned.

¹⁴The sons of Israel took as their plunder all the spoil of

these cities and the cattle; but they struck every man with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them. They left no one alive.

¹⁵Just as the LORD had commanded Moses His servant, so Moses had commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses.

¹⁶So Joshua took all this land: the hill country, all the Negev (South country), all the land of Goshen, the lowland, the Arabah [plain], the hill country of Israel and its lowland

¹⁷from Mount Halak, that rises toward Seir [in the south], even as far as Baal-gad in the Valley of Lebanon at the foot of Mount Hermon [in the north]. He captured all their kings and struck them and put them to death.

¹⁸Joshua waged war with all these kings a long time [at least five years].

¹⁹There was no city that made peace with the Israelites except the Hivites living in Gibeon; they took all *the others* in battle.

²⁰For it was [the purpose] of the LORD to harden their hearts, to meet Israel in battle so that Israel would utterly destroy them, that they would receive no mercy, but that Israel would destroy them, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

²¹Then Joshua came at that time and cut off the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab and from all the hill country of Judah and all the hill country of Israel. Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities.

²²There were no Anakim left in the land of the children of Israel; only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod [of Philistia] some remained.

²³So Joshua took the whole land [of Canaan], according to all that the LORD had spoken to Moses, and Joshua gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. So the land had rest from war.

12 NOW THESE are the kings of the land whom the sons of Israel defeated, and whose land they possessed beyond the Jordan toward the east, from the valley of the [river] Amon to Mount Hermon, and all the Arabah [plain] to the east:

²Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon, and ruled from Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of the [river] Amon, both the middle of the valley and half of Gilead, and as far as the brook Jabbok, [which is] the border of the sons of Ammon;

³and the Arabah [plain] as far as the Sea of Chinnereth (Galilee) eastward, and as far as the sea of the Arabah, the Salt (Dead) Sea, eastward toward Beth-jeshimoth, and southward to the foot of the slopes of [Mount] Pisgah;

⁴and the territory of Og king of Bashan, one of the remnant of the Rephaim, who lived at Ashtaroth and at Edrei,

⁵and ruled over Mount Hermon and Salecah and all of Bashan to the border of the Geshurites and the Maacathites, and over half of Gilead, *as far as* the border of Sihon king of Heshbon.

⁶Moses the servant of the LORD and the sons of Israel defeated them; and Moses the servant of the LORD gave their land as a possession to the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh. [Num 21; 32:33; Deut 2; 3]

⁷These are the kings of the land whom Joshua and the sons of Israel defeated on the west side of the Jordan, from Baal-gad in the Valley of Lebanon to Mount Halak, which rises toward Seir. Joshua gave their land to the tribes of Israel as a possession according to their divisions,

⁸in the hill country, in the lowland (foothills), in the Arabah [plain], on the slopes [descending to the Dead Sea], and in the wilderness, and in the Negev (South country)—the [lands of the] Hittite, the Amorite and the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite:

⁹the king of Jericho, one; the king of Ai, which is beside Bethel, one;

¹⁰the king of Jerusalem, one; the king of Hebron, one;

¹¹the king of Jarmuth, one; the king of Lachish, one;

¹²the king of Eglon, one; the king of Gezer, one;

¹³the king of Debir, one; the king of Geder, one;

¹⁴the king of Hormah, one; the king of Arad, one;

¹⁵the king of Libnah, one; the king of Adullam, one;

¹⁶the king of Makkedah, one; the king of Bethel, one;

¹⁷the king of Tappuah, one; the king of Hopher, one;

¹⁸the king of Aphek, one; the king of Lasharon, one;

¹⁹the king of Madon, one; the king of Hazor, one;

²⁰the king of Shimron-meron, one; the king of Achshaph, one;

²¹the king of Taanach, one; the king of Megiddo, one;

²²the king of Kedesh, one; the king of Jokneam in Carmel, one;

²³the king of Dor in the heights of Dor, one; the king of Goyim in Gilgal, one;

²⁴the king of Tirzah, one: in all, thirty-one kings.

13 NOW JOSHUA was old and advanced in years, and the LORD said to him, “You have grown old and advanced in years, and very substantial portions of the land remain to be possessed.

²“This is the land that remains: all the regions of the Philistines and all those of the Geshurites;

³from the Shihor [waterway] which is east of Egypt [at the southern end of Canaan], northward to the border of Ekron (all of it regarded as Canaanite); the five rulers of the Philistines: the Gazite, Ashdodite, the Ashkelonite, the Gittite, the Ekronite; and the Avvite

⁴in the south, all the land of the Canaanite, and Mearah that belongs to the Sidonians, as far as Aphek, to the border of the Amorite;

⁵and the land of the Gebalite, and all Lebanon, toward the east, from Baal-gad below Mount Hermon to the entrance of Hamath.

⁶“As for all the inhabitants of the hill country from Lebanon to Misrephoth-maim, even all the Sidonians, I will drive them out before Israel; only allot the land to Israel as an inheritance just as I have commanded you.

⁷“So now, divide this land [west of the Jordan] as an inheritance for the nine tribes and the half-tribe of Manasseh.”

⁸With the other half-tribe [of Manasseh], the Reubenites

and the Gadites received their inheritance which Moses gave them beyond the Jordan eastward, just as Moses the servant of the LORD gave to them;

⁹from Aroer on the edge of the valley of the [river] Arnon, and the city in the middle of the valley, and all the plain of Medeba, as far as Dibon;

¹⁰and all the cities of Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, as far as the border of the Ammonites;

¹¹and Gilead, and the territory of the Geshurites and Maacathites, and all Mount Hermon, and all Bashan as far as Salecah;

¹²the entire kingdom of Og in Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth and Edrei—he alone was left of the remnant of the Rephaim [giants]—for Moses had struck them and dispossessed them.

¹³But the sons of Israel did not dispossess the Geshurites or the Maacathites; for Geshur and Maacath live among Israel to this day.

¹⁴It was only to the tribe of Levi that Moses gave no [territory as an] inheritance; the offerings by fire to the LORD, the God of Israel, are their inheritance, as He told him.

¹⁵So Moses gave *an inheritance* to the tribe of the sons of Reuben according to their families.

¹⁶Their territory was from Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of the [river] Arnon, and the city which is in the middle of the valley and all the plain by Medeba;

¹⁷with Heshbon, and all its cities which are on the plain: Dibon and Bamoth-baal and Beth-baal-meon,

¹⁸and Jahaz and Kedemoth and Mephaath,

¹⁹and Kiriathaim and Sibmah and Zereth-shahar on the hill of the valley,

²⁰and Beth-peor and the slopes of Pisgah and Beth-jeshimoth,

²¹even all the cities of the plain and all the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites who reigned in Heshbon, whom Moses struck down along with the leaders of Midian, Evi and Rekem and Zur and Hur and Reba, the princes of Sihon, who lived in the land.

²²The sons of Israel also killed Balaam the son of Beor, the diviner (soothsayer), with the sword among [the rest of] their slain. [Num 31:16]

²³The border of the sons of Reuben was the Jordan. This was the inheritance of the sons of Reuben according to their families, with their cities and villages.

²⁴Moses also gave *an inheritance* to the tribe of Gad, to the sons of Gad, according to their families.

²⁵Their territory was Jazer, and all the cities of Gilead, and half the land of the sons of Ammon, as far as Aroer east of Rabbah;

²⁶and from Heshbon as far as Ramath-mizpeh and Betonim, and from Mahanaim as far as the border of Debir;

²⁷and in the valley, Beth-haram and Beth-nimrah and Succoth and Zaphon, the rest of the kingdom of Sihon king of Heshbon, with the Jordan as a border, as far as the *lower* end of the Sea of Chinnereth (Galilee) east of the Jordan.

²⁸This is the inheritance of the sons of Gad according to their families, with their cities and their villages.

²⁹Moses also gave *an inheritance* to the half-tribe of

Manasseh; and it was for the half-tribe of the sons of Manasseh according to their families.

³⁰Their region extended from Mahanaim, all Bashan, the entire kingdom of Og king of Bashan, and all the towns of Jair, which are in Bashan, sixty cities;

³¹also half of Gilead, with Ashtaroth and Edrei, the cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan; these were for the sons of Machir the son of Manasseh, for half of the sons of Machir according to their families (clans).

³²These are *the territories* which Moses distributed as an inheritance in the plains of Moab, beyond the Jordan at Jericho to the east.

³³But to the tribe of Levi, Moses did not give an inheritance; the LORD, the God of Israel, is their inheritance, as He told them.

14 NOW THESE are *the territories* which the tribes of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the households of the tribes of Israel apportioned to them as an inheritance,

²by the lot of their inheritance, as the LORD had commanded through Moses, for the nine tribes and the half-tribe.

³For Moses had given an inheritance to the two tribes and the half-tribe beyond the Jordan; but he did not give [any territory as] an inheritance to the Levites among them.

⁴For the sons of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim, and no portion was given in the land to the Levites

except cities in which to live, with their pasture lands for their livestock and for their property.

⁵The Israelites did just as the LORD had commanded Moses, and they divided the land.

⁶Then the [tribe of the] sons of Judah approached Joshua in Gilgal, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, “You know the word which the LORD said to Moses the man of God concerning me and you in Kadesh-barnea.

POWERPOINT

Just as Caleb declared his faith to drive the giants out of the fortified cities (Josh. 14:11–12), you can have an “I am” and an “I can” attitude. Fill your thoughts and your words with these confessions daily, and then you will experience more joy in your life!

I am a new creation in Christ
(see 2 Cor. 5:17).

I can live in perfect peace
(see Isa. 26:3).

*I can do all things through
Christ Who strengthens me*
(see Phil. 4:13).

*I am more than a conqueror in
Christ*
(see Rom. 8:37).

*I am dead to sin and alive to
righteousness*
(see Rom. 6:11).



⁷“I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to scout the land [of Canaan], and I brought a report back to him as it was in my heart.

⁸“My brothers (fellow spies) who went up with me made the heart of the people melt with fear; but I followed the LORD my God completely.

⁹“So Moses swore [an oath to me] on that day, saying, ‘Be assured that the land on which your foot has walked will be an inheritance to you and to your children always, because you have followed the LORD my God completely.’ [Deut 1:35, 36]

¹⁰“And now, look, the LORD has let me live, just as He said, these forty-five years since the LORD spoke this word to Moses, when Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, look at me, I am eighty-five years old today.

¹¹“I am still as strong today as I was the day Moses sent me; as my strength was then, so is my strength now, for war and for going out and coming in.

¹²“So now, give me this hill country about which the LORD spoke that day, for you heard on that day that the [giant-like] Anakim were there, with great fortified cities; perhaps the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the LORD said.”

¹³So Joshua blessed him and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as an inheritance.

¹⁴Therefore, Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he followed the LORD, the God of Israel, completely.

¹⁵The name of Hebron was formerly Kiriath-arba [city of Arba]; *for Arba* was the greatest man among the [giant-like] Anakim. Then the land had rest from war.

15 NOW THE lot (allotment) for the tribe of the sons of Judah according to their families reached [southward to] the border of Edom, southward to the wilderness of Zin at its most southern part.

²Their southern border was from the lower end of the Salt (Dead) Sea, from the bay that turns southward.

³Then it proceeded southward to the ascent of Akrabbim and continued along to Zin, and then went by the south of Kadesh-barnea and continued along to Hezron, and went up to Addar and turned about to Karka.

⁴It continued along to Azmon and proceeded to the Brook of Egypt (Wadi el-Arish), and the border ended at the [Mediterranean] sea. This was their southern border.

⁵The eastern border was the Salt (Dead) Sea, as far as the mouth of the Jordan. The northern border was from the bay of the sea at the mouth of the Jordan.

⁶Then the border went up to Beth-hoglah, and continued along north of Beth-arabah, and the border went up to the [landmark of the] stone of Bohan the son of Reuben.

⁷The border went up to Debir from the Valley of Achor, and turned northward toward Gilgal which is opposite the ascent of Adummim, which is on the south side of the valley; and the border continued on to the waters of En-shemesh and ended at En-rogel.

⁸Then the border went up by the Valley of Ben-hinnom (son of Hinnom) at the southern slope of the Jebusite [city] (that is, Jerusalem); and the border went up to the top of the mountain that lies before the Valley of Hinnom to the west, which is at the northern end of the Valley of Rephaim.

⁹Then the border extended from the top of the mountain to the spring of the waters of Nephtoah and proceeded to the cities of Mount Ephron; then the border curved to Baalah (that is, Kiriath-jearim).

¹⁰The border went around west from Baalah to Mount Seir, and passed along to the northern slope of Mount Jearim (that is, Chesalon), and went down to Beth-shemesh and then continued on through Timnah.

¹¹The border proceeded to the slope [of the hill] of Ekron northward, then curved to Shikkeron and continued to Mount Baalah and proceeded to Jabneel. Then the border ended at the [Mediterranean] sea.

¹²The western border was at the Great Sea, with its coastline. This is the border around the tribe of the sons of Judah according to their families.

¹³Now to Caleb the son of Jephunneh Joshua gave a portion among the sons of Judah, as the LORD commanded him, *namely*, Kiriath-arba, *Arba being* the father of Anak (that is, Hebron).

¹⁴So Caleb drove out from there the three sons of Anak: Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmai, the children of Anak.

¹⁵Then he went up from there against the people of Debir; Debir was formerly named Kiriath-sepher.

¹⁶Caleb said, "I will give Achsah my daughter as wife to the man who attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures it."

¹⁷And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's brother, captured it; so he gave him Achsah his daughter as a wife.

¹⁸Now it came about that when Achsah came *to Othniel*, she persuaded him [to allow her] to ask her father for a field. Then she [rode up to Caleb and] dismounted from her donkey, and Caleb said to her, "What do you want?"

¹⁹Achsah answered, "Give me a blessing; since you have given me the [dry] land of the Negev (South country), give me springs of water, too." So he gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

²⁰This is the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Judah according to their families (clans).

²¹The cities of the tribe of the sons of Judah in the extreme south toward the border of Edom were Kabzeel and Eder and Jagur,

²²and Kinah and Dimonah and Adadah,

²³and Kedesh and Hazor and Ithnan,

²⁴Ziph and Telem and Bealoth,

²⁵and Hazor-hadattah and Kerioth-hezron (that is, Hazor),

²⁶Amam and Shema and Moladah,

²⁷and Hazar-gaddah and Heshmon and Beth-pelet,

²⁸and Hazar-shual and Beersheba and Biziothiah,

²⁹Baalath and Iim and Ezem,
³⁰and Eltolad and Chesil and Hormah,
³¹and Ziklag and Madmannah and Sansannah,
³²and Lebaoth and Shilhim and Ain and Rimmon; in all
twenty-nine cities with their villages.

³³In the lowland: Eshtaol and Zorah and Ashnah,
³⁴and Zanoah and En-gannim, Tappuah and Enam,
³⁵Jarmuth and Adullam, Socoh and Azekah,
³⁶and Shaaraim and Adithaim and Gederah and
Gederothaim; fourteen cities with their villages.

³⁷Zenan and Hadashah and Migdal-gad,
³⁸and Dilean and Mizpeh and Joktheel,
³⁹Lachish and Bozkath and Eglon,
⁴⁰and Cabbon and Lahmas and Chitlish,
⁴¹and Gederoth, Beth-dagon and Naamah and Makkedah;
sixteen cities with their villages.

⁴²Libnah and Ether and Ashan,
⁴³and Iphtah and Ashnah and Nezib,
⁴⁴and Keilah and Achzib and Mareshah; nine cities with
their villages.

⁴⁵Ekron, with its towns and villages;
⁴⁶from Ekron even to the sea, all that were beside Ashdod,
with their villages;

⁴⁷Ashdod, with its towns and its villages; Gaza, with its
towns and its villages; as far as the Brook of Egypt (Wadi el-
Arish) and the Great [Mediterranean] Sea with its coastline.

⁴⁸In the hill country: Shamir and Jattir and Socoh,

⁴⁹and Dannah and Kiriath-sannah (that is, Debir),
⁵⁰and Anab and Eshtemoh and Anim,
⁵¹and Goshen and Holon and Giloh; eleven cities with their villages.

⁵²Arab and Dumah and Eshan,
⁵³and Janum and Beth-tappuah and Aphekah,
⁵⁴and Humtah and Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), and Zior;
nine cities with their villages.

⁵⁵Maon, Carmel and Ziph and Juttah,
⁵⁶and Jezreel and Jokdeam and Zanoah,
⁵⁷Kain, Gibeah and Timnah; ten cities with their villages.

⁵⁸Halhul, Beth-zur and Gedor,
⁵⁹and Maarath and Beth-anoth and Eltekon; six cities with their villages.

⁶⁰Kiriath-baal (that is, Kiriath-jearim), and Rabbah; two cities with their villages.

⁶¹In the wilderness [that slopes downward toward the Dead Sea]: Beth-arabah, Middin and Secacah,

⁶²and Nibshan and the City of Salt and Engedi; six cities with their villages.

⁶³But as for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the [tribe of the] sons of Judah were not able to drive them out; so the Jebusites live with the sons of Judah in Jerusalem to this day.

16 THEN THE lot (allotment) for the sons of Joseph went

from the Jordan Valley at Jericho to the waters of Jericho on the east into the wilderness, going up from Jericho through the hill country to Bethel.

²Then it went from Bethel to Luz, and continued to Ataroth, the border of the Archites.

³It went down westward to the territory of the Japhletites, as far as the outskirts of lower Beth-horon, then to Gezer, and it ended at the sea.

⁴The sons of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, received their inheritance.

⁵Now this was the territory of the sons of Ephraim according to their families: on the east side the border of their inheritance was Ataroth-addar, as far as upper Beth-horon.

⁶Then the border went westward at Michmethath on the north, and turned eastward to Taanath-shiloh and continued beyond it to the east of Janoah.

⁷It went down from Janoah to Ataroth and to Naarah, touched Jericho and ended at the Jordan.

⁸The border continued from Tappuah westward to the Brook Kanah, and it ended at the [Mediterranean] sea. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Ephraim according to their families (clans),

⁹with the cities which were set apart for the sons of Ephraim within the inheritance of the sons of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages.

¹⁰But they did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, so the Canaanites live among Ephraim to this day, and they became forced laborers.

17 NOW THIS was the lot (allotment) for the tribe of Manasseh, for he was the firstborn of Joseph. To Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead, were allotted Gilead and Bashan, because he was a man of war.

²So *the lot* was also made for the rest of the sons of Manasseh according to their families—for the sons of Abiezer and for the sons of Helek and for the sons of Asriel and for the sons of Shechem and for the sons of Hephher and for the sons of Shemida; these were the male descendants of Manasseh the son of Joseph according to their families (clans).

³But Zelophehad the son of Hephher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, only daughters; and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah.

POWERPOINT

Just as the Israelites wisely established clear boundaries in Joshua 17, it is wise for us to draw healthy boundaries in our lives and relationships to protect ourselves from being used and abused. Don't be a people-pleaser who pushes beyond the bounds of reason in order to make others happy while you are stressed or miserable. Set clear-cut boundaries and keep them in place.



⁴They came before Eleazar the priest and before Joshua the son of Nun and before the leaders and said, “The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers.” So according to the command of the LORD Joshua gave them an inheritance among their father’s brothers.

⁵So ten portions fell to Manasseh, besides the land of

Gilead and Bashan, which is beyond the Jordan [on the east side of the river],

⁶because the daughters of [Zelophehad, a descendant of] Manasseh had received an inheritance among his [other] sons [whose inheritance went to their male descendants]. The land of Gilead belonged to the rest of the sons of Manasseh. [Num 36:5–12]

⁷The territory of Manasseh reached from Asher to Michmethath which was east of Shechem; then the border went southward to the inhabitants of En-tappuah.

⁸The land of Tappuah belonged to Manasseh, but [the city of] Tappuah on the border of Manasseh belonged to the sons of Ephraim.

⁹Then the border went down to the brook of Kanah, south of the brook (these cities *belonged* to Ephraim, among the cities of Manasseh), and Manasseh's border was on the north side of the brook and it ended at the sea.

¹⁰The land on the south side *belonged* to Ephraim and that on the north side was Manasseh's, and the sea was their border; they reached to [the territory of] Asher on the north and to [the territory of] Issachar on the east.

¹¹Also, in Issachar and in Asher, Manasseh had Bethshean and its towns and Ibleam and its towns, and the inhabitants of Dor and its towns, and the inhabitants of En-dor and its towns, and the inhabitants of Taanach and its towns, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and its towns; the third is Napheth.

¹²But the sons of Manasseh were not able to [drive out the inhabitants and] take possession of these cities, because the

Canaanites persisted in living in that land.

¹³When the Israelites became strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but they did not drive them out completely.

¹⁴The sons of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, “Why have you given us only one lot and one portion as an inheritance, when we are a numerous people whom the LORD has so far blessed?”

¹⁵Then Joshua replied, “If you are a numerous people, go up to the forest and clear ground for yourselves there in the land of the Perizzites and the Rephaim, since the hill country of Ephraim is too narrow for you.”

¹⁶The sons of Joseph said, “The hill country is not enough for us, and all the Canaanites who live in the valley have iron chariots, both those who are in Beth-shean and its towns and those in the Valley of Jezreel.”

¹⁷Joshua said to the house of Joseph, to Ephraim and to Manasseh, “You are a numerous people and have great power; you shall not have *only* one lot,

¹⁸but the hill country shall be yours. For though it is a forest, you shall clear it and possess it to its farthest borders; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, even though they have iron chariots and though they are strong.”

18 THEN THE whole congregation of the Israelites assembled at Shiloh [in the tribal territory of Ephraim], and set up the Tent of Meeting there; and the land was subdued before them.

²There remained among the Israelites seven tribes who had not yet divided their inheritance.

³So Joshua asked them, “How long will you put off entering to take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you?”

⁴“Provide for yourselves three men from each tribe so that I may send them, and that they may go through the land and write a description of it with regard to their [tribal] inheritance; then they shall return to me.

⁵“They shall divide it into seven parts; [the tribe of] Judah shall remain in its territory on the south, and the house of Joseph shall remain in its territory on the north.

⁶“You shall describe the land in seven divisions, and bring *the description* here to me. I will cast lots for you here before the LORD our God.

⁷“But the Levites have no portion among you, because the priesthood of the LORD is their inheritance. Gad and Reuben and half the tribe of Manasseh also have received their inheritance eastward beyond the Jordan, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave them.”

⁸So the men arose and went [on their way], and Joshua commanded those who went to describe the land, saying, “Go and walk throughout the land and describe it, and return to me; and I will cast lots for you here before the LORD in Shiloh.”

⁹So the men set out and passed through the land, and described it by cities in seven divisions in a book; and they came back to Joshua to the camp at Shiloh.

¹⁰Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD, and there Joshua divided the land to the sons of Israel, [to each

tribe] according to their portions.

¹¹Now the lot (allotment) of the tribe of the sons of Benjamin came up according to their families, and the territory of their lot fell between [the tribes of] the sons of Judah and the sons of Joseph.

¹²On the north side their border began at the Jordan, then it went up the slope of Jericho on the north, and up through the hill country westward, and it ended at the Beth-aven wilderness.

¹³Then the border continued southward toward Luz, to the slope of Luz (that is, Bethel); then the border went down to Ataroth-addar, by the hill that lies south of lower Beth-horon.

¹⁴The border changed course [from there] and turned around on the western side southward, from the hill that lies to the south opposite Beth-horon; it ended at Kiriath-baal (that is, Kiriath-jearim), a city of [the tribe of] the sons of Judah. This *formed* the western side [of Benjamin's territory].

¹⁵The southern side was from the edge of Kiriath-jearim, and the border went on westward and went to the source of the waters of Nephtoah.

¹⁶Then the border went down to the edge of the hill overlooking the Valley of Ben-hinnom (son of Hinnom), which is at the north end of the Valley of Rephaim; and it descended to the Valley of Hinnom, south to the slope of the Jebusite, and went on down to En-rogel.

¹⁷Then it turned toward the north and went on to En-shemesh and on to Geliloth, which is opposite the ascent of Adummim, and it went down to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben.

¹⁸It continued to the north to the side opposite [Beth-] Arabah and went down to the Arabah.

¹⁹The border continued along to the north of the slope of Beth-hoglah; and the border ended at the northern bay of the Salt (Dead) Sea, at the south end of the Jordan. This was the southern border.

²⁰And the Jordan River was its border on the east side. This was the inheritance of the sons of Benjamin, according to their families and according to its borders all around.

²¹Now the cities of the tribe of the sons of Benjamin according to their families were Jericho and Beth-hoglah and Emek-keziz,

²²and Beth-arabah and Zemaraim and Bethel,

²³and Avvim and Parah and Ophrah,

²⁴and Chephar-ammoni and Ophni and Geba; twelve cities with their villages;

²⁵Gibeon and Ramah and Beeroth,

²⁶and Mizpeh and Chephirah and Mozah,

²⁷and Rekem and Irpeel and Taralah,

²⁸and Zelah, Haeleph and the Jebusite (that is, Jerusalem), Gibeah, Kiriath; fourteen cities with their villages. This is the inheritance of [the tribe of] the sons of Benjamin according to their families (clans).

19 THEN THE second lot fell to Simeon, to the tribe of the sons of Simeon according to their families (clans), and their inheritance was within the inheritance of the sons of Judah.

²So they had as their inheritance Beersheba or Sheba and Moladah,

³and Hazar-shual and Balah and Ezem,

⁴and Eltolad and Bethul and Hormah,

⁵and Ziklag and Beth-marcaboth and Hazar-susah,

⁶and Beth-lebaoth and Sharuhem; thirteen cities with their villages;

⁷Ain, Rimmon and Ether and Ashan; four cities with their villages;

⁸and all the villages which were around these cities as far as Baalath-beer, Ramah of the Negev (South country). This was the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Simeon according to their families.

⁹The inheritance of the sons of Simeon *was taken* from the portion of the sons of Judah, for the share of the sons of Judah was too large for them; so the sons of Simeon received an inheritance within Judah's inheritance.

¹⁰The third lot came up for [the tribe of] the sons of Zebulun according to their families. The territory of their inheritance extended to Sarid.

¹¹Then its border went up westward and on to Maralah, and reached to Dabbesheth and reached to the brook east of Jokneam.

¹²Then it turned from Sarid east toward the sunrise as far as the border of Chisloth-tabor, and it proceeded to Daberath and on up to Japhia.

¹³From there it continued east toward the sunrise to Gath-hepher and to Eth-kazin, and proceeded to Rimmon which turns

toward Neah.

¹⁴The border circled it on the north to Hannathon, ending at the Valley of Iphtahel.

¹⁵Included were Kattah and Nahalal and Shimron and Idalah and Bethlehem; twelve cities with their villages.

¹⁶This was the inheritance of the sons of Zebulun according to their families, these cities with their villages.

¹⁷The fourth lot fell to [the tribe of] Issachar, to the sons of Issachar according to their families.

¹⁸Their territory included: Jezreel and Chesulloth and Shunem,

¹⁹and Hapharaim and Shion and Anaharath,

²⁰and Rabbith and Kishion and Ebez,

²¹and Remeth and En-gannim and En-haddah and Beth-pazzez.

²²The border reached to Tabor and Shahazumah and Beth-shemesh, and their border ended at the Jordan; sixteen cities with their villages.

²³This was the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Issachar according to their families, the cities and their villages.

²⁴The fifth lot fell to the tribe of the sons of Asher according to their families.

²⁵Their territory was Helkath and Hali and Beten and Achshaph,

²⁶and Allammelech and Amad and Mishal; and on the west it reached to Carmel and to Shihor-libnath.

²⁷Then it turned eastward to Beth-dagon and reached Zebulun and the Valley of Iphtahel northward to Beth-emek and

Neiel, and continued in the north to Cabul,

²⁸and Ebron and Rehob and Hammon and Kanah, as far as Great Sidon.

²⁹Then the border turned to Ramah, [reaching] to the fortified city of Tyre; and it turned to Hosah, and it ended at the [Mediterranean] sea at the region of Achzib.

³⁰Included were Ummah, and Aphek and Rehob; twenty-two cities with their villages.

³¹This was the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Asher according to their families, these cities with their villages.

³²The sixth lot fell to [the tribe of] the sons of Naphtali according to their families.

³³Their border ran from Heleph, from the oak in Zaanannim and Adami-nekeb and Jabneel, as far as Lakkum, and it ended at the Jordan.

³⁴Then the border turned westward to Aznoth-tabor and went from there to Hukkok; and it reached Zebulun on the south and reached Asher on the west, and to Judah toward the east at the Jordan.

³⁵The fortified cities were Ziddim, Zer, and Hammath, Rakkath and Chinnereth,

³⁶and Adamah and Ramah and Hazor,

³⁷and Kedesh and Edrei and En-hazor,

³⁸and Yiron and Migdal-el, Horem and Beth-anath and Beth-shemesh; nineteen cities with their villages.

³⁹This was the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Naphtali according to their families, the cities and their villages.

⁴⁰The seventh lot fell to the tribe of the sons of Dan

according to their families.

⁴¹The territory of their inheritance included Zorah and Eshtaol and Ir-shemesh,

⁴²and Shaalabbin and Aijalon and Ithlah,

⁴³and Elon and Timnah and Ekron,

⁴⁴and Eltekeh and Gibbethon and Baalath,

⁴⁵and Jehud and Bene-berak and Gath-rimmon,

⁴⁶and Me-jarkon and Rakkon, with the territory opposite Joppa.

⁴⁷The territory of the sons of Dan went beyond these; so the sons of Dan went up to fight against Leshem (Laish) and captured it. Then they struck it with the edge of the sword and took possession of it and settled there [between the tribes of Naphtali and Manasseh]; they renamed Leshem, Dan, after the name of their father (ancestor) Dan. [Judg 1:34; 18:7–10, 27]

⁴⁸This was the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Dan according to their families (clans), these cities with their villages.

⁴⁹When they had finished dividing the land for inheritance by its borders, the Israelites gave an inheritance among them to Joshua the son of Nun.

⁵⁰According to the command of the LORD they gave him the city for which he asked—Timnath-serah in the hill country of Ephraim. So he built the city and settled in it.

⁵¹These are the inheritances which Eleazar the priest, Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the households of the tribes of the sons of Israel distributed by lot in Shiloh before the LORD at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting. So they finished dividing the land.

20 THE LORD spoke to Joshua, saying,

²“Speak to the Israelites, saying, ‘Designate the cities of refuge (asylum), of which I spoke to you through Moses,

³so that the person (manslayer) who kills any person unintentionally, without premeditation, may flee there, and they shall be your refuge from the blood avenger. [Num 35:10ff]

⁴‘He shall flee to one of these cities, and shall stand at the entrance of the gate of the city and explain his case to the elders of that city; and they shall take him into [the protection of] the city and give him a place [to stay], so that he may live among them.

⁵‘If the blood avenger pursues him, they shall not hand the offender (manslayer) over to him, because he killed his neighbor unintentionally *and* without premeditation and did not hate him beforehand.

⁶‘He shall live in that city until he has stood before the congregation for judgment [and if acquitted of murder he must stay there], until the death of the one who is the high priest in those days. Then the offender (manslayer) shall return to his own city and his own house from which he fled.”

⁷So they set apart *and* consecrated Kedesh in Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali, and Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the hill country of Judah.

⁸Beyond the Jordan east of Jericho, they designated Bezer in the wilderness on the plain from the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead from the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan

from the tribe of Manasseh.

⁹These were the appointed cities for all the Israelites and for the stranger sojourning (living temporarily) among them, so that whoever killed any person unintentionally may flee there, and not die by the hand of the blood avenger until he had stood before the congregation [for judgment].

21 THEN THE heads of the households of the Levites came to Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the households of the tribes of the sons of Israel.

²They spoke to them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, saying, “The LORD commanded Moses to give us cities to live in, with their pasture lands for our cattle.”

³So the sons of Israel gave the Levites from their inheritance these [forty-eight] cities and their pasture lands, in accordance with the command of the LORD.

⁴The [first] lot (allotment) came out for the families of the Kohathites. So those Levites who were sons (descendants) of Aaron the priest received thirteen cities by lot from the tribe of Judah and from the tribe of Simeon and from the tribe of Benjamin.

⁵The rest of the sons of Kohath received ten cities by lot from the families of the tribe of Ephraim and from the tribe of Dan and from the half-tribe of Manasseh.

⁶The sons of Gershon received thirteen cities by lot from the families of the tribe of Issachar and from the tribe of Asher and from the tribe of Naphtali and from the half-tribe of Manasseh in Bashan.

⁷The sons of Merari according to their families received twelve cities from the tribe of Reuben and from the tribe of Gad and from the tribe of Zebulun.

⁸The sons of Israel gave by lot to the Levites these cities with their pasture lands, as the LORD had commanded through Moses.

⁹They gave these cities which are mentioned here by name from the tribe of the sons of Judah and from the tribe of the sons of Simeon;

¹⁰and they were for the sons of Aaron, one of the families of the Kohathites, of the sons of Levi, because the lot fell to them first.

¹¹They gave them [the city of] Kiriath-arba, *Arba being* the father of Anak (that is, Hebron) in the hill country of Judah, with its surrounding pasture lands.

¹²But the fields of the city and its villages they had given to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as his property.

¹³So to the sons of Aaron the priest they gave Hebron, the city of refuge for anyone who committed manslaughter, with its pasture lands, and Libnah with its pasture lands,

¹⁴and Jattir with its pasture lands and Eshtemoa with its pasture lands,

¹⁵and Holon with its pasture lands and Debir with its pasture lands,

¹⁶and Ain with its pasture lands and Juttah with its pasture lands *and* Beth-shemesh with its pasture lands; nine cities from these two tribes (Judah and Simeon).

¹⁷From the tribe of Benjamin, Gibeon with its pasture lands, and Geba with its pasture lands,

¹⁸Anathoth with its pasture lands and Almon with its pasture lands; four cities.

¹⁹All the cities of the sons of Aaron, the priests, were thirteen cities with their pasture lands.

²⁰Then the cities from the tribe of Ephraim were allotted to the families of the sons of Kohath, the Levites, *even to* the rest of the sons of Kohath.

²¹They gave them Shechem, the city of refuge for anyone who committed manslaughter, with its pasture lands, in the hill country of Ephraim, and Gezer with its pasture lands,

²²and Kibzaim with its pasture lands and Beth-horon with its pasture lands; four cities.

²³From the tribe of Dan, Eltekeh with its pasture lands, Gibeon with its pasture lands,

²⁴Aijalon with its pasture lands, Gath-rimmon with its pasture lands; four cities.

²⁵From the half-tribe of Manasseh, *they allotted* Taanach with its pasture lands and Gath-rimmon with its pasture lands; two cities.

²⁶All the cities with their pasture lands for the families of the rest of the sons of Kohath *totalled* ten.

²⁷To the sons of Gershon, one of the families of the Levites, *they gave* from the other half-tribe of Manasseh, [the city of] Golan in Bashan, the city of refuge for anyone who committed manslaughter, with its pasture lands, and Be-shterah with its pasture lands; two cities.

²⁸From the tribe of Issachar, *they gave* Kishion with its pasture lands, Daberath with its pasture lands,

²⁹Jarmuth with its pasture lands, and En-gannim with its pasture lands; four cities.

³⁰From the tribe of Asher, *they gave* Mishal with its pasture lands, Abdon with its pasture lands,

³¹Helkath with its pasture lands and Rehob with its pasture lands; four cities.

³²From the tribe of Naphtali, *they gave* Kedesh in Galilee, the city of refuge for anyone who committed manslaughter, with its pasture lands and Hammoth-dor with its pasture lands and Kartan with its pasture lands; three cities.

³³All the cities of the Gershonites according to their families were thirteen cities with their pasture lands.

³⁴To the families of the sons of Merari, the rest of the Levites, *they gave* from the tribe of Zebulun, Jokneam with its pasture lands and Kartah with its pasture lands,

³⁵Dimnah with its pasture lands and Nahalal with its pasture lands; four cities.

³⁶From the tribe of Reuben, *they gave* Bezer with its pasture lands and Jahaz with its pasture lands,

³⁷Kedemoth with its pasture lands and Mephaath with its pasture lands; four cities.

³⁸From the tribe of Gad, *they gave* Ramoth in Gilead, the city of refuge for anyone who committed manslaughter, with its pasture lands and Mahanaim with its pasture lands,

³⁹Heshbon with its pasture lands and Jazer with its pasture lands; four cities in all.

⁴⁰All [these were] the cities of the sons of Merari according to their families, the rest of the families of the Levites; and their

lot was twelve cities.

⁴¹All the cities of the Levites in the midst of the property of the sons of Israel were forty-eight cities with their pasture lands.

⁴²These cities each had its surrounding pasture lands; so it was with all these cities.

⁴³So the LORD gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers (ancestors), and they took possession of it and lived in it.

⁴⁴The LORD gave them rest [from conflict] on every side, in accordance with everything that He had sworn to their fathers, and not one of all their enemies stood before them [in battle]; the LORD handed over all their enemies to them.

⁴⁵Not one of the good promises which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel failed; all had come to pass.

22 THEN JOSHUA called the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh,

²and said to them, "You have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have listened to *and* obeyed my voice in everything that I commanded you.

³"You have not deserted your brothers these many days to this day, but have [carefully] kept the obligation of the commandment of the LORD your God.

⁴"And now the LORD your God has given rest to your brothers, as He has promised them; so turn now and go to your tents, to the land of your possession, which Moses the servant

of the LORD gave you beyond the [east side of the] Jordan.

⁵“Only be very careful *and* diligently observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD has commanded you to love the LORD your God and walk in all His ways and keep His commandments and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul [your very life].”

⁶So Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their tents.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God's Promises Never Fail

After God had given Israel all the land He had promised, it says He also gave them “rest.” And amazingly, “Not one of the good promises which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel failed; all had come to pass” (Josh. 21:45).

According to Romans 15:13, we can be filled “with all joy and peace in believing”—not by doubting or being negative, but by believing. We all believe something, but believing only God’s Word produces the results whereby we may “abound in hope and overflow with confidence in His promises.” By just being positive, having the best perspective on everything, and always believing the best of everybody, we release peace and joy in our lives. We get what we believe, what we think, and what we meditate on, so believe God’s Word and expect peace and joy.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Thoughts Lead to Good Feelings

Excitement, zeal, and passion are positive emotions. They energize us to press forward in our pursuits. The Bible instructs us to be zealous and enthusiastic as we serve the Lord (see Rom. 12:11). Joshua exhorted God's people to "love the LORD your God and walk in all His ways and keep His commandments and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul [your very life]" (Josh. 22:5). Why should we do that? Simply because God expects us to trust that everything He does is for our ultimate good.

Good emotions come from good decisions and good thoughts. One way to enjoy a happier life is not to get up each day and wait to see how you feel, letting those feelings dictate the course of your day. Instead, set your mind in the right direction ahead of time and make decisions you know will produce emotions you can enjoy.

⁷Now to the one-half of the tribe of Manasseh Moses had given *a possession* in Bashan, but to the other half Joshua gave *a possession* on the west side of the Jordan among their brothers. So when Joshua sent them away to their tents, he blessed them,

⁸and he said to them, "Return to your tents with great riches and with very much livestock, with silver, gold, bronze,

iron, and with very many clothes; divide the spoil of your enemies with your brothers (fellow tribesmen).”

⁹So the sons (descendants) of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh returned *home* and departed from the [other] sons (western tribes) of Israel at Shiloh which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the land of Gilead, to the land of their own which they had possessed, in accordance with the command of the LORD through Moses.

¹⁰When they came to the region of the Jordan which is in the land of Canaan, the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an altar there by the Jordan, an altar that was great to behold.

¹¹And the [other] sons of Israel heard it said, “Look, the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh have built an altar at the edge of the land of Canaan, in the region [west] of the Jordan, on the side *belonging to* the sons of Israel.”

¹²When the sons of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the Israelites gathered at Shiloh to make war against them.

¹³Then the sons of Israel sent Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest to the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh, in the land of Gilead,

¹⁴and with him ten leaders, one leader from each father’s household from each of the tribes of Israel; and each one was the head of his father’s household among the thousands of Israel.

¹⁵They came to the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh, in the land of Gilead, and they

said to them,

¹⁶“This is what the entire congregation of the LORD says, ‘What is this disloyal *and* unfaithful act which you have committed against the God of Israel, so as to turn away from following the LORD this day, by building yourselves an altar, to rebel against the LORD this day?

¹⁷‘Is the wrongdoing (idolatry) of Peor not enough for us, from which we have not cleansed ourselves to this day, even though the affliction [in which twenty-four thousand died] came on the congregation of the LORD, [Num 25:1–9]

¹⁸that you would turn away this day from following the LORD? If you rebel against the LORD today, He will be angry with the entire congregation of Israel tomorrow.

¹⁹‘If, however, the land of your possession is unclean, then cross into the land of the possession of the LORD, where the LORD’s tabernacle is situated, and settle down among us. But do not rebel against the LORD, or rebel against us by building an altar for yourselves, besides the altar of the LORD our God [at Shiloh].

²⁰‘Did not Achan the son of Zerah act unfaithfully in the things under the ban, and [as a result God’s] wrath came on the entire congregation of Israel? And that man did not perish alone in his wrongdoing.’” [Josh 7:1–26]

²¹Then the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh answered and said to the heads of the families of Israel,

²²“The Mighty One, God, the LORD, the Mighty One, God, the LORD! He knows, and may Israel itself know. If it was in rebellion, or if in an unfaithful act against the LORD, do not

save us this day!

²³“If we have built an altar for ourselves to turn away from following the LORD, or if [we did so] to offer a burnt offering or grain offering on it, or if to offer sacrifices of peace offerings on it, may the LORD Himself require it [of us and hold us responsible].

²⁴“But in truth we have done this out of concern, for a reason, saying, ‘In time to come your sons (descendants) may say to our sons, “What claim do you have to the LORD, the God of Israel?’

²⁵“For the LORD has made the Jordan a border between us and you, you sons of Reuben and sons of Gad; you have no part in the LORD.” So your sons (descendants) may cause our sons to stop fearing the LORD.’

²⁶“So we said, ‘Let us prepare *and* build an altar, not for burnt offering or for sacrifice,

²⁷but to be a witness between us and you and between the generations after us, that we are to perform the service of the LORD before Him with our burnt offerings, and with our sacrifices and with our peace offerings, so that your sons (descendants) will not say to our sons in time to come, “You have no part in the LORD.”’

²⁸“So we said, ‘If your descendants should say this to us or to our descendants in time to come, then we can reply, “See the copy of the altar of the LORD which our fathers made, not for burnt offering or for sacrifice, but rather it is a witness between us and you.”’

²⁹“Far be it from us that we should rebel against the LORD and turn away from following the LORD this day, by building an

altar for burnt offering, for grain offering or for sacrifice, besides the altar of the LORD our God which is before His tabernacle [in Shiloh].”

³⁰So when Phinehas the priest and the leaders of the congregation and heads of the families of Israel who were with him, heard the words which the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the sons of Manasseh spoke, it pleased them.

³¹Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said to the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the sons of Manasseh, “Today we know that the LORD is among us, because you have not committed this unfaithful act against the LORD; indeed you have saved Israel from the hand of the LORD.”

³²Then Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest and the leaders returned from the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad, from the land of Gilead to the land of Canaan, to the sons of Israel, and brought back word to them.

³³The report pleased the sons of Israel, and the sons of Israel blessed God; and they said no more about going to battle against them to destroy the land in which the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad were living.

³⁴The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad called the altar *Witness*; “For it is a witness between us that the LORD is God.”

23 A LONG time after that, when the LORD had given Israel rest from all their enemies on every side, and Joshua had grown old and advanced in years,

²that Joshua called all Israel, their elders and their heads and their judges and their officers, and said to them, “I am old

and advanced in years.

³“And you have seen all that the LORD your God has done to all these nations for your sake; for the LORD your God is He who has been fighting for you. [Ex 14:14]

⁴“See, I have allotted to you these nations that remain as an inheritance for your tribes, with all the nations which I have cut off, from the Jordan [on the east] to the Great [Mediterranean] Sea toward the setting sun.

⁵“The LORD your God will push them away from before you and drive them out of your sight and you will take possession of their land, just as the LORD your God promised you.

⁶“Be steadfast *and* very determined to keep and to do everything that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, so that you do not turn aside from it to the right or the left,

⁷so that you do not associate with these nations which remain among you, or mention the name of their gods, or make anyone swear [an oath by them], or serve them, or bow down to them.

⁸“But you are to cling to the LORD your God, just as you have done to this day.

⁹“For the LORD has driven out great and mighty nations from before you; and as for you, no man has been able to stand [in opposition] before you to this day.

¹⁰“One of your men puts to flight a thousand, for the LORD your God is He who is fighting for you, just as He promised you.

¹¹“So be very careful *and* watchful of yourselves to love the LORD your God.

¹²“For if you ever turn back and cling to the rest of these nations, these that are left among you, and intermarry with them, so that you associate with them and they with you,

¹³know *and* understand with certainty that the LORD your God will not continue to drive these nations out from before you; but they will be a snare and trap to you, and a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which the LORD your God has given you.

¹⁴“Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the LORD your God has promised concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed.

¹⁵“It shall come about that just as every good word which the LORD your God spoke *and* promised to you has been fulfilled for you, so the LORD will bring upon you every bad thing [about which He warned you], until He has destroyed *and* eliminated you from this good land which the LORD your God has given you.

¹⁶“When you transgress (violate) the covenant of the LORD your God, which He commanded you [to follow], and you go and serve other gods and bow down to them, then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and you shall perish quickly from the good land which He has given you.”

24 THEN JOSHUA gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel and for their heads and for their judges and for their officers; they presented

themselves before God.

²Joshua said to all the people, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says, ‘Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, lived beyond the [Euphrates] River in ancient times; and they served other gods.

³‘Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the [Euphrates] River and led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants, and I gave him Isaac.

⁴‘To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau, and to Esau I gave [the hill country of] Mount Seir to possess; but Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt.

⁵‘Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt by what I did in its midst; and afterward I brought you out.

⁶‘Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea.

⁷‘When they cried out to the LORD [for help], He put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them and covered them; and your own eyes saw what I did in Egypt. And you lived in the wilderness a long time (forty years). [Josh 5:6]

⁸‘Then I brought you into the land of the Amorites who lived on the other side of the Jordan, and they fought with you; and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land and I destroyed them before you.

⁹‘Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel, and he sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you.

¹⁰‘But I would not listen to Balaam. Therefore he had to

bless you, so I saved you from Balak's hand. [Deut 23:5]

¹¹“You crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho; and the citizens of Jericho fought against you, as did the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Girgashite, the Hivite and the Jebusite; and so I gave them into your hand.

¹²“I sent the hornet [that is, the terror of you] before you, which drove the two kings of the Amorites out before you; but it was not by your sword or by your bow. [Ex 23:27, 28; Deut 2:25; 7:20]

¹³“I gave you a land for which you did not labor, and cities which you did not build, and you live in them; you eat from vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.’

¹⁴“Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and in truth; remove the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the [Euphrates] River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.

Speak God's Word

*As for me and my house, we
will serve the Lord.*

| adapted from JOSHUA 24:15 |

¹⁵“If it is unacceptable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

¹⁶The people answered, “Far be it from us to abandon (reject) the LORD to serve other gods;

¹⁷for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs (miracles) in our sight and kept us safe all along the way that we went and among all the peoples among whom we passed.

¹⁸“The LORD drove all the peoples out from before us, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God.”

¹⁹Then Joshua said to the people, “You will not be able to serve the LORD [if you serve any other gods], for He is a holy God; He is a jealous God [demanding what is rightfully and

uniquely His]. He will not forgive your transgression [of His law] or your sins.

²⁰“If you do abandon (reject) the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume *and* destroy you after He has done you good.”

²¹The people said to Joshua, “No, but we will serve [only] the LORD.”

²²Joshua then said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for yourselves the LORD, to serve Him.” And they said, “We are witnesses.”

²³“Now then, remove the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your hearts toward the LORD, the God of Israel.”

²⁴The people said to Joshua, “We will serve the LORD our God and we will listen to *and* obey His voice.”

²⁵So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance at Shechem.

²⁶And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was in [the courtyard of] the sanctuary of the LORD.

²⁷Joshua then said to all the people, “Look, this stone shall serve as a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us; so it shall be a witness against you, so that [afterward] you do not deny your God.”

²⁸Then Joshua sent the people away, each to [the territory of] his inheritance.

²⁹It happened after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, at the age of a hundred and

ten years.

³⁰They buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-serah, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash.

³¹Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, and had known all the works of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

³²Now they buried the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up from Egypt, at Shechem, in the plot of land which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred pieces of money; and it became the inheritance of the sons of Joseph.

³³And Eleazar [the priest], the son of Aaron died; and they buried him at Gibeah [on the hill] of Phinehas his son, which had been given to him in the hill country of Ephraim.

Judges

Author: | Unknown

Date: | About 1050
BC–1000 BC

The book of Judges is the story of the Israelites' turning away from God after they had settled in the Promised Land. Their disobedience and disregard for Him caused them great trouble. One of the patterns we see in Judges is that every time the Israelites turned their backs on God, their enemies defeated them and they became oppressed.

What happened to the Israelites when they were disloyal to God is a powerful lesson for anyone who wants to win the battle of the mind. If you want to live a victorious life, it's necessary to keep your heart faithful to the Lord. Don't ever forget God or think you can live successfully without His presence and His help, as the Israelites did, but always do whatever is necessary to stay in close personal fellowship with Him.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM JUDGES:

Just as the Lord was with Gideon, He is also with you (see Judges 6:12–14).

You can be like Gideon, speaking of your battles as though they are already won (see Judges 7:14–15).

Everyone has weaknesses, just as Samson did. The enemy knows your weaknesses and will seek to take advantage of them. Be aware of your weaknesses and guard against the lies of Satan (see Judges 16:17).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM JUDGES:

Hear, O kings; listen, O rulers! I will sing to the LORD, I will sing praise to the LORD, the God of Israel. | Judges 5:3

So let all Your enemies perish, O LORD; but let those who love Him be like the rising of the sun in its might. | Judges 5:31

And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him and said, "The LORD is with you, O brave man." | Judges 6:12

THE BOOK OF JUDGES

1 NOW IT came about after the death of Joshua, that the sons (descendants) of Israel (Jacob) asked the LORD, “Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them?”

²And the LORD said, “Judah shall go up [first]; behold, I have given the land into his hand.”

³And [the tribe of the sons of] Judah said to [the tribe of the sons of] Simeon his brother, “Come up with me into my allotted territory, so that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with you into your allotted territory.” So Simeon went with him.

⁴Then Judah went up, and the LORD gave the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand, and they struck down in defeat ten thousand men at Bezek.

⁵Then they found Adoni-bezek in Bezek and fought against him, and they struck down in defeat the Canaanites and the Perizzites.

⁶But Adoni-bezek fled; and they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and his big toes.

⁷Adoni-bezek said, “Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to gather up *scraps of food* under my

table; as I have done [to others], so God has repaid me.” So they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died there.

⁸Then the sons of Judah fought against [Jebusite] Jerusalem and captured it and struck it with the edge of the sword and set the city on fire.

⁹Afterward the sons of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites who lived in the hill country, in the Negev (South country) and in the lowland.

¹⁰So Judah went against the Canaanites who lived in Hebron (the name of Hebron formerly was Kiriath-arba); and they defeated Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmi.

¹¹From there [the tribe of] Judah went against the inhabitants of Debir (the name of Debir formerly was Kiriath-sepher [city of books and scribes]).

¹²And Caleb said, “Whoever attacks Kiriath-sepher and captures it, I will even give him my daughter Achsah as a wife.”

¹³Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother, captured it; so he gave him his daughter Achsah as a wife.

¹⁴When she came to *Othniel*, she persuaded him to [allow her to] ask her father [Caleb] for a field. Then she [rode up to Caleb and] dismounted from her donkey, and Caleb said to her, “What do you want?”

¹⁵She said to him, “Give me a blessing; since you have given me the land of the Negev (South country), give me springs of water, too.” So Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

¹⁶The sons of [Jethro] the Kenite, Moses’ father-in-law, went up from the City of Palms (Jericho) with the sons of Judah, to the wilderness of Judah which is in the Negev (South

country) *near* Arad; and they went and lived with the people.
[Ex 3:1]

¹⁷Then [the warriors of the tribe of] Judah went with [the warriors of the tribe of] Simeon his brother, and they struck the Canaanites living in Zephath and utterly destroyed it. So the city was called Hormah (destruction).

¹⁸Also [the warriors of] Judah captured Gaza with its territory and Ashkelon with its territory and Ekron with its territory.

¹⁹The LORD was with Judah, and [the tribe of] Judah took possession of the hill country, but they could not dispossess *and* drive out those inhabiting the valley because they had iron chariots.

²⁰Then they gave Hebron to Caleb, as Moses had said, and he drove out from there the three sons of Anak. [Josh 14:6, 9]

²¹But the sons of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem; so the Jebusites have lived with the sons of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.

²²The house of Joseph also went up against Bethel, and the LORD was with them.

²³The house of Joseph spied out Bethel (now the name of the city was formerly Luz).

²⁴The spies saw a man coming out of the city and they said to him, "Please show us the entrance to the city and we will treat you kindly."

²⁵So he showed them the entrance to the city, and they struck the city with the edge of the sword, but they let the man and all his family go free.

²⁶The man went into the land of the Hittites and built a city

and named it Luz, which is its name to this day.

²⁷But [the tribe of] Manasseh did not take possession of Beth-shean and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages; so the Canaanites remained in that land.

²⁸It happened when Israel became strong, that they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but they did not drive them out completely.

²⁹Neither did [the warriors of] Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who were living in Gezer; so the Canaanites lived in Gezer among them.

³⁰[The warriors of the tribe of] Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron or of Nahalol; so the Canaanites lived among them and were put to forced labor.

³¹[The warriors of the tribe of] Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Acco, or the inhabitants of Sidon, or of Ahlab, or of Achzib, or of Helbah, or of Aphik, or of Rehob.

³²So the Asherites lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land, because they did not drive them out.

³³Neither did [the warriors of] Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, or the inhabitants of Beth-anath, but they lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; and the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and of Beth-anath became forced labor for them.

³⁴Then the Amorites forced the sons of Dan [back] into the hill country, for they would not allow them to come down into the valley;

³⁵yet the Amorites persisted in living on Mount Heres (the

mountain of the sun), in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim; but when the power of the house (descendants) of Joseph became strong *and* prevailed, they became forced labor.

³⁶The border of the Amorites ran from the ascent of Akrabbim, from Sela (rock) and upward.

2 NOW THE Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, “I brought you up from Egypt and led you to the land which I swore [to give] to your fathers; and I said, ‘I will never break My covenant with you, [Ex 20:2; 23:32]

²and as for you, you shall not make a covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.’ But you have not obeyed Me; what is this that you have done?

³“So I also said, ‘I will not drive your enemies out before you; but they will be *like thorns* in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you.’”

⁴When the Angel of the LORD had spoken these words to all the Israelites, the people raised their voices and wept.

⁵So they named that place Bochim (weepers); and there they offered sacrifices to the LORD.

⁶And when Joshua had sent the people away, the [tribes of] Israelites went each to his inheritance, to take possession of the land.

⁷The people served the LORD all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

⁸Then Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of a hundred and ten.

⁹And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

¹⁰Also, all [the people of] that generation were gathered to their fathers [in death]; and another generation arose after them who did not know (recognize, understand) the LORD, nor even the work which He had done for Israel.

¹¹Then the Israelites did evil in the sight of the LORD and worshiped *and* served the Baals,

¹²and they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who brought them out of the land of Egypt. They followed other gods from the gods of the peoples who were around them, and they bowed down to them, and offended *and* provoked the LORD to anger.

¹³So they abandoned the LORD and served Baal [the pagan god of the Canaanites] and the Ashtaroath.

¹⁴So the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands (power) of plunderers who robbed them; and He sold them into the hands of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer stand [in opposition] before their enemies.

¹⁵Wherever they went, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil (misfortune), as the LORD had spoken, and as the LORD had sworn to them, so that they were severely distressed. [Lev 26:14–46]

¹⁶Then the LORD raised up judges who rescued them from the hands of those who robbed them.

¹⁷Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they played the

prostitute after other gods and they bowed down to them. They quickly turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do as *their fathers*.

¹⁸When the LORD raised up judges for them, He was with the judge and He rescued them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed and afflicted them.

¹⁹But when the judge died, they turned back and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, in following and serving other gods, and bowing down to them. They did not abandon their practices or their stubborn ways.

²⁰So the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He said, "Because this nation has transgressed (violated) My covenant (binding agreement) which I commanded their fathers, and has not listened to My voice,

²¹I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left [to be conquered] when he died,

²²in order to test [the loyalty of] Israel by them, whether Israel will keep the way of the LORD to walk in it, as their fathers did, or not."

²³So the LORD allowed those nations to remain, not driving them out at once; and He did not give them into the hand of Joshua.

3 NOW THESE are the nations which the LORD left [in order] to test Israel by them (*that is*, all [the people of Israel] who had

not [previously] experienced any of the wars in Canaan;

²only in order that the generations of the sons of Israel might be taught war, at least those who had not experienced it previously).

³*The remaining nations are:* the five lords (governors) of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites who lived on Mount Lebanon from Mount Baal-hermon to the entrance of Hamath.

⁴They were [allowed to remain] for the testing of Israel, to determine whether Israel would listen to *and* obey the commandments of the LORD, which He had commanded their fathers (ancestors) through Moses.

⁵And the Israelites lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites;

⁶and they took their daughters for themselves as wives and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their [pagan] gods. [Ex 34:12–16]

⁷And the Israelites did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth. [Judg 2:13]

⁸So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and He sold them into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the Israelites served Cushan-rishathaim eight years.

⁹But when the Israelites cried out to the LORD [for help], the LORD raised up a man to rescue the people of Israel, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.

¹⁰The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the LORD gave Cushan-

rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand, and he prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim.

¹¹And the land was at rest [from oppression for] forty years. Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

¹²Now the Israelites again did evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD strengthened Eglon king of Moab against Israel, since they had done what was evil in the sight of the LORD.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God's Grace Compensates for Our Weakness

God gives us His power (grace) so we can do what is needed in spite of our weaknesses. In fact, God purposefully chooses the weak and foolish things of the world to work through so we will give Him the glory for what is accomplished. God wants to amaze the world, and one of the ways He does so is by doing great things through people who are weak and don't have the natural abilities to complete the task at hand (see 1 Cor. 1:25–29).

Shamgar is a good example of this. Using only an oxgoad, probably an iron spear eight to ten feet long, he saved Israel (see Judg. 3:31). We can easily see that this would have been impossible in his natural strength, but God enabled him to do it.

If God has given you something to do and you feel inadequate, relax; don't be afraid you won't be able to do it. Step out in faith, and God will meet you where you are and give you His grace (undeserved favor and power) to complete the task. Through Christ you can do all things!

¹³And Eglon gathered to him the sons of Ammon and Amalek, and went and struck down Israel [in defeat], and they took possession of the City of Palm Trees (Jericho).

¹⁴And the Israelites served Eglon king of Moab eighteen

years.

¹⁵But when the Israelites cried out to the LORD [for help], the LORD raised up a man to rescue them, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a left-handed man. And the Israelites sent *a gift* of tribute by him to Eglon king of Moab.

¹⁶Now Ehud made for himself a sword a cubit long, which had two edges, and he bound it on his right thigh under his robe.

¹⁷And he brought the tribute to Eglon king of Moab. Now Eglon was a very fat man.

¹⁸And when Ehud had finished presenting the tribute, he sent away the people who had carried it.

¹⁹But Ehud himself turned back from the sculptured stones at Gilgal, [and he returned to Eglon] and said [to him], “I have a secret message for you, O king.” Eglon said “Keep silence.” And all who attended him left him.

²⁰Ehud came to him as he was sitting alone in his [private] cool upper chamber, and Ehud said, “I have a message from God for you.” And the king got up from his seat.

²¹Then Ehud reached out with his left hand and took the sword from his right thigh, and plunged it into Eglon’s belly.

²²And the hilt also went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade, because Ehud did not draw the sword out of his belly; and the refuse came out.

²³Then Ehud went out into the vestibule and shut the doors of the upper chamber behind him, and locked *them*.

²⁴When Ehud departed, Eglon’s servants came. And when they saw that the doors of the upper room were locked, they said, “He is only relieving himself in the cool room.”

²⁵They waited [a very long time] until they became embarrassed *and* uneasy, but he still did not open the doors of the upper room. So [finally] they took the key and opened them, and behold, their master had fallen to the floor, dead.

²⁶Now Ehud escaped while they lingered, and he passed beyond the sculptured stones and escaped to Seirah.

²⁷When he had arrived, he blew a trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim; and the sons of Israel went down with him from the hill country, and he was in front of them.

²⁸And he said to them, “Pursue *them*, for the LORD has handed over your enemies the Moabites to you.” So they went down after him and seized the fords of the Jordan opposite Moab and did not allow anyone to cross.

²⁹They struck down at that time about ten thousand Moabite men, all strong, courageous men; not a man escaped.

³⁰So Moab was subdued *and* humbled that day under the hand of Israel, and the land was at rest for eighty years.

³¹After Ehud came Shamgar the son of Anath, who struck down six hundred Philistine men with an oxgoad. He too saved Israel.

4 BUT THE Israelites again did evil in the sight of the LORD, after Ehud died.

²So the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-hagoyim.

³Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD [for help], for

Jabin had nine hundred iron chariots and had oppressed *and* tormented the sons of Israel severely for twenty years.

⁴Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time.

⁵She used to sit [to hear and decide disputes] under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the Israelites came up to her for judgment.

⁶Now she sent *word* and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-naphtali, and said to him, “Behold, the LORD, the God of Israel, has commanded, ‘Go and march to Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men [of war] from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun.

⁷‘I will draw out Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his infantry to meet you at the river Kishon, and I will hand him over to you.’”

⁸Then Barak said to her, “If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go.”

⁹She said, “I will certainly go with you; nevertheless, the journey that you are about to take will not be for your honor *and* glory, because the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.” Then Deborah got up and went with Barak to Kedesh.

¹⁰And Barak summoned [the fighting men of the tribes of] Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh, and ten thousand men went up under his command; Deborah also went up with him.

¹¹Now Heber the Kenite had separated himself from the Kenites, from the sons of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, and had pitched his tent as far away as the terebinth tree in Zaanannim, which is near Kedesh.

¹²When someone told Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor,

¹³Sisera called together all his chariots, nine hundred iron chariots, and all the people who were with him, from Harosheth-hagoyim to the river Kishon.

¹⁴Deborah said to Barak, "Arise! For this is the day when the LORD has given Sisera into your hand. Has the LORD not gone out before you?" So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him.

¹⁵And the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and [confused] all his army with the edge of the sword before Barak; and Sisera dismounted from his chariot and fled away on foot.

¹⁶But Barak pursued the chariots and the army to Harosheth-hagoyim, and the entire army of Sisera fell by the sword; not even one man was left.

¹⁷But Sisera fled on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, because there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite.

¹⁸Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said to him, "Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me! Have no fear." So he turned aside to her [and went] into the tent, and she covered him with a rug.

¹⁹And he said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink because I am thirsty." And she opened a skin of milk and gave him a drink; then she covered him.

²⁰And he said to her, "Stand at the door of the tent, and if any man comes and asks you, 'Is there anyone here?' tell him, 'No.'"

²¹But Jael, Heber's wife, took a tent peg and a hammer in

her hand, and came up quietly to him and drove the peg through his temple, and it went through into the ground; for he was sound asleep and exhausted. So he died.

²²And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him and said to him, “Come, and I will show you the man whom you are seeking.” And he entered [her tent] with her, and behold Sisera lay dead with the tent peg in his temple.

²³So on that day God subdued *and* humbled Jabin king of Canaan before the sons of Israel.

²⁴And the hand of the sons of Israel pressed down heavier and heavier on Jabin king of Canaan, until they had destroyed him.

5 THEN DEBORAH and Barak the son of Abinoam sang on that day, saying,

²“For the leaders who took the lead in Israel,
For the people who volunteered [for battle],
Bless the LORD!

³“Hear, O kings; listen, O rulers!
I will sing to the LORD,
I will sing praise to the LORD, the God of Israel.

⁴“LORD, when You went out from Seir,
When You marched from the field of Edom,
The earth quaked, the heavens also dripped,
Yes, the clouds dripped water.

⁵“The mountains quaked at the presence of the LORD,
Yes, this Sinai, at the presence of the LORD, the God of

Israel.

6“In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath,
In the days of Jael, the highways were deserted,
And travelers went by roundabout ways.

7“*The villagers ceased to be*; they ceased in Israel
Until I, Deborah, arose,
Until I arose, a mother in Israel.

Speak God's Word

*I will sing to the Lord. I will
sing praise to the Lord, the
God of Israel.*

| *adapted from* JUDGES 5:1 |

- 8“They chose new gods;
Then war was in the gates.
Was there a shield or spear seen
Among forty thousand in Israel?
- 9“*My heart goes out* to the commanders of Israel,
The volunteers among the people;
Bless the LORD!
- 10“Sing of it, you who ride on white donkeys,
You who sit on *rich* carpets,
And you who walk by the way.
- 11“*At the sound of those who divide flocks* among the
watering places,
There they shall recount the righteous acts of the LORD,
The righteous acts toward His villagers in Israel.
Then the people of the LORD went down to the gates.
- 12“Awake, awake, Deborah;

Awake, awake, sing a song!

Arise, Barak, and lead away your captives, you son of Abinoam.

13“Then down marched the survivors to the nobles;
The people of the LORD marched down for Me against the mighty.

14“From Ephraim those whose root is in Amalek *came down*,
After you, Benjamin, with your relatives;
From Machir came down commanders *and* rulers,
And from Zebulun those who handle the scepter of the
[office of] scribe.

15“And the heads of Issachar *came* with Deborah;
As Issachar, so was Barak;
Into the valley they rushed at his heels;
Among the divisions of Reuben
There were great searchings of heart.

16“Why [Reuben] did you linger among the sheepfolds,
To hear the piping for the flocks?
Among the divisions of Reuben
There were great searchings of heart.

17“Gilead remained beyond the Jordan;
And why did Dan live as an alien on ships?
Asher sat [still] on the seacoast,
And remained by its landings.
[These did not come to battle for God’s people.]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Be Confident in God's Love

We are loved, accepted, and made right with God because we place our faith in Jesus Christ and the work He accomplished for us on the cross (see Rom. 5:8). He paid for our sins and mistakes. He absolved us from guilt and reconciled us with God so when we stand before God, we have "rightness," not "wrongness." And we have it because He gave it as a gift, not because we earned it.

Once you believe God's love is based on Who He is and what Jesus has done and not on what you do, the struggle is over. You can cancel your "performance" and serve God, not to "get" Him to love you, but because you know that He does love you, which changes you: "So... let those who love Him be like the rising of the sun in its might" (Judg. 5:31). You shine in His love!

18“But Zebulun was a people who risked their lives to the [point of] death;

Naphtali also, on the heights of the field.

19“The kings came and fought;

Then the kings of Canaan fought

At Taanach by the waters of Megiddo.

Spoils of silver they did not obtain.

- 20“From the heavens the stars fought,
From their courses they fought against Sisera.
- 21“‘The torrent Kishon swept the enemy away,
The ancient torrent, the torrent Kishon.
O my soul, march on with strength.
- 22“‘Then the horses’ hoofs beat [loudly]
Because of the galloping—the galloping of his valiant *and*
powerful steeds.
- 23“‘Curse Meroz,’ said the messenger of the LORD,
‘Utterly curse its inhabitants;
Because they did not come to the help of the LORD,
To the help of the LORD against the mighty.’
- 24“‘Most blessed of women is Jael,
The wife of Heber the Kenite;
Most blessed is she of women in the tent.
- 25“‘Sisera asked for water and she gave him milk;
She brought him curds in a magnificent bowl.
- 26“‘She reached out her [left] hand for the tent peg,
And her right hand for the workmen’s hammer.
Then she struck Sisera, she smashed his head;
And she shattered and pierced his temple.
- 27“‘He bowed, he fell, he lay [still] at her feet;
At her feet he bowed, he fell;
Where he bowed, there he fell dead.
- 28“‘Out of the window she looked down and lamented (cried
out in a shrill voice),

The mother of Sisera through the lattice,
'Why is his chariot delayed in coming?
Why have the hoofbeats of his chariots delayed?'

²⁹"Her wise ladies answered her,

Indeed, she repeated her words to herself,

³⁰'Are they not finding and dividing the spoil?

A maiden (concubine) or two for every man;

A spoil of dyed garments for Sisera,

A spoil of dyed garments embroidered,

Two pieces of dyed garments embroidered for the neck of
the plunderer?'

³¹"So let all Your enemies perish, O LORD;

But let those who love Him be like the rising of the sun in its
might."

And the land was at rest for forty years.

6 THEN THE Israelites did evil in the sight of the LORD; and
the LORD gave them into the hand of Midian for seven years.

²The [powerful] hand of Midian prevailed against Israel.
Because of Midian the sons of Israel made for themselves the
dens (hideouts) which were in the mountains, and the caves
and the [mountain] strongholds.

³For it was whenever Israel had sown [their seed] that the
Midianites would come up with the Amalekites and the people
of the east and go up against them.

⁴So they would camp against them and destroy the crops
of the land as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel as

well as no sheep, ox, or donkey.

⁵For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, and they would come in as numerous as locusts; both they and their camels were innumerable. So they came into the land to devastate it.

⁶So Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites, and the Israelites cried out to the LORD [for help].

⁷Now it came about when they cried out to the LORD because of Midian,

⁸that the LORD sent a prophet to the Israelites, and he said to them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘I brought you up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of slavery.

⁹‘And I rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land,

¹⁰and I said to you, “I am the LORD your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live.” But you have not listened to *and* obeyed My voice.”

¹¹Now the Angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth tree at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, and his son Gideon was beating wheat in the wine press [instead of the threshing floor] to [hide it and] save it from the Midianites.

¹²And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, “The LORD is with you, O brave man.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Follow Your Heart

As Gideon experienced, not everything God asks us to do will make sense in our minds (see Judg. 6:15). Learn how to go with what you sense inside your heart. If you don't have peace about doing something, don't do it. If you have peace about something, don't let your friends talk you out of it just because they don't understand. Even if no one else is doing what you believe you should do, be bold enough to follow your heart.

Instead of trying to figure things out, just do what God tells you and you will avoid a lot of confusion. Every time you get confused you can think, I don't know what's going on, and I am not going to try to figure it out. I just want to follow God. The apostle Paul was a very educated man, and even he came to the point where he said he was determined to know nothing but Christ (see 1 Cor. 2:2).

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

You Can Do It by Faith

Of all the people in the Bible, Gideon was one of the ones most filled with doubt. When God called him to do a big job, Gideon had no confidence that he could accomplish it. What he needed to do was realize that his doubts and lack of self-confidence were not important; what mattered was whether or not he had faith in God. With faith in God, our inadequacies become insignificant and we can experience God's power working through us to do what we cannot do in our own strength.

Many times when people talk about what they believe God has called them to do or refer to a promise they believe God has given them, they immediately say, "But I just don't have enough faith for that." The truth is, we have all the faith we need to do whatever God's will is for us (see Rom. 12:3). We all have faith, but the key to victory is where we place it. If we place our faith in our own abilities or in other people, we will be disappointed. But if we put our faith in God, we will be amazed at what He can do through us.

When I sit down at the computer to start writing a new book, even though I have a subject in mind and have done some research, I still don't know for sure what all I am going to write. Beginning is sometimes the most difficult part of the process. I sit there looking at the keyboard, then finally put my fingers on the keys—and words begin pouring into my heart. Then day after day, chapter after chapter, by faith, I finally finish the book. But I will never finish unless I begin.

Faith doesn't mean we have to know what every step will be as we move toward our goal. Many times we have to take one step before God shows us the next one. We must *begin*, and then we need to keep on going. When we make progress in the right direction, we need to let it encourage us and inspire us to take the next step. If what we are doing is God's will, He will never fail to help us finish as we continue in faith day after day.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God, I choose today to place my faith in You. I admit that I cannot do what You are calling me to do in my own strength. I will not look to myself or to other people, but I will look to You to enable me to accomplish by faith what You are asking me to do. In Jesus' name. Amen.

¹³But Gideon said to him, “Please my lord, if the LORD is with us, then why has all this happened to us? And where are all His wondrous works which our fathers told us about when they said, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the LORD has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian.”

¹⁴The LORD turned to him and said, “Go in this strength of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?”

¹⁵But Gideon said to Him, “Please Lord, how am I to rescue Israel? Behold, my family is the least [significant] in Manasseh, and I am the youngest (smallest) in my father’s house.”

¹⁶The LORD answered him, “I will certainly be with you, and you will strike down the Midianites as [if they were only] one man.”

¹⁷Gideon replied to Him, “If I have found any favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who speaks with me.

¹⁸“Please do not depart from here until I come back to You, and bring my offering and place it before You.” And He said, “I will wait until you return.”

¹⁹Then Gideon went and prepared a young goat and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour. The meat he put in a basket and the broth in a pot, and he brought *the food* to Him under the oak (terebinth) and presented it.

²⁰The Angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth [over them].” And he did so.

²¹Then the Angel of the LORD put out the end of the staff that was in His hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire flared up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the Angel of the LORD vanished from his sight.

²²When Gideon realized [without any doubt] that He was the Angel of the LORD, he declared, “Oh no, Lord GOD! For now I have seen the Angel of the LORD face to face [and I am doomed]!”

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that You are
peace.*

• *adapted from Judges 6:24*

²³The LORD said to him, “Peace to you, do not be afraid; you shall not die.”

²⁴Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and named it The LORD is Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah, of the

Abiezrites.

²⁵Now on that same night the LORD said to Gideon, “Take your father’s bull, the second bull seven years old, and tear down the altar of Baal that belongs to your father, and cut down the Asherah that is beside it;

²⁶and build an altar to the LORD your God on top of this mountain stronghold [with stones laid down] in an orderly way. Then take the second bull and offer a burnt sacrifice using the wood of the Asherah which you shall cut down.”

²⁷Then Gideon took ten men of his servants and did just as the LORD had told him; but because he was too afraid of his father’s household (relatives) and the men of the city to do it during daylight, he did it at night.

²⁸Early the next morning when the men of the city got up, they discovered that the altar of Baal was torn down, and the Asherah which was beside it was cut down, and the second bull was offered on the altar which had been built.

²⁹So they said to one another, “Who has done this thing?” When they searched about and inquired, they were told, “Gideon the son of Joash did it.”

³⁰Then the men of the city said to Joash, “Bring out your son, so that he may be executed, because he has torn down the altar of Baal and cut down the Asherah which was beside it.”

³¹But Joash said to all who stood against him, “Will you plead for Baal? Will you save him? Whoever pleads for Baal shall be put to death while it is still morning. If Baal is a god, let him defend himself, because someone has torn down his altar.”

³²Therefore on that day he named Gideon Jerubbaal, meaning, “Let Baal plead,” because he had torn down his altar.

³³Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the east assembled together; and they crossed over [the Jordan] and camped in the Valley of Jezreel.

³⁴So the Spirit of the LORD clothed Gideon [and empowered him]; and he blew a trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called together [as a militia] to follow him.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Slow Down and Be at Peace

When Gideon built an altar to the Lord, he named it “The LORD is Peace” (Judg. 6:24). The apostle Paul echoed this in Ephesians 2:14 when he wrote about Jesus: “For He Himself is our peace.” If we know the Lord, we have access to peace all the time.

I believe one of the biggest stealers of peace in most people’s lives today is what I call “the hurry habit.” People have become so busy, that in order to accomplish everything they think they have to do, they are constantly in a hurry. I believe that if we must rush and hurry through everything we do, we are trying to do too much. Much of what we hurry to do is done because we think if we do it now, we can enjoy life later. I suggest we slow down, get our peace back, and enjoy life now!

One way to renew our minds in this area is to realize that we really do not have to do everything everyone wants us to do, and that saying no is perfectly acceptable.

As soon as you start feeling pressured to do more than you

can do peacefully, let that be your “overload alarm.” Just as your alarm clock signals you to get up and start your day, let your overload alarm be your signal to say no to whatever you must in order to remain peaceful.

One of the people I have to say no to is myself. Sometimes I have opportunities to do things that cause me to feel pressured and I have to say, “Joyce, your peace is more important than this thing you want to do.”

Quite often, we are our own worst enemy. We may want to be involved in everything that everyone we know is involved in, but that may not be best for us. If we will follow wisdom, we can be at peace while everyone around us is stressed from hurrying to do too much.

God is not in a hurry. If we hurry we are likely to run right past Him and miss something wonderful He has for us. Let me encourage you to live in God’s divine rhythm, according to His perfect timing, and to live at a pace that allows you to enjoy doing what you do with peace.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God of peace, I pray that You would help me to renew my mind as I think about all the things I want to do and need to do. Help me to make choices that lead to peace, not to stress and hurry. I ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

³⁵He sent messengers throughout [the tribe of] Manasseh, and the fighting men were also called together to follow him; and he sent messengers to [the tribes of] Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and they came up to meet them.

³⁶Then Gideon said to God, “If You are going to rescue Israel through me, as You have spoken,

³⁷behold, I will put a fleece of [freshly sheared] wool on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece, and it is dry on all the ground [around it], then I will know that You will rescue Israel through me, as You have said.”

³⁸And it was so. When he got up early the next morning and squeezed the dew out of the fleece, he wrung from it a bowl full of water.

³⁹Then Gideon said to God, “Do not let your anger burn against me, so that I may speak once more. Please let me make a test once more with the fleece; now let only the fleece be dry, and let there be dew on all the ground.”

⁴⁰God did so that night; for it was dry only on the fleece, and there was dew on all the ground [around it].

7 THEN JERUBBAAL (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him got up early and camped beside the spring of Harod; and the camp of Midian was north of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley.

²Then the LORD said to Gideon, “There are too many people with you for Me to hand over Midian to them, otherwise Israel will boast [about themselves] against Me,

saying, 'My own power has rescued me.'

³“So now, proclaim in the hearing of the people, ‘Whoever is afraid and trembling, let him turn back and leave Mount Gilead.’” So twenty-two thousand men returned [home], but ten thousand remained.

⁴Then the LORD said to Gideon, “There are still too many people; bring them down to the water and I will test them for you there. Therefore it shall be that he of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall go with you,’ he shall go with you; but everyone of whom I say to you, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ he shall not go.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Let God's Words Outweigh Your Words

In Judges 7, God delivered the Israelites from captivity through Gideon and an army of only three hundred men (v. 8). But when the angel first came to call Gideon to this great task, Gideon began rehearsing a list of his inabilities, including reasons he thought he could not do what God was calling him to do.

In Judges 6:14, God says, "Have I not sent you?" In other words, "Would I ask you to do something I haven't equipped you to do?" And again, in the next verse, Gideon responds with excuses—I'm too poor, too small, too weak. Gideon believed what he said about himself more than he believed the encouraging words of the Lord.

To renew your mind according to God's words, when you have thoughts such as, It's too hard; I've never done this before; this isn't what I had planned; I don't know how; I'm too old/young; I don't feel like it; or I'm afraid, remember what God's Word says. Let God's positive, life-giving words outweigh the negative words you're tempted to speak about yourself.

⁵So he brought the people down to the water, and the LORD said to Gideon, "You shall separate everyone who laps the water with his tongue as a dog laps, as well as everyone who

kneels down to drink.”

⁶Now the number of those who lapped [the water], putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men, but all the rest of the people kneeled down to drink water.

⁷And the LORD told Gideon, “With the three hundred men who lapped I will rescue you, and will hand over the Midianites to you. Let all the *other* people go, each man to his home.”

⁸So the three hundred men took people’s provisions [for the journey] and their trumpets [made of rams’ horns] in their hands. And Gideon sent [away] all the *other* men of Israel, each to his tent, but kept the three hundred men. And the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.

⁹Now on that same night the LORD said to Gideon, “Arise, go down against their camp, for I have given it into your hand.

¹⁰“But if you are afraid to go down [by yourself], go with Purah your servant down to the camp,

¹¹and you will hear what they say; and afterward you will have the courage to go down against the camp.” Then he went down with Purah his servant to the outposts of the army that was in the camp.

¹²Now the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the sons of the east were lying [camped] in the valley, as countless as locusts; and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore.

¹³When Gideon arrived, there was a man telling a dream to his friend. And he said, “Listen carefully, I had a dream: there was a loaf of barley bread tumbling into the camp of Midian, and it came to the tent and struck it so that it fell, and turned it upside down so that the tent lay flat.”

¹⁴And his friend replied, “This [dream] is nothing less than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel. God has given Midian and the entire camp into his hand.”

¹⁵When Gideon heard the account of the dream and its interpretation, he bowed down in worship. Then he returned to the camp of Israel and said, “Arise, for the LORD has given the camp of Midian into your hand.”

¹⁶He divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put trumpets and empty pitchers into the hands of all of them, with torches inside the pitchers.

¹⁷And he said to them, “Look at me, then do likewise. When I come to the edge of the camp, do just as I do.

¹⁸“When I and all who are with me blow the trumpet (ram’s horn), then all around the camp you also blow the trumpets and shout, ‘For the LORD and for Gideon!’”

¹⁹So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, when the guards had just been changed, and they blew the trumpets and smashed the pitchers that were in their hands.

²⁰When three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers, they held the torches in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow, and they shouted, “A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!”

²¹Then each stood in his place around the camp; and the entire [Midianite] army ran, crying out as they fled.

²²When Gideon’s men blew the three hundred trumpets, the LORD set the sword of one [Midianite] against another even throughout the whole army; and the army fled as far as Beth-shittah toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel-meholah,

by Tabbath.

²³The men of Israel were summoned together from [the tribes of] Naphtali and Asher and all Manasseh, and they pursued Midian.

²⁴Then Gideon sent messengers throughout the hill country of [the tribe of] Ephraim, saying, “Come down against the Midianites and take [control of] the waters before them [thereby cutting off the Midianites], as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan [River].” So all the men of Ephraim were assembled together and they took *control of* the waters, as far as Beth-barah and the Jordan.

²⁵Then the men of Ephraim took the two leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb, and they killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and they killed Zeeb at the wine press of Zeeb, and pursued Midian; and they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon from across the Jordan.

8 AND THE men of [the tribe of] Ephraim said to Gideon, “What is this thing that you have done to us, not calling us when you went to fight with Midian?” And they quarreled with him vehemently.

²But he said to them, “What have I done now [that is so significant] in comparison with you? Is not the gleanings (leftovers) *of the grapes* of [your tribe of] Ephraim better than the vintage (entire harvest) of [my clan of] Abiezer?

³“God has given the leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb into your hands; and what was I able to do in comparison with you?” Then their anger toward him subsided when he made

this statement.

⁴So Gideon came to the Jordan and crossed over [the river], he and the three hundred men who were with him—exhausted, yet [still] pursuing [the enemy].

⁵He said to the men of Succoth, “Please give loaves of bread to the people who are following me since they are exhausted, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian.”

⁶But the leaders of Succoth said, “Are Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hands, that we should give bread to your army?”

⁷Gideon said, “For that [response], when the LORD has handed over Zebah and Zalmunna to me, I will thrash your bodies with the thorns and briars of the wilderness.”

⁸He went from there up to Penuel and spoke similarly to them; and the men of Penuel answered him just as the men of Succoth had answered.

⁹So Gideon said also to the men of Penuel, “When I come again in peace, I will tear down this tower.”

¹⁰Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor with their armies, about fifteen thousand [fighting] men, all who were left of the entire army of the sons of the east; for a hundred and twenty thousand swordsmen had fallen.

¹¹Gideon went up by the route of those who lived in tents to the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and he attacked their camp when the camp was unsuspecting.

¹²When Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued them and captured the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and terrified the entire army.

¹³Then Gideon the son of Joash returned from the battle by the ascent of Heres.

¹⁴He captured a young man of Succoth and questioned him. And *the youth* wrote down for him [the names of] the leaders of Succoth and its elders, seventy-seven men.

¹⁵He came to the men of Succoth and said, “Look here, Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you taunted me, saying, ‘Are Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand, that we should give bread to your men who are exhausted?’”

¹⁶He took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briars, and with them he punished the men of Succoth.

¹⁷He tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.

¹⁸Then Gideon said to Zebah and Zalmunna, “What kind of men were they whom you killed at Tabor?” And they replied, “They were like you, each one of them resembled the son of a king.”

¹⁹He said, “They were my brothers, the sons of my mother. As the LORD lives, if only you had let them live, I would not kill you.”

²⁰So [to humiliate them] Gideon said to Jether his firstborn, “Stand up, and kill them!” But the youth did not draw his sword, because he was afraid, for he was still [just] a boy.

²¹Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, “Rise up yourself and strike us; for as the man is, so is his strength.” So Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and took the crescent amulets that were on their camels’ necks.

²²Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule [as king]

over us, both you and your son, also your son's son, for you have rescued us from the hand of Midian."

²³But Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you."

²⁴And Gideon said to them, "I would make a request of you, that each one of you give me an earring from his spoil." For the Midianites had gold earrings, because they were Ishmaelites [who customarily wore them].

²⁵They answered, "We will certainly give them *to you*." And they spread out a garment, and every one of them threw an earring there from his spoil.

²⁶And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was seventeen hundred *shekels* of gold, apart from the crescent amulets and pendants and the purple garments which were worn by the kings of Midian, and apart from the chains that were on their camels' necks.

²⁷Gideon made [all the golden earrings into] an ephod [a sacred, high priest's garment], and put it in his city of Ophrah, and all Israel worshiped it as an idol there, and it became a trap for Gideon and his household.

²⁸So Midian was subdued *and* humbled before the sons of Israel, and they no longer lifted up their heads [in pride]. And the land was at rest for forty years in the days of Gideon.

²⁹Jerubbaal (Gideon) the son of Joash went and lived in his own house.

³⁰Now Gideon had seventy sons born to him, because he had many wives.

³¹And his concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, whom he named Abimelech.

³²Gideon the son of Joash died at a good advanced age and was buried in the tomb of Joash his father in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

³³Then it came about, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the Israelites again played the prostitute with the Baals, and made Baal-berith their god.

³⁴And the Israelites did not remember the LORD their God, who had rescued them from the hand of all their enemies on every side;

³⁵nor did they show kindness to the family of Jerubbaal (*that is*, Gideon) in return for all the good that he had done for Israel.

9 NOW ABIMELECH the son of Jerubbaal (Gideon) went to Shechem to his mother's relatives, and said to them and to the whole clan of the household of his mother's father,

²"Speak now in the hearing of all the leaders of Shechem, 'Which is better for you, that seventy men, all of the sons of Jerubbaal rule over you, or that one man rule over you?' Also, remember that I am your *own* bone and flesh."

³So his mother's relatives spoke all these words concerning him so that all the leaders of Shechem could hear; and their hearts were inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said, "He is our relative."

⁴And they gave him seventy *pieces* of silver from the house of Baal-berith, with which Abimelech hired worthless and undisciplined men, and they followed (supported) him.

⁵Then he went to his father's house at Ophrah and

murdered his brothers the sons of Jerubbaal, seventy men, [in a public execution] on one stone. But Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left *alive*, because he had hidden himself.

⁶All the men of Shechem and all of Beth-millo assembled together, and they went and made Abimelech king, by the oak (terebinth) of the pillar (memorial stone) at Shechem.

⁷When they told Jotham, he went and stood at the top of Mount Gerizim and shouted to them, "Hear me, O men of Shechem, so that God may hear you.

⁸"Once the trees went forth to anoint a king over them, and they said to the olive tree, 'Reign over us!'

⁹"But the olive tree said to them, 'Should I give up my fatness by which God and men are honored, and go to wave over the trees?'

¹⁰"Then the trees said to the fig tree, 'You come and reign over us!'

¹¹"But the fig tree said to them, 'Should I give up my sweetness and my good fruit, and go to wave over the trees?'

¹²"Then the trees said to the vine, 'You come and reign over us.'

¹³"And the vine replied, 'Should I give up my new wine, which makes God and men happy, and go to wave over the trees?'

¹⁴"Then all the trees said to the bramble, 'You come and reign over us.'

¹⁵"So the bramble said to the trees, 'If in truth you are anointing me king over you, then come and take refuge in my shade; but if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon.'

¹⁶“Now then, if you acted in truth and integrity when you made Abimelech king, and if you have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have dealt with him as he deserved—

¹⁷for my father fought for you and risked his life and rescued you from the hand of Midian;

¹⁸but you have risen against my father’s house today and have murdered his sons, seventy men, on one stone, and have made Abimelech, son of his maidservant, king over the people of Shechem, because he is your relative—

¹⁹if then you have acted in truth and integrity with Jerubbaal and his house this day, then rejoice in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you.

²⁰“But if not, may fire come out from Abimelech and devour the people of Shechem and Beth-millo; and may fire come out from the people of Shechem and Beth-millo, and devour Abimelech.”

²¹Then Jotham escaped and fled, and went to Beer and lived there because of Abimelech his brother.

²²Abimelech ruled over Israel for three years.

²³Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem; and the leaders of Shechem acted treacherously against Abimelech,

²⁴so that the violence done to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal (Gideon) might come [on the guilty], and that their [innocent] blood might be laid on Abimelech their brother, who had killed them, and on the leaders of Shechem, who strengthened his hands (encouraged him) to kill his brothers.

²⁵The leaders of Shechem set men in ambush against Abimelech on the mountaintops, and they robbed all who

passed by them along the road; and it was reported to Abimelech.

²⁶Now Gaal the son of Ebed came with his relatives, and moved into Shechem; and the leaders of Shechem trusted him.

²⁷They went out into the field, gathered the grapes of their vineyard and trod them, and held a festival; and they entered the house of their god, and they ate and drank, and cursed Abimelech.

²⁸Gaal the son of Ebed said, “Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem, that we should serve him? Is he not [merely] the son of Jerubbaal and is Zebul not his lieutenant? Serve the men of Hamor the father (founder) of Shechem. Why then should we serve Abimelech?

²⁹“If only this people were under my authority! Then I would remove Abimelech and say to him, ‘Increase [the size of] your army and come out [to fight].”

³⁰When Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger burned.

³¹He sent messengers to Abimelech secretly, saying, “Behold, Gaal the son of Ebed and his relatives have come to Shechem; and they are stirring up the city against you.

³²“Now then, get up during the night, you and the people who are with you, and set up an ambush in the field.

³³“Then in the morning, at sunrise, you will get up early and rush upon *and* attack the city; and when Gaal and the people who are with him come out against you, you shall do to them whatever you can.”

³⁴So Abimelech and all the people who were with him got up during the night, and set up an ambush against Shechem, in

four companies.

³⁵Now Gaal the son of Ebed came out and stood in the entrance of the city gate; then Abimelech and the people who were with him got up from the ambush.

³⁶When Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, "Look, people are coming down from the mountaintops." But Zebul said to him, "You are *only* seeing the shadow of the mountains as *if they were* men."

³⁷Gaal spoke again and said, "Look! People are coming down from the highest part of the land, and one company is coming by way of the sorcerers' oak tree."

³⁸Then Zebul said to Gaal, "Where is your [boasting] mouth now, you who said, 'Who is Abimelech that we should serve him?' Is this not the people whom you despised? Go out now and fight with them!"

³⁹So Gaal went out ahead of the leaders of Shechem and fought with Abimelech.

⁴⁰Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him; and many fell wounded as far as the entrance of the gate.

⁴¹Then Abimelech stayed at Arumah, and Zebul drove out Gaal and his relatives so that they could not remain in Shechem.

⁴²The next day the people went out to the field, and it was reported to Abimelech.

⁴³So he took his people and divided them into three companies, and set an ambush in the field; and he looked and saw the people coming out of the city. And he rose up against them and struck them down.

⁴⁴Then Abimelech and the company with him advanced

forward and stood in the entrance of the city gate; the two other companies attacked all who were in the field and killed them.

⁴⁵Abimelech fought against the city that entire day. He took the city and killed the people who were in it; he demolished the city and sowed it with salt.

⁴⁶When all the leaders of the Tower of Shechem heard about it, they entered the inner chamber (stronghold) of the temple of El-berith (the god of a covenant).

⁴⁷Abimelech was told that all the leaders of the Tower of Shechem were assembled together.

⁴⁸So Abimelech went up to Mount Zalmon, he and all the people with him; and Abimelech took an axe in his hand and cut down a branch from the trees, picked it up, and laid it on his shoulder. And he said to the people with him, "What you have seen me do, hurry and do just as I have done."

⁴⁹So everyone of the people also cut down his branch and followed Abimelech, and they put *the branches* on top of the inner chamber and set it on fire over those *inside*, so that all the people in the Tower of Shechem also died, about a thousand men and women.

⁵⁰Then Abimelech went to Thebez, and camped against Thebez and took it.

⁵¹But there was a strong (fortified) tower in the center of the city, and all the men and women with all the leaders of the city fled to it and shut themselves in; and they went up on the roof of the tower.

⁵²So Abimelech came to the tower and fought against it, and approached the entrance of the tower to burn it down with

fire.

⁵³But a certain woman threw an upper millstone [down] on Abimelech's head and crushed his skull.

⁵⁴Then he called quickly to the young man who was his armor bearer, and said to him, "Draw your sword and kill me, so that it will not be said of me, 'A woman killed him.'" So the young man pierced him through, and he died.

⁵⁵When the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, each departed to his home.

⁵⁶In this way God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech, which he had done to his father [Jerubbaal] by killing his seventy brothers.

⁵⁷Also God repaid all the wickedness of the men of Shechem on their heads, and the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal (Gideon) came upon them. [Judg 9:19, 20]

10 AFTER ABIMELECH died, Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar, arose to save Israel; and he lived in Shamir, in the hill country of Ephraim.

²Tola judged Israel for twenty-three years; then he died and was buried in Shamir.

³After him, Jair the Gileadite arose, and he judged Israel for twenty-two years.

⁴He had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys, and they had thirty towns in the land of Gilead that are called Havvoth-jair (towns of Jair) to this day.

⁵And Jair died and was buried in Kamon.

⁶Then the Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD; they served the Baals, the Ashtaroath (female deities), the gods of Aram (Syria), the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines. They abandoned the LORD and did not serve Him.

POWERPOINT

In Judges 10:6, the Israelites abandoned God. But they didn't just decide one day to turn their backs on him. Their abandonment started with a thought, which led to a bad attitude, which eventually led to a bad decision. Our thoughts certainly affect our attitudes and decisions. Everything the Lord tells us is for our own good. He knows what will make us happy and what will make us miserable, as individuals as well as a nation. When people are full of wrong thoughts, they are miserable. When people are miserable, they make others miserable also. Take inventory of your mind on a regular basis and ask yourself, "What have I been thinking about?" Spend some time examining your thought life so you can think thoughts that have a positive impact on your attitudes and decisions.



⁷So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites,

⁸and they oppressed and crushed Israel that year. For eighteen years they *oppressed* all the Israelites who were beyond the Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead.

⁹The Ammonites crossed the Jordan to fight against Judah, Benjamin, and the house of Ephraim, so that Israel was greatly distressed.

¹⁰Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD [for help], saying, “We have sinned against You, because we have abandoned (rejected) our God and have served the Baals.”

¹¹The LORD said to the Israelites, “*Did I not rescue you* from the Egyptians, the Amorites, the Ammonites, and the Philistines?”

¹²“Also when the Sidonians, the Amalekites, and the Maonites oppressed *and* crushed you, you cried out to Me, and I rescued you from their hands.

¹³“Yet you have abandoned (rejected) Me and served other gods; therefore I will no longer rescue you.

¹⁴“Go, cry out to the gods you have chosen; let them rescue you in your time of distress.”

¹⁵The Israelites said to the LORD, “We have sinned, do to us whatever seems good to You; only please rescue us this day.”

¹⁶So they removed the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD; and He could bear the misery of Israel no longer.

¹⁷Then the Ammonites were assembled together and they camped in Gilead. And the sons of Israel assembled and camped at Mizpah.

¹⁸The people, the leaders of Gilead (Israel) said to one another, “Who is the man who will begin to fight against the Ammonites? He shall become head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.”

11 NOW JEPHTHAH the Gileadite was a brave warrior, but he was the son of a prostitute. Gilead was the father of Jephthah.

²Gilead’s wife bore him sons, and when his wife’s sons grew up, they drove Jephthah out and said to him, “You shall not have an inheritance in our father’s house, because you are the son of another woman.”

³Then Jephthah fled from his brothers and lived in the land of Tob; and worthless *and* unprincipled men gathered around Jephthah, and went out [on raids] with him.

⁴Now it happened after a while that the Ammonites fought against Israel.

⁵When the Ammonites fought against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob;

⁶and they said to Jephthah, “Come and be our leader, so that we may fight against the Ammonites.”

⁷But Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, “Did you not hate me and drive me from the house of my father? Why have you come to me now when you are in trouble?”

⁸The elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, “This is why we have turned to you now: that you may go with us and fight the Ammonites and become head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.”

⁹So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, “If you take me back [home] to fight against the Ammonites and the LORD gives them over to me, will I [really] become your head?”

¹⁰The elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, “The LORD is the witness between us; be assured that we will do as you have said.”

¹¹So Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and leader over them. And Jephthah repeated everything that he had promised before the LORD at Mizpah.

¹²Now Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the Ammonites, saying, “What is [the problem] between you and me, that you have come against me to fight in my land?”

¹³The Ammonites’ king replied to the messengers of Jephthah, “It is because Israel took away my land when they came up from Egypt, from the [river] Arnon as far as the Jabbok and [east of] the Jordan; so now, return those lands peaceably.”

¹⁴But Jephthah sent messengers again to the king of the Ammonites,

¹⁵and they said to him, “This is what Jephthah says: ‘Israel did not take the land of Moab or the land of the Ammonites.

¹⁶‘For when they came up from Egypt, Israel walked through the wilderness to the Red Sea and came to Kadesh;

¹⁷then Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, “Please let us pass through your land,” but the king of Edom would not listen. Also they sent *word* to the king of Moab, but he would not consent. So Israel stayed at Kadesh.

¹⁸‘Then they went through the wilderness and went around the land of Edom and the land of Moab, and came to the east side of the land of Moab, and they camped on the other side of the [river] Arnon; but they did not enter the territory of Moab, for the Arnon was the [northern] boundary of Moab.

¹⁹‘Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, king of Heshbon, and Israel said to him, “Please let us pass through your land to our place.”

²⁰‘But Sihon did not trust Israel to pass through his territory; so Sihon gathered together all his people and camped at Jahaz and fought against Israel.

²¹‘The LORD, the God of Israel, gave Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel, and they defeated them; so Israel took possession of all the land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of that country.

²²‘They took possession of all the territory of the Amorites, from the Arnon as far as the Jabbok, and from the wilderness [westward] as far as the Jordan.

²³‘And now the LORD God of Israel has dispossessed *and* driven out the Amorites from before His people Israel, so [why]

should you possess it?

²⁴“Do you not possess what Chemosh your god gives you to possess? And everything that the LORD our God dispossessed before us, we will possess.

²⁵“Now are you any better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he ever strive against Israel, or did he ever go to war against them?

²⁶“While Israel lived in Heshbon and its villages, and in Aroer and its villages, and in all the cities along the banks of the Arnon for three hundred years, why did you not recover your lost lands during that time?

²⁷“So I have not sinned against you, but you are doing me wrong by making war against me; may the LORD, the [righteous] Judge, judge this day between the Israelites and the Ammonites.””

POWERPOINT

Throughout the Old Testament we see that “the Spirit of the LORD came upon” people as He did in Judges 11:29 and gave them power, wisdom, or ability beyond what they naturally had. Outer power comes from inner purity, and that inner purification is a work of the Holy Spirit filling us and giving us the power to live the abundant life through believing in Jesus Christ.



²⁸But the king of the Ammonites disregarded the message of Jephthah, which he sent to him.

²⁹Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed through Gilead and Manasseh, and Mizpah of Gilead, and from Mizpah of Gilead he passed on to the Ammonites.

³⁰Jephthah made a vow to the LORD and said, “If You will indeed give the Ammonites into my hand,

³¹then whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the Ammonites, it shall be the LORD's, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering."

³²Then Jephthah crossed over to the Ammonites to fight with them; and the LORD gave them into his hand.

³³And from Aroer to the entrance of Minnith he struck them, twenty cities, and as far as Abel-keramim (brook by the vineyard), with a very great defeat. So the Ammonites were subdued *and* humbled before the Israelites.

³⁴Then Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, and this is what he saw: his daughter coming out to meet him with tambourines and with dancing. And she was his only child; except for her he had no son or daughter.

³⁵And when he saw her, he tore his clothes [in grief] and said, "Alas, my daughter! You have brought me great disaster, and you are the cause of ruin to me; for I have made a vow to the LORD, and I cannot take it back."

³⁶And she said to him, "My father, you have made a vow to the LORD; do to me as you have vowed, since the LORD has taken vengeance for you on your enemies, the Ammonites."

³⁷And she said to her father, "Let this *one* thing be done for me; let me alone for two months, so that I may go to the mountains and weep over my virginity, I and my companions."

³⁸And he said, "Go." So he sent her away for two months; and she left with her companions, and wept over her virginity on the mountains.

³⁹At the end of two months she returned to her father, who did to her as he had vowed; and she had no relations with a man. It became a custom in Israel,

⁴⁰that the daughters of Israel went yearly to tell the story of the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in the year.

12 THE MEN of [the tribe of] Ephraim were summoned [to action], and they crossed over to Zaphon and said to Jephthah, “Why did you cross over to fight with the Ammonites without calling us to go with you? [For that] we will burn your house down upon you.”

²And Jephthah said to them, “My people and I were in a major conflict with the Ammonites, and when I called you [for help], you did not rescue me from their hand.

³“So when I saw that you were not coming to help me, I took my life in my hands and crossed over against the Ammonites, and the LORD handed them over to me. So why have you come up to me this day to fight against me?”

⁴Then Jephthah assembled all the men of Gilead and fought with [the tribe of] Ephraim; and the men of Gilead defeated Ephraim, because they had said, “You Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim, in the midst of [the tribes of] Ephraim and Manasseh.”

⁵And the Gileadites took the fords of the Jordan opposite the Ephraimites; and when *any of* the fugitives of Ephraim said, “Let me cross over,” the men of Gilead would say to him, “Are you an Ephraimite?” If he said, “No,”

⁶they said to him, “Then say ‘Shibboleth.’” And he said, “Sibboleth,” for he could not pronounce it correctly. Then they seized him and killed him at the fords of the Jordan. At that time forty-two thousand of the Ephraimites fell.

⁷Jephthah judged Israel for six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in *one of* the cities of Gilead.

⁸And after him Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel.

⁹He had thirty sons, and thirty daughters whom he gave in marriage outside *the family*, and he brought in thirty daughters [-in-law] from outside for his sons. He judged Israel for seven years.

¹⁰Then Ibzan died and was buried at Bethlehem.

¹¹After him Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel; and he judged Israel for ten years.

¹²Then Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried at Aijalon in the land of Zebulun.

¹³Now after him Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel.

¹⁴He had forty sons and thirty grandsons who rode on seventy donkeys; and he judged Israel for eight years.

¹⁵Then Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died and was buried at Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.

13 NOW ISRAEL again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD gave them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years.

²And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was infertile and had no *children*.

³And the Angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and

said to her, “Behold, you are infertile and have no *children*, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son.

⁴“Therefore, be careful not to drink wine or [any other] intoxicating drink, and do not eat anything [ceremonially] unclean.

⁵“For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son. No razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite [dedicated] to God from birth; and he shall begin to rescue Israel from the hands of the Philistines.”

⁶Then the woman went and told her husband, saying, “A Man of God came to me and his appearance was like the appearance of the Angel of God, very awesome. I did not ask Him where he came from, and he did not tell me his name.

⁷“But He said to me, ‘Behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and now you shall not drink wine or [any other] intoxicating drink, nor eat anything [ceremonially] unclean, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from birth to the day of his death.’”

⁸Then Manoah pleaded with the LORD and said, “O Lord, please let the Man of God whom You sent come again to us and teach us what we are to do for the boy who is to be born.”

⁹And God listened to the voice of Manoah; and the Angel of God came again to the woman as she sat in the field, but Manoah her husband was not with her.

¹⁰So the woman ran quickly and told her husband, “Behold, the Man who came to me the other day has appeared to me.”

¹¹Then Manoah got up and followed his wife, and came to the Man and said to him, “Are you the Man who spoke to this

woman?” He said, “I am.”

¹²And Manoah said, “Now when your words come *true*, what shall be the boy’s manner of life, and his vocation?”

¹³The Angel of the LORD said to Manoah, “The woman must pay attention to everything that I said to her.

¹⁴“She may not eat anything that comes from the vine nor drink wine or [any other] intoxicating drink, nor eat anything [ceremonially] unclean. She shall observe everything that I commanded her.”

¹⁵Then Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, “Please let us detain you and let us prepare a young goat for you [to eat].”

¹⁶The Angel of the LORD said to Manoah, “Though you detain me, I will not eat your food, but if you prepare a burnt offering, offer it to the LORD.” For Manoah did not know that he was the Angel of the LORD.

¹⁷Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, “What is your name, so that when your words come *true*, we may honor you?”

¹⁸But the Angel of the LORD said to him, “Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful (miraculous)?” [Is 9:6]

¹⁹So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering and offered it on the rock to the LORD, and He performed miracles while Manoah and his wife looked on.

²⁰For when the flame went up toward heaven from the altar, the Angel of the LORD ascended in the altar flame. When Manoah and his wife saw this they fell on their faces to the ground.

²¹The Angel of the LORD did not appear again to Manoah

or his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was the Angel of the LORD.

²²So Manoah said to his wife, “We will certainly die, because we have seen God.”

²³But his [sensible] wife said to him, “If the LORD had desired to kill us, He would not have received a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these things, nor would He have announced *such things* as these at this time.”

²⁴So the woman [in due time] gave birth to a son and named him Samson; and the boy grew and the LORD blessed him.

²⁵And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him at times in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

14 SAMSON WENT down to Timnah and at Timnah he saw a woman, one of the daughters of the Philistines.

²So he went back and told his father and his mother, “I saw a woman in Timnah, one of the daughters of the Philistines; now get her for me as a wife.”

³But his father and mother said to him, “Is there no woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you must go to take a wife from the uncircumcised (pagan) Philistines?” And Samson said to his father, “Get her for me, because she looks pleasing to me.”

⁴His father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD, and that He was seeking an occasion [to take action] against the Philistines. Now at that time the Philistines were

ruling over Israel.

⁵Then Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother [to arrange the marriage], and they came as far as the vineyards of Timnah; and suddenly, a young lion *came* roaring toward him.

⁶The Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, and he tore the lion apart as one tears apart a young goat, and he had nothing at all in his hand; but he did not tell his father or mother what he had done.

⁷So he went down and talked with the woman; and she looked pleasing to Samson.

⁸When he returned later to take her, he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion; and behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the body of the lion.

⁹So he scraped the honey out into his hands and went on, eating as he went. When he came to his father and mother, he gave them *some*, and they ate it; but he did not tell them he had taken the honey from the body of the lion.

¹⁰His father went down to the woman, and Samson prepared a feast there, for that was the customary thing for young men to do.

¹¹When the people saw him, they brought thirty companions (wedding attendants) to be with him.

¹²Then Samson said to them, "Let me now ask you a riddle; if you can tell me what it is within the seven days of the feast, and solve it, then I will give you thirty linen tunics (undergarments) and thirty changes of [outer] clothing.

¹³"But if you are unable to tell me [the answer], then you shall give me thirty linen tunics (undergarments) and thirty

changes of [outer] clothing.” And they said to him, “Ask your riddle, so that we may hear it.”

¹⁴So he said to them,

“Out of the eater came something to eat,
And out of the strong came something sweet.”

And they could not solve the riddle in three days.

¹⁵Then on the fourth day they said to Samson’s wife, “Persuade your husband to tell us [through you] the [answer to the] riddle, or we will burn you and your father’s household with fire. Have you invited us to make us poor? Is this not *true*?”

¹⁶So Samson’s wife wept before him and said, “You only hate me, you do not love me; you have asked my countrymen a riddle, and have not told [the answer] to me.” And he said to her, “Listen, I have not told my father or my mother [either], so [why] should I tell you?”

¹⁷However Samson’s wife wept before him seven days while their [wedding] feast lasted, and on the seventh day he told her because she pressed him so hard. Then she told the [answer to the] riddle to her countrymen.

¹⁸So the men of the city said to Samson on the seventh day before sundown,

“What is sweeter than honey?
What is stronger than a lion?”

And he said to them,

“If you had not plowed with my heifer,
You would not have solved my riddle.”

¹⁹Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of them and took their gear, and gave changes *of clothes* to those who had explained the riddle. And his anger burned, and he went up to his father's house.

²⁰But Samson's wife was *given* to his companion who had been his friend.

15 BUT AFTER a while, in the time of wheat harvest, Samson went to visit his wife with a young goat [as a gift of reconciliation]; and he said, "I will go in to my wife in *her* room." But her father would not allow him to go in.

²Her father said, "I really thought you utterly hated her; so I gave her to your companion. Is her younger sister not more beautiful than she? Please take her [as your wife] instead."

³Samson said to them, "This time I shall be blameless in regard to the Philistines when I do them harm."

⁴So Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took torches and turning *the foxes* tail to tail, he put a torch between each pair of tails.

⁵When he had set the torches ablaze, he let the foxes go into the standing grain of the Philistines, and he burned up the heap of sheaves and the standing grain, along with the vineyards and olive groves.

⁶Then the Philistines said, "Who did this?" And they were told, "Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he took Samson's wife and gave her to his [chief] companion [at the wedding feast]." So the Philistines came up and burned her and

her father with fire.

⁷Samson said to them, “If this is the way you act, be certain that I will take revenge on you, and [only] after that I will stop.”

⁸Then he struck them without mercy, a great slaughter; and he went down and lived in the cleft of the rock of Etam.

⁹Then the [army of the] Philistines came up and camped in [the tribal territory of] Judah, and overran Lehi (Jawbone).

¹⁰The men of Judah said, “Why have you come up against us?” And they answered, “We have come up to bind Samson, in order to do to him as he has done to us.”

¹¹Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam and said to Samson, “Have you not known that the Philistines are rulers over us? What is this that you have done to us?” He said to them, “As they did to me, so I have done to them.”

¹²They said to him, “We have come down to bind you, so that we may hand you over to the Philistines.” And Samson said to them, “Swear to me that you will not kill me.”

¹³So they said to him, “No, we will [only] bind you securely and place you into their hands; but we certainly will not kill you.” So they bound him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock [of Etam].

¹⁴When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting to meet him. And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, and the ropes on his arms were like flax (linen) that had been burned, and his bonds dropped off his hands.

¹⁵He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, so he reached out his hand and took it and killed a thousand men with it.

¹⁶Then Samson said,

“With the jawbone of a donkey,
Heaps upon heaps,
With the jawbone of a donkey
I have struck down a thousand men.”

¹⁷When he finished speaking, he threw the jawbone from his hand; and he named that place Ramath-lehi (hill of the jawbone).

¹⁸Then Samson was very thirsty, and he called out to the LORD and said, “You have given this great victory through the hand of Your servant, and now am I to die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised (pagans)?”

¹⁹So God split open the hollow place that was at Lehi, and water came out of it. When Samson drank, his spirit (strength) returned and he was revived. Therefore he named it En-hakkore (spring which is calling), which is at Lehi to this day.

²⁰And Samson judged Israel in the days of [occupation by] the Philistines for twenty years. [Judg 17:6]

16 THEN SAMSON went to Gaza and saw a prostitute there, and went in to her.

²The Gazites *were told*, “Samson has come here.” So they surrounded *the place* and waited all night at the gate of the city to ambush him. They kept quiet all night, saying, “In the morning, when it is light, we will kill him.”

³But Samson lay [resting] until midnight, then at midnight he got up and took hold of the doors of the city gate and the two door-posts, and pulled them up, [security] bar and all, and he put them on his shoulders and carried them up to the top of

the hill which is opposite Hebron.

⁴After this he fell in love with a [Philistine] woman [living] in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.

⁵So the [five] lords (governors) of the Philistines came to her and said to her, “Persuade him, and see where his great strength *lies* and [find out] how we may overpower him so that we may bind him to subdue him. And each of us will give you eleven hundred *pieces* of silver.”

⁶So Delilah said to Samson, “Please tell me where your great strength lies and with what you may be bound and subdued.”

⁷Samson said to her, “If they bind me with seven fresh cords (tendons) that have not been dried, then I will be weak and be like any [other] man.”

⁸Then the Philistine lords brought her seven fresh cords that had not been dried, and she bound him with them.

⁹Now she had men lying in ambush in an inner room. And she said to him, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” And he broke the cords as a string of tow breaks when it touches fire. So [the secret of] his strength was not discovered.

¹⁰Then Delilah said to Samson, “See now, you have mocked me and told me lies; now please tell me [truthfully] how you may be bound.”

¹¹He said to her, “If they bind me tightly with new ropes that have not been used, then I will become weak and be like any [other] man.”

¹²So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them and said to him, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” And the men lying in ambush were in the inner room. But he snapped

the ropes off his arms like [sewing] thread.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Emotional Stability

Delilah took advantage of Samson's lack of emotional strength, pressuring him and pleading with him to tell her the source of his strength, until "he was annoyed to death" and told her his secret (Judg. 16:16).

We all have emotions, and we always will; they are part of being human. Since that is true, I believe emotional stability should be one of the main goals of every believer. We should seek God to learn how to manage our emotions and stop them from managing us.

I urge you to make emotional maturity a priority in your life. If you do not believe you are doing a good job of managing your emotions, begin to pray and seek God for emotional maturity. I also encourage you to learn what upsets you the most or prompts you to behave emotionally and be watchful during those situations.

¹³Then Delilah said to Samson, "Until now you have mocked me and told me lies; tell me [truthfully] with what you may be bound." And he said to her, "If you weave the seven braids of my hair with the web [and fasten it with a pin, then I will become weak and be like any other man."

¹⁴So while he slept, Delilah took the seven locks (braids) of his hair and wove them into the web]. And she fastened it with

the pin [of the loom] and said to him, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” And he awoke from his sleep and pulled out the pin of the [weaver’s] loom and the web.

¹⁵Then she said to him, “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times and have not told me where your great strength lies.”

¹⁶When she pressured him day after day with her words and pleaded with him, he was annoyed to death.

¹⁷Then [finally] he told her everything that was in his heart and said to her, “A razor has never been used on my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother’s womb. If I am shaved, then my strength will leave me, and I will become weak and be like any [other] man.”

¹⁸Then Delilah realized that he had told her everything in his heart, so she sent and called for the Philistine lords, saying, “Come up this once, because he has told me everything in his heart.” Then the Philistine lords came up to her and brought the money [they had promised] in their hands.

¹⁹She made Samson sleep on her knees, and she called a man and had him shave off the seven braids of his head. Then she began to abuse Samson, and his strength left him.

²⁰She said, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” And he awoke from his sleep and said, “I will go out as I have time after time and shake myself free.” For Samson did not know that the LORD had departed from him.

²¹Then the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes; and they brought him down to Gaza and bound him with [two] bronze chains; and he was *forced to be* a grinder [of grain into

flour at the mill] in the prison.

²²But the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaved off.

²³Now the Philistine lords gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and to celebrate, for they said,

“Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hands!”

²⁴When the people saw Samson, they praised their god, for they said,

“Our god has handed over our enemy to us,
The ravager of our country,
Who has killed many of us.”

²⁵Now when they were in high spirits, they said, “Call for Samson, so that he may amuse us.” So they called Samson out of the prison, and he entertained them. They made him stand between the pillars.

²⁶Then Samson said to the boy who held him by the hand, “Let me feel the pillars on which the [roof of the] house rests, so that I may lean against them.”

²⁷Now the house was full of men and women; all the Philistine lords were there, and on the flat roof were about three thousand men and women who looked on while Samson was entertaining them.

²⁸Then Samson called to the LORD and said, “O Lord GOD, please remember me and please strengthen me just this one time, O God, and let me take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes.”

²⁹Samson took hold of the two middle [support] pillars on which the house rested, and braced himself against them, one

with his right hand and the other with his left.

³⁰And Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” And he stretched out with all his might [collapsing the support pillars], and the house fell on the lords and on all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life.

³¹Then his brothers and his father’s entire [tribal] household came down, took him, and brought him up; and they buried him in the tomb of Manoah his father, [which was] between Zorah and Eshtaol. So Samson had judged Israel for twenty years. [Judg 17:6; Heb 11:32]

17 THERE WAS a man of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Micah.

²And he said to his mother, “The eleven hundred *pieces* of silver which were taken from you, about which you cursed [the thief] and also spoke about in my hearing, behold, the silver is with me; I took it.” And his mother said, “Blessed be my son before the LORD.”

³He returned the eleven hundred *pieces* of silver to his mother, and she said, “I had truly dedicated the silver from my hand to the LORD for my son (in his name) to make an image [carved from wood and plated with silver] and a cast image [of solid silver]; so now, I will return it to you.”

⁴So when he returned the silver to his mother, she took two hundred *pieces* of silver and gave them to the silversmith who made of it an image [of silver-plated wood] and a cast image [of solid silver]; and they were in the house of Micah.

⁵Now the man Micah had a house of gods (shrine), and he made an ephod and teraphim and dedicated *and* installed one of his sons, who became his [personal] priest.

⁶In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes.

⁷Now there was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah, from the family [of the tribe] of Judah, who was a Levite; and he was staying there [temporarily].

⁸Then the man left the town of Bethlehem in Judah, to stay wherever he could find *a place*; and as he journeyed, he came to the hill country of Ephraim, to the house of Micah.

⁹Micah said to him, “Where do you come from?” And he said to him, “I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I am going to stay wherever I can find *a place*.”

¹⁰And Micah said to him, “Live here with me and be a father and a [personal] priest to me, and I will give you ten *pieces* of silver each year, a supply of clothing, and your sustenance (room and board).” So the Levite went in.

¹¹The Levite agreed to live with the man, and the young man became to Micah like one of his sons.

¹²So Micah dedicated (installed) the Levite, and the young man became his priest and lived in the house of Micah.

¹³Then Micah said, “Now I know that the LORD will favor me *and* make me prosper because I have a Levite as my priest.”

18 IN THOSE days there was no king in Israel; and in those days the tribe of the Danites was seeking an inheritance [of land] for themselves to live in, for until then an inheritance had

not been allotted to them as a possession among the tribes of Israel.

²So the sons of Dan sent from the total number of their [extended] family five brave men from Zorah and Eshtaol, to scout the land and to explore it; and they said to them, “Go, explore the land.” They came to the hill country of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and lodged there.

³When they passed near Micah’s house, they recognized the voice of the young man, the Levite, and they turned aside there and said to him, “Who brought you here? And what are you doing in this place? And what do you have here?”

⁴And he said to them, “Micah has done this and that for me, and he has hired me and I have become his priest.”

⁵And they said to him, “Please ask of God, so that we may know whether our journey on which we are going will be successful.”

⁶The priest said to them, “Go in peace; the journey on which you are going is acceptable to the LORD.”

⁷Then the five men went on and came to Laish and saw the people who were there, [how they were] living securely in the style of the Sidonians, quiet and peaceful; and there was no oppressive magistrate in the land humiliating *them* in anything, and they were far from the Sidonians and had no dealings with anyone.

⁸The five men came back [home] to their brothers at Zorah and Eshtaol, and their brothers said to them, “What *do* you have to report?”

⁹They said, “Arise, let us go up against them; for we have seen the land, and behold, it is very good (fertile). Will you sit

still *and* do nothing? Do not hesitate to go, to enter, to take possession of the land.

¹⁰“When you enter, you will come to people [feeling] safe and secure with a spacious land [widely extended on all sides]; for God has given it into your hands—a place where there is no lack of anything that is on the earth.”

¹¹Then from the [tribal] family of the Danites, from Zorah and from Eshtaol, six hundred men armed with weapons of war set out.

¹²They went up and camped at Kiriath-jearim in Judah. Therefore they have called that place Mahaneh-dan to this day; it is west of Kiriath-jearim.

¹³They went on from there to the hill country of Ephraim and came to Micah’s house.

¹⁴Then the five men who had gone to scout the country of Laish said to their relatives, “Do you know that there are in these houses an ephod, teraphim, an image [of silver-plated wood], and a cast image [of solid silver]? Now therefore, consider what you should do.”

¹⁵So they turned in that direction and came to the house of the young Levite, at the home of Micah, and asked him how he was doing.

¹⁶Now the six hundred men armed with their weapons of war, who were of the sons of Dan, stood at the entrance of the gate.

¹⁷Now the five men who had gone to scout the land went up and entered the house and took the image [of silver-plated wood], the ephod, the teraphim, and the cast image [of solid silver], while the priest stood by the entrance of the gate with

the six hundred men armed with weapons of war.

¹⁸When these [five men] went into Micah's house and took the [plated] image, the ephod, the teraphim, and the cast image, the priest asked them, "What are you doing?"

¹⁹They said to him, "Keep quiet, put your hand over your mouth and come with us, and be a father and a priest to us. Is it better for you to be a priest to the house of one man, or to be a priest to a tribe and family in Israel?"

²⁰The priest's heart was glad [to hear that], and he took the ephod, the teraphim, and the image, and went among the people.

²¹So they turned and left, and they put the children, the livestock, and the valuables *and* supplies in front of them.

²²When they had gone some distance from the house of Micah, the men who were [living] in the houses near Micah's house assembled [as a militia] and overtook the sons of Dan.

²³They shouted to the Danites, who turned and said to Micah, "What is your *reason* for assembling [against us]?"

²⁴He said, "You have taken away my gods which I have made, and the priest, and have gone away; what else do I have left? How can you say to me, 'What is your *reason*?'"

²⁵The sons of Dan said to him, "Do not let your voice [of complaint] be heard among us, or else angry men will assault you and you will lose your life, along with the lives of [everyone in] your household."

²⁶Then the Danites went on their way; and Micah saw that they were too strong for him, so he turned and went back to his house.

²⁷They took the [idolatrous] things that Micah had made,

and his priest, and they came to Laish, to a people who were quiet and secure; and they struck them with the edge of the sword and burned the city with fire.

²⁸And there was no one to rescue them because it was far from Sidon and they had no dealings with anyone. It was in the valley which belongs to Beth-rehob. And they rebuilt the city and lived in it.

²⁹They named the city Dan, after Dan their forefather who was born to Israel (Jacob); however, the original name of the city was Laish.

³⁰The [tribe of] the sons of Dan set up the image [of silver-plated wood] for themselves; and Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, and his sons were priests to the tribe of the Danites until the day of the captivity *and* exile from the land.

³¹So they set up for themselves Micah's [silver-plated wooden] image which he had made, *and kept it* throughout the time that the house (tabernacle) of God was at Shiloh.

19 NOW IT happened in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that a certain Levite living [as an alien] in the most remote part of the hill country of Ephraim, who took a concubine for himself from Bethlehem in Judah.

²But his concubine was unfaithful to him, and left him and went to her father's house in Bethlehem of Judah, and stayed there for a period of four months.

³Then her husband arose and went after her to speak kindly *and* tenderly to her in order to bring her back, taking

with him his servant and a pair of donkeys. So she brought him into her father's house, and when the father of the girl saw him, he was happy to meet him.

POWERPOINT

When the Levite's father-in-law coaxed him by saying, "strengthen yourself with a piece of bread" (Judg. 19:5), he was tempting him with food and we could call that "emotional eating." If you are an "emotional eater," you are vulnerable to eating as a way to suppress or soothe negative emotions and the hassles of daily life. Ask God to help you learn to find emotional strength in His Word instead of seeking it from other sources.



⁴So his father-in-law, the girl's father, detained him; and he stayed there with him for three days. So they ate and drank, and he lodged there.

⁵On the fourth day they got up early in the morning, and the Levite prepared to leave; but the girl's father said to his

son-in-law, “Strengthen yourself with a piece of bread, and afterward go your way.”

⁶So both men sat down and ate and drank together; and the girl’s father said to the man, “Please be willing to spend the night and enjoy yourself.”

⁷Then the man got up to leave, but his father-in-law urged him [strongly to remain]; so he spent the night there again.

⁸On the fifth day he got up early in the morning to leave, but the girl’s father said, “Please strengthen yourself, and wait until the end of the day.” So both of them ate.

⁹When the man and his concubine and his servant got up to leave, his father-in-law, the girl’s father, said to him, “Behold, now the day has drawn to a close; please spend the night. Look, now the day comes to an end; spend the night here and celebrate, enjoy yourself. Then tomorrow you may get up early for your journey and go home.”

¹⁰But the man was not willing to stay the night; so he got up and left and came to *a place* opposite Jebus (that is Jerusalem). With him were two saddled donkeys [and his servant] and his concubine.

¹¹When they were near Jebus, the day was almost gone, and the servant said to his master, “Please come and let us turn aside into this Jebusite city and spend the night in it.”

¹²But his master said to him, “We will not turn aside into a city of foreigners who are not of the sons (descendants) of Israel. We will go on as far as Gibeah.”

¹³And he said to his servant, “Come and let us approach one of *these* places: and we will spend the night in Gibeah or in Ramah.”

¹⁴So they passed by and went on their way, and the sun set on them near Gibeah, which belongs to [the tribe of] Benjamin,

¹⁵and they turned aside there to go in and spend the night in Gibeah. And the Levite went in and sat down in the open square of the city, because no man invited them into his house to spend the night.

¹⁶Then behold, *there was* an old man *who* was coming out of the field from his work at evening. He was from the hill country of Ephraim but was staying in Gibeah, and the men of the place were sons (descendants) of Benjamin.

¹⁷When he looked up, he saw the traveler [and his companions] in the city square; and the old man said, “Where are you going, and where do you come from?”

¹⁸The Levite replied, “We are passing through from Bethlehem [in the territory] of Judah to the most remote part of the hill country of Ephraim; I am from there. I went to Bethlehem of Judah, but I am *now* going [home] to my house, and there is no man [in the city] who will take me into his house [for the night].

¹⁹“Yet we have both straw and feed for our donkeys, and also bread and wine for me, and for your handmaid, and for the young man who is with your servant; there is no lack of anything.”

²⁰Then the old man said, “Peace be to you. Only *leave* all your needs to me; and do not spend the night in the open square.”

²¹So he brought him into his house and fed the donkeys; and they washed their feet and ate and drank.

²²While they were celebrating, behold, men of the city, certain worthless *and* evil men, surrounded the house, pounding on the door; and they spoke to the master of the house, the old man, saying, “Bring out the man who came to your house so that we may have relations with him.”

²³Then the man, the master of the house, went out and said to them, “No, my fellow citizens, please do not act so wickedly. Since this man has come to my house [as my guest], do not commit this sacrilege.

²⁴“Here is my virgin daughter and this man’s concubine. I will bring them out now; abuse *and* humiliate them and do to them whatever you want, but do not commit this act of sacrilege against this man.”

²⁵But the men would not listen to him. So the man took the Levite’s concubine and brought her outside to them; and they had relations with her and abused her all night until morning; and when daybreak came, they let her go.

²⁶At daybreak the woman came and collapsed at the door of the man’s house where her master was, until it was [fully] light.

²⁷When her master got up in the morning and opened the doors of the house and went out to go on his way, he saw his concubine lying at the door of the house, and her hands were on the threshold.

²⁸He said to her, “Get up, and let us go.” But there was no answer [for she had died]. Then he put her [body] on the donkey; and the man left and went home.

²⁹When he arrived at his house, he took a knife, and taking hold of his [dead] concubine, he cut her [corpse] limb by limb

into twelve pieces, and sent her [body parts] throughout all the territory of Israel.

³⁰All who saw *the dismembered parts* said, “Nothing like this has *ever* happened or been seen from the day that the sons of Israel came up from the land of Egypt to this day. Consider it, take counsel, and speak [your minds]!”

20 THEN ALL the sons of Israel from Dan [in the north] to Beersheba [in the south], including the land of Gilead came out, and the congregation assembled as one man to the LORD at Mizpah.

²The chiefs of all the people of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand men on foot who drew the sword.

³(Now the Benjamites [in whose territory the crime was committed] heard that the [other tribes of the] sons of Israel had gone up to Mizpah.) And the sons of Israel said, “How did this evil thing happen?”

⁴So the Levite, the husband of the woman who was murdered, replied, “I had come with my concubine to spend the night in Gibeah, [a town] which belongs to [the tribe of] Benjamin.

⁵“But the men of Gibeah rose up against me and surrounded the house at night because of me. They intended to kill me, but instead they raped my concubine [so brutally] that she died.

⁶“So I took my concubine and cut her [corpse] in pieces and sent her [body parts] throughout the land of the

inheritance of Israel; for the men of Gibeah have committed a lewd and disgraceful act in Israel.

⁷“Now then, all you sons of Israel, all of you, give your advice and counsel here [regarding what should be done].”

⁸Then all the people stood [unified] as one man, saying, “None of us will go to his tent, and none of us will return to his home [until this is settled].

⁹“But now this is the thing which we will do to Gibeah; *we will go up* by lot against it,

¹⁰and we will take ten men out of a hundred throughout the tribes of Israel, and a hundred out of a thousand, and a thousand out of ten thousand to bring provisions for the men, so that when they come to Gibeah of Benjamin, they may punish them for all the despicable acts which they have committed in Israel.”

¹¹So all the men of Israel assembled against the city, united as one man.

¹²Then the tribes of Israel sent men through the entire tribe of Benjamin, saying, “What is this evil thing that has been done among you?”

¹³“Now therefore, turn over the men [involved], the worthless *and* wicked men in Gibeah, so that we may put them to death and remove *this* wickedness from Israel.” But the Benjamites would not listen to the voice of their brothers, the sons of Israel.

¹⁴Then the [tribe of the] sons of Benjamin gathered from the cities to Gibeah, to go out to battle against the [other] sons of Israel.

¹⁵And the Benjamites assembled out of their cities at that

time twenty-six thousand men who drew the sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah, who assembled seven hundred chosen men.

¹⁶Out of all these people were seven hundred choice left-handed men; each one could sling stones at [a target no wider than] a hair and not miss.

¹⁷Then the men of Israel, other than Benjamin, assembled four hundred thousand men who drew the sword; all of these were men of war.

¹⁸The men of Israel arose and went up to Bethel and asked of God and said, "Which of us shall take the lead to battle against the sons [tribe] of Benjamin?" And the LORD said, "Judah [shall go up] first."

¹⁹Then the [fighting men of the] sons of Israel arose in the morning and camped against Gibeah.

²⁰The men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin, and assembled in battle formation against them at Gibeah.

²¹The sons of Benjamin came out of Gibeah and struck to the ground on that day twenty-two thousand [fighting] men of Israel.

²²But the people, the [fighting] men of Israel, took courage *and* strengthened themselves and again set their battle line in the same place where they formed it the first day.

²³The sons of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until evening, and asked of the LORD, "Shall we advance again to battle against the sons of our brother Benjamin?" And the LORD said, "Go up against them."

²⁴So the sons of Israel came against the sons of Benjamin the second day.

²⁵And [the fighting men from the tribe of] Benjamin went out of Gibeah against them the second day and again struck to the ground the sons of Israel, eighteen thousand men, all of whom were swordsmen.

²⁶Then all the sons of Israel and all the people went up and came to Bethel and wept; and they sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.

²⁷And the sons of Israel inquired of the LORD (for the ark of the covenant of God was there [at Bethel] in those days,

²⁸and Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, *ministered* before it in those days), saying, “Shall I yet again go out to battle against the sons of my brother Benjamin, or shall I quit?” And the LORD said, “Go up, for tomorrow I will hand them over to you.”

²⁹So Israel set men in ambush around Gibeah.

³⁰The [fighting men of the] sons of Israel went up against the sons of Benjamin on the third day and placed themselves in battle formation against Gibeah as at other times.

³¹The Benjamites went out against their army and were lured away from the city, and they began to strike and kill some of the people as at other times, on the highways, one of which goes up to Bethel and the other to Gibeah, and in the open country, about thirty men of Israel.

³²And the Benjamites said, “They are defeated before us, as at the first.” But the sons of Israel said, “Let us flee and lure them away from the city to the highways.”

³³Then all the men of Israel got up from their places and placed themselves in battle formation at Baal-tamar; and the

men of Israel [who were] in ambush rushed from their place in the plain of Maareh-geba.

³⁴When the ten thousand choice [fighting] men from all Israel came against Gibeah, the battle was hard *and* fierce; but the Benjamites did not realize that disaster was about to strike them.

³⁵And the LORD struck down [the tribe of] Benjamin before Israel, so that the sons of Israel destroyed twenty-five thousand one hundred men of Benjamin that day, all of whom were swordsmen.

³⁶So the Benjamites realized that they were defeated. Then men of Israel gave ground to the Benjamites, because they relied on the men in ambush whom they had placed against Gibeah.

³⁷Then the men in ambush quickly rushed and attacked Gibeah; and the men in ambush also deployed and struck the entire city with the edge of the sword.

³⁸Now the appointed signal between the men of Israel and the men in ambush was that they would make a great cloud of smoke rise from the city.

³⁹So the men of Israel turned in the battle, and Benjamin began to strike and kill about thirty men of Israel, for they said, "Certainly they are defeated before us as in the first battle!"

⁴⁰But when the [signal] cloud began to rise out of the city in a column of smoke, the Benjamites looked behind them; and behold, the entire city went up *in smoke* to heaven.

⁴¹When the men of Israel turned back *again*, the men of Benjamin were terrified, for they saw that disaster had fallen upon them.

⁴²Therefore, they turned their backs before the men of Israel [and fled] toward the direction of the wilderness, but the battle followed *and* overtook them. As the [fighting men of the] sons of Benjamin ran among them, the Israelites of the cities came out and destroyed them.

⁴³They surrounded [the men of] Benjamin, pursued them relentlessly, and overtook them opposite Gibeah toward the east.

⁴⁴Thus eighteen thousand men of Benjamin fell, all of these brave *and* able warriors.

⁴⁵The survivors [of Benjamin] turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, and Israel caught five thousand of them on the roads and overtook them at Gidom and killed two thousand of them.

⁴⁶So all of Benjamin who fell that day were twenty-five thousand men who drew the sword, all of them brave *and* able warriors.

⁴⁷But six hundred men turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon and stayed at the rock of Rimmon for four months.

⁴⁸The men of Israel turned back against [the tribe of] the sons of Benjamin and struck them with the edge of the sword, both the entire city [of Gibeah] and the livestock and all that they found. They also set on fire all the [surrounding] towns which they found.

21 NOW THE men of Israel had sworn [an oath] at Mizpah, "None of us shall give his daughter in marriage to [a man of]

Benjamin.”

²So the people came to Bethel and sat there before God until evening, and lifted up their voices and wept bitterly. [Judg 20:27]

³They said, “O LORD, God of Israel, why has this come about in Israel, that there should be today one tribe missing from Israel?”

⁴And the next day the people got up early and built an altar there and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings.

⁵Then the sons of Israel said, “Which one from all the tribes of Israel did not come up in the assembly to the LORD?” For they had taken a great oath concerning him who did not come up to the LORD at Mizpah, saying, “He shall certainly be put to death.”

⁶And the sons of Israel felt sorry [and had compassion] for their brother Benjamin and said, “One tribe has been cut off from Israel today.

⁷“What shall we do for wives for those who are left, since we have sworn [an oath] by the LORD that we will not give them any of our daughters as wives?”

⁸And they said, “Which one is there of the tribes from Israel that did not come up to Mizpah to the LORD?” And behold, [it was discovered that] no one had come to the camp from Jabesh-gilead, to the assembly.

⁹For when the people were assembled, behold, there was not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead there.

¹⁰And the congregation sent twelve thousand of the most courageous men there, and commanded them saying, “Go and strike the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the sword,

including the women and the children.

¹¹“And this is the thing that you shall do; you shall utterly destroy every male and every woman who is not a virgin.”

¹²And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead four hundred young virgins who had not known a man intimately; and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan.

¹³Then the whole congregation sent *word* to the [surviving] sons of Benjamin who were at the rock of Rimmon, and proclaimed peace to them.

¹⁴So [the survivors of] Benjamin returned at that time, and they gave them the women whom they had kept alive from the women of Jabesh-gilead; but there were not enough [to provide wives] for them.

¹⁵And the people were sorry [and had compassion] for [the survivors of the tribe of] Benjamin because the LORD had made a gap in the tribes of Israel.

¹⁶Then the elders of the congregation said, “What shall we do for wives for those [men] who are left, since the women of Benjamin have been destroyed?”

¹⁷They said, “*There must be* an inheritance for the survivors of Benjamin, so that a tribe will not be wiped out from Israel.

¹⁸“But we cannot give them wives from our daughters.” For the sons of Israel had sworn [an oath], “Cursed is he who gives a wife to [a man from the tribe of] Benjamin.”

¹⁹So they said, “Listen, there is the yearly feast of the LORD at Shiloh, which is on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and on

the south side of Lebonah.”

²⁰So they instructed the sons of Benjamin, saying, “Go, set an ambush in the vineyards,

²¹and watch; if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in the dances, then you shall come out of the vineyards and each of you shall catch his wife from the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of [the tribe of] Benjamin.

²²“When their fathers or their brothers come to complain to us, we shall say to them, ‘Give them to us voluntarily, because we did not take a wife for each man *of Benjamin* in battle, nor did you give *wives* to them, for that would have made you guilty [of breaking your oath].’”

²³So the sons of [the tribe of] Benjamin did as instructed and took wives according to their number, from the dancers whom they carried away. Then they went and returned to their inheritance, and rebuilt the towns and lived in them.

²⁴The sons of Israel departed from there at that time, each man to his tribe and family, and each man went from there to his inheritance.

²⁵In those days [when the judges governed] there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes.

Ruth

Author: |
Unknown, traditionally
Samuel
Date: | Between
1050 BC and 500 BC

The story of Ruth is a great Old Testament example of someone who won a major battle of the mind. When Ruth's husband died and her mother-in-law, Naomi, decided to return to her home in Bethlehem, Ruth had a lot to think about. Would she stay in her homeland of Moab, or would she leave everything familiar to her and follow Naomi? Despite Naomi's objections at first, Ruth thought for herself and ultimately made the wise choice to go with Naomi and give her heart to Naomi's God, the God of Israel (see Ruth 1:16–17). This decision ultimately blessed Ruth more than I think she could have ever imagined.

Any time you have to choose between what is familiar, as Ruth's homeland was to her, and something new and different—yet challenging—remember Ruth's example. Don't

let the enemy convince you to stay in an old situation when
God has something much better for you!

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM RUTH:

Naomi obviously lived in such a way that Ruth wanted to follow Naomi's God (see Ruth 1:16). You can also live in a way that draws others to the Lord.

Naomi said that God had caused her grief and bitterness (see Ruth 1:20), but God was actually setting her up for a blessing (see Ruth 4:14).

Just as God turned Ruth and Naomi's situation from loss to restoration, He can always bring blessings from the hardships you endure.

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM RUTH:

May the LORD repay you for your kindness, and may your reward be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge. | Ruth 2:12

Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer (grandson, as heir) today, and may his name become famous in Israel.” | Ruth 4:14

May he also be to you one who restores life and sustains your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him. | Ruth 4:15

THE BOOK OF

RUTH

1 IN THE days when the judges governed [Israel], there was a famine in the land [of Canaan]. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to live temporarily in the country of Moab with his wife and his two sons.

²The man's name was Elimelech and his wife's name was Naomi and his two sons were named Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went to the country of Moab and stayed there.

³Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left [a widow] with her two sons.

⁴They took wives from the Moabite women; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other was Ruth. They lived there about ten years;

⁵and then both Mahlon and Chilion also died, so the woman [Naomi] was left without her two sons and her husband.

⁶Then she set out with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in Moab how the LORD had taken care of His people [of Judah] in giving them food.

⁷So she left the place where she was living, her two

daughters-in-law with her, and they started on the way back to the land of Judah.

⁸But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go back, each of you return to your mother’s house. May the LORD show kindness to you as you have shown kindness to the dead and to me.

⁹“May the LORD grant that you find rest, each one in the home of her husband.” Then she kissed them [goodbye], and they wept aloud.

¹⁰And they said to her, “No, we will go with you to your people [in Judah].”

¹¹But Naomi said, “Go back, my daughters, why should you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that may become your husbands?

¹²“Go back, my daughters, go, for I am too old to have a husband. If I said I have hope, and if I actually had a husband tonight and even gave birth to sons,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

There Is a Way

Have you ever faced a situation and said, “There is no way”? Maybe some of these thoughts weigh on your mind: There is no way I can handle this pressure. There is no way I can pay my bills at the end of the month. There is no way I can save my marriage. There is no way I can lose the weight I need to lose. There is no way I can endure the difficulties I have in my life.

Ruth refused to leave Naomi when their dire circumstances were far beyond “there is no way,” declaring that God did have a way (Ruth 1:16). There is always a way. It may not be easy, it may not be convenient, it may not come quickly; but if you will simply keep on keeping on and refuse to give up, you will find a way. God always has a way, and He will reveal it to you if you won’t give up.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

The Road Map of Right Thinking

Chapter one of Ruth tells of Naomi's tragic life. She has lost her husband, her two sons, her country, and finally feels as if she has lost her God. She tells her daughters-in-law to leave her "because the LORD'S hand has gone against me" (v. 13). She is not only bitter, but she believes that God is punishing her (v. 21). Only Ruth's optimism, hope, faith, and love help draw Naomi back from depression.

As you read through Ruth 1, consider how your mind, mouth, moods, attitudes, and behavior are definitely all connected. A negative mind and mouth will produce negative moods, attitudes, and, in all probability, a miserable day and miserable life. But the positive approach of setting your mind in an uplifting direction can have only a good effect on you and your entire life.

If you are not happy and you ask God why, He won't tell you that it is your circumstances. He will tell you that it is your mental and emotional posture toward your circumstances, and that you have the opportunity to take responsibility for

changing them. He always helps us, but He doesn't do everything for us without any participation on our part.

Transformation means a thorough change, and that is exactly what Jesus offers us through His death and resurrection. He offers us a new way of living, one filled with good things in which we are not conformed to the world and its superficial, external customs. A new way of thinking and a new attitude will always precede this new way of living. Right thinking and right attitudes are road maps that allow us to reach our destination (see Rom. 12:2).

This doesn't mean you won't have to deal with any unpleasantness throughout the day—and when you do, you may need to make even more choices about how you will think in those situations—but the good news is that you can choose how you will think, the words you want to speak, and the attitude you will have toward life. Your attitude belongs to you, and nobody can force you to have a bad one if you don't want to. People who do have a bad attitude hurt themselves more than anyone, and they hinder any positive progress in their life. A bad attitude and a good life simply don't mix!

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God of all wonders, I thank You that You are working to transform me into the image of Your Son, Jesus. I present myself to You as a living sacrifice and ask You to continue to renew my mind in the name of Jesus. Amen.

¹³would you wait until they were grown? Would you go without marrying? No, my daughters; for it is much more difficult for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has gone against me."

¹⁴Then they wept aloud again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law [goodbye], but Ruth clung to her.

¹⁵Then Naomi said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; turn back *and* follow your sister-in-law."

¹⁶But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people will be my people, and your God, my God.

¹⁷"Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD do the same to me [as He has done to you], and more also, if anything but death separates me from you."

¹⁸When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she said nothing more.

¹⁹So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole city was stirred because of them, and the women asked, "Is this Naomi?"

²⁰She said to them, "Do not call me Naomi (sweetness); call me Mara (bitter), for the Almighty has caused me great grief *and* bitterness.

²¹"I left full [with a husband and two sons], but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi, since the LORD has testified against me and the Almighty has afflicted

me?”

²²So Naomi returned from the country of Moab, and with her Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law. And they arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

2 NOW NAOMI had a relative of her husband, a man of great wealth *and* influence, from the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.

²And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, “Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one [of the reapers] in whose sight I may find favor.” Naomi said to her, “Go, my daughter.”

³So Ruth went and picked up the leftover grain in a field after the reapers; and she happened to stop at the plot of land belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

⁴It was then that Boaz came back from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, “The LORD be with you!” And they answered him, “The LORD bless you!”

⁵Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, “Whose young woman is this?”

⁶The servant in charge of the reapers answered, “She is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab.

⁷“And she said, ‘Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.’ So she came and has continued [gathering grain] from early morning until now, except when she sat [resting] for a little while in the [field] house.”

⁸Then Boaz said to Ruth, “Listen carefully, my daughter. Do

not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but stay here close by my maids.

⁹“Watch which field they reap, and follow behind them. I have commanded the servants not to touch you. And when you are thirsty, go to the [water] jars and drink from what the servants draw.”

¹⁰Then she kneeled face downward, bowing to the ground, and said to him, “Why have I found favor in your eyes that you should notice me, when I am a foreigner?”

¹¹Boaz answered her, “I have been made fully aware of everything that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people that you did not know before.

¹²“May the LORD repay you for your kindness, and may your reward be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.”

¹³Then she said, “Let me find favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not as one of your maidservants.”

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord God, that I
can take refuge under Your
wings.*

• adapted from Ruth 2:12

¹⁴At mealtime Boaz said to her, “Come over here and eat some bread and dip your bread in the vinegar.” So she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate until she was satisfied and she had some left [for Naomi].

¹⁵When she got up to glean, Boaz ordered his servants, “Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her.

¹⁶“Also you shall purposely pull out for her some stalks [of grain] from the sheaves and leave them so that she may collect them, and do not rebuke her.”

¹⁷So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley.

¹⁸She picked it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. Ruth also took out and gave to Naomi what she had saved after she [had eaten and] was satisfied.

¹⁹Her mother-in-law said to her, “Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you.” So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, “The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz.”

²⁰Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “May he be blessed of the LORD who has not ceased his kindness to the living and to the dead.” Again Naomi said to her, “The man is one of our closest relatives, one who has the right to redeem us.” [Lev 25:25]

²¹Then Ruth the Moabite said, “He also said to me, ‘Stay close to my servants until they have harvested my entire crop.’”

²²Naomi said to Ruth, “It is good, my daughter, for you to go out [to work] with his maids, so that others do not assault you in another field.”

²³So she stayed close to the maids of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvests. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

3 THEN NAOMI her mother-in-law said to Ruth, “My daughter, shall I not look for security *and* a home for you, so that it may be well with you?

²“Now Boaz, with whose maids you were [working], is he not our relative? See now, he is winnowing barley at the threshing floor tonight.

³“So wash and anoint yourself [with olive oil], then put on your [best] clothes, and go down to the threshing floor; but stay out of the man’s sight until he has finished eating and drinking.

⁴“When he lies down, notice the place where he is lying, and go and uncover his feet and lie down. Then he will tell you what to do.”

⁵Ruth answered her, “I will do everything that you say.”

⁶So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had told her.

⁷When Boaz had eaten and drunk and his heart was happy, he went to lie down at the end of the stack of grain. Then Ruth came secretly, and uncovered his feet and lay down.

⁸In the middle of the night the man was startled and he turned over, and found a woman lying at his feet.

⁹So he said, “Who are you?” And she answered, “I am Ruth your maid. Spread the hem of your garment over me, for you are a close relative *and* redeemer.”

¹⁰Then he said, “May you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter. You have made your last kindness better than the first; for you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich.

¹¹“Now, my daughter, do not be afraid. I will do for you whatever you ask, since all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence.

¹²“It is true that I am your close relative *and* redeemer; however, there is a relative closer [to you] than I.

¹³“Spend the night [here], and in the morning if he will redeem you, fine; let him do it. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then, as the LORD lives, I will redeem you. Lie down until the morning.”

¹⁴So she lay at his feet until the morning, but got up before anyone could recognize another; Boaz said, “Do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor [last night].”

¹⁵He also said, “Give me the shawl you are wearing and

hold it out.” So Ruth held it and he measured out six measures of barley [into it] and placed it on her. And she went into the city.

¹⁶When she came home, her mother-in-law said, “How did it go, my daughter?” And Ruth told her everything that the man had done for her.

¹⁷She said, “He gave me these six measures of barley, and he said to me, ‘Do not go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’”

¹⁸Then Naomi said, “Sit *and* wait, my daughter, until you learn how this matter turns out; for the man will not rest until he has settled it today.”

4 THEN BOAZ went up to the city gate [where business and legal matters were settled] and sat down, and then the close relative (redeemer) of whom Boaz had spoken came by. He said to him, “Come over here, friend, and sit down.” So he came and sat down.

²Then Boaz took ten men from the elders of the city and said, “Sit down here.” And they sat down.

³He said to the closest relative (redeemer), “Naomi, who has returned from the country of Moab, must sell the plot of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech.

⁴“So I thought to let you hear of it, saying, ‘Buy it in the presence of those sitting here, and before the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if not, then tell me, so that I may know; for there is no one besides you to redeem it, and I am [next of kin] after you.’” And he said, “I will redeem

it.”

⁵Then Boaz said, “The day that you buy the field from Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased, to restore the name of the deceased to his inheritance.”

⁶The closest relative (redeemer) said, “I cannot redeem it for myself, because [by marrying a Moabitess] I would jeopardize my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption (purchase) yourself, because I cannot redeem it.” [Deut 23:3, 4]

⁷Now formerly in Israel this was the custom concerning redeeming and exchanging *property*. To confirm a transaction, a man pulled off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the *way of confirming and attesting* in Israel.

⁸So, when the closest relative (redeemer) said to Boaz, “Buy it for yourself,” he pulled off his sandal [and gave it to Boaz to confirm the agreement].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Transforming Your Thinking

Ruth was a Moabitess, who worshiped idols, and yet she changed her mind about that and decided to serve the one true God. As a result of her transformed thinking, she ended up in the direct bloodline of David and Jesus (see Ruth 1:16; 4:17).

According to Romans 12:2, we are transformed by learning to think in a completely different way. This is a large part of being a successful Christian. One of the surest ways to become a victorious Christian is to learn to transform your thoughts.

The word transformed means “to change into another complete form, to totally change the appearance of, to convert.” I especially like the idea of conversion as a definition of transformation because when people accept Christ as their Savior, we say they have had a “conversion experience.” First, God converts us, and then He converts everything else in our lives by helping us convert (renew) our thinking.

⁹Then Boaz said to the elders and to all the people, “You are witnesses this day that I have bought everything that was Elimelech’s and everything that was Chilion’s and Mahlon’s from the hand of Naomi.

¹⁰“I have also acquired Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of

Mahlon, to be my wife to restore the name of the deceased to his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased will not be cut off from his brothers or from the gate of his birthplace. You are witnesses today.”

¹¹All the people at the gate and the elders said, “We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the household of Israel. May you achieve wealth *and* power in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem.

¹²“Further, may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring which the LORD will give you by this young woman.”

¹³So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.

¹⁴Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer (grandson, as heir) today, and may his name become famous in Israel.

¹⁵“May he also be to you one who restores life and sustains your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.”

¹⁶Then Naomi took the child and placed him in her lap, and she became his nurse.

¹⁷The neighbor women gave him a name, saying, “A son (grandson) has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed (worshiper). He is the father of Jesse, the father of David [the ancestor of Jesus Christ].

¹⁸Now these are the descendants of Perez: Perez was the father of Hezron,

¹⁹Hezron was the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab,

²⁰Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon,

²¹Salmon the father of Boaz, Boaz the father of Obed,

²²Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David [the king of Israel and the ancestor of Jesus Christ].

1 Samuel

Author: | Uncertain

Date: | Between 931
BC and 722 BC

First Samuel introduces us to characters such as Hannah and her promised son, Samuel, and Saul, God's first chosen king of Israel, who through a series of wrong thoughts and ungodly choices ultimately became a jealous, frightened, weak, and wicked person. It also introduces us to David, Israel's greatest leader and king, who is referred to as a man after God's own heart (see 1 Samuel 13:14).

Before David became king, he spent years worshiping God as a shepherd and writing many of the Psalms while God prepared him for future greatness. He also killed the mighty giant Goliath simply because he thought correctly about the challenge and realized that God was on his side, not Goliath's.

If you will think properly about the challenges you face, no matter how impossible they seem, God will give you victory,

just as He gave to David.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM 1 SAMUEL:

Always remember that it's important to try your best, but no one ever gets everything right. God is always looking at the heart (see 1 Samuel 16:7).

David understood that Goliath was not in covenant with God (see 1 Samuel 17:26). David also knew that God was on his side because he was in covenant with Him. As a believer, God is on your side too!

If you are tempted to seek revenge or take matters into your own hands, as David could have done with Saul, remember that God has His own ways and His own timing of dealing with people who come against you (see 1 Samuel 26:10–11).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM 1 SAMUEL:

Hannah prayed and said, “My heart rejoices and triumphs in the LORD; my horn (strength) is lifted up in the LORD, my mouth has opened wide [to speak boldly] against my enemies, because I rejoice in Your salvation.” | 1 Samuel 2:1

The LORD will not abandon His people for His great name's sake, because the LORD has been pleased to make you a people for Himself. | 1 Samuel 12:22

Samuel said, “Has the LORD as great a delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obedience to the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed [is better] than the fat of rams.” | 1 Samuel 15:22

THE FIRST BOOK OF
SAMUEL

1 THERE WAS a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim, of the hill country of Ephraim, named Elkanah the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite.

²He had two wives, one named Hannah and the other named Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.

³This man went up from his city each year to worship and sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh. Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests to the LORD there.

⁴When the day came that Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions [of the sacrificial meat] to Peninnah his wife and all her sons and daughters.

⁵But to Hannah he would give a double portion, because he loved Hannah, but the LORD had given her no children.

⁶Hannah's rival provoked her bitterly, to irritate *and* embarrass her, because the LORD had left her childless.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Praying for God's Will

Fervent prayer is powerful, and Hannah knew it.

I once reached a point in my prayer life where I felt frustrated, so I began to seek God about it. I wanted the assurance that “the heartfelt and persistent prayer of a righteous man (believer) can accomplish much [when put into action and made effective by God—it is dynamic and can have tremendous power]” (James 5:16). I wanted God’s power made available to change that situation or to bless that person’s life over which I was praying.

If we’re going to learn how to pray effectively, we need to seek God and say, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). He will show you the keys to praying more effectively. Keys lock and unlock. Keys reflect authority. Whoever has the keys has the authority. When we pray in this way, we’re asking the Lord to reveal His prayer principles that will make our prayers effective.

I encourage you to start seeking God’s will when you pray, because there will be an anointing on prayer that is in line with His will as it was with Hannah’s prayer for a child (see 1 Sam. 1). God showed me that to pray fervently means to put your whole self, all of your attention—your mind, your will, and your emotions—all of you into what you’re praying about. He is more concerned with the quality of prayer than

the quantity of prayer.

There is nothing more powerful to change our lives and the lives of those around us than God's hand moving in response to our heartfelt, continued prayer.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Focus on God

I've never heard anyone pray, "Dear God, please make everything easy for me," but I have heard prayers come close. Too many people want victory without battle, triumph without effort, and ease without labor. The world simply doesn't function that way, nor does God's Word promise us a life without some difficulties.

There was a time when I'd make a firm stand for following the Lord, but in my heart (and often in my mouth) were the words, "it's just too hard." God convicted me of negative thinking and taught me that if I would stop looking at the hardships and obey Him, He would make a way for me. God wants to bless us and prosper the work of our hands, but the open door to blessing is to obey His commandments (see Deut. 30:9–11, 14). He assures us: "For this commandment which I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach" (v. 11).

Because we spend so much time listening to the negatives and figuring out what can go wrong, too often we forget the

promise that God's will is not too difficult for us. We can learn to view obvious difficulties as blessings from God.

For instance, Hannah spent years praying for a baby, but the Lord had not given her one. Meanwhile, her husband's second wife gave birth to sons and daughters and provoked Hannah bitterly, to irritate and embarrass her.

Instead of saying, "Life is so hard," Hannah, in her great distress, prayed to the Lord (see 1 Sam. 1:10). She didn't merely focus on the hardships; she focused on the One Who could give her a child. She didn't listen to the whisperings of her enemy; she turned her heart toward God and trusted His loving hand to be upon her. I wrote the words *loving hand* even though it may not always seem that way. And that's where the devil sometimes creeps in to say, "If God loves you so much, why are you in this mess?"

The best answer is the one Hannah received: "and the LORD remembered her [prayer]" (v. 19). God never promises an easy life, but He does promise a blessed life. He does hear and answer prayer!

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God of love and compassion, please forgive me for complaining about life being too hard and wanting things to be easy. Lead me where You want me to go and help me rejoice even in the midst of the problems, because You will be there to help me solve them. Amen.

⁷So it happened year after year, whenever she went up to the house of the LORD, Peninnah provoked her; so she wept and would not eat.

⁸Then Elkanah her husband said to her, “Hannah, why do you cry and why do you not eat? Why are you so sad *and* discontent? Am I not better to you than ten sons?”

⁹So Hannah got up after eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his seat beside the doorpost of the temple (tabernacle) of the LORD.

¹⁰Hannah was greatly distressed, and she prayed to the LORD and wept in anguish.

¹¹She made a vow, saying, “O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction (suffering) of Your maidservant and remember, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life; a razor shall never touch his head.”

¹²Now it happened as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli was watching her mouth.

¹³Hannah was speaking in her heart (mind); only her lips were moving, and her voice was not heard, so Eli thought she was drunk.

¹⁴Eli said to her, “How long will you make yourself drunk? Get rid of your wine.”

¹⁵But Hannah answered, “No, my lord, I am a woman with a despairing spirit. I have not been drinking wine or *any* intoxicating drink, but I have poured out my soul before the LORD. [Gen 19:34]

¹⁶“Do not regard your maidservant as a wicked *and* worthless woman, for I have spoken until now out of my great concern and [bitter] provocation.”

¹⁷Then Eli answered and said, “Go in peace; and may the God of Israel grant your petition that you have asked of Him.”

¹⁸Hannah said, “Let your maidservant find grace *and* favor in your sight.” So the woman went on her way and ate, and her face was no longer *sad*.

¹⁹The family got up early the next morning, worshiped before the LORD, and returned to their home in Ramah. Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her [prayer].

²⁰It came about in due time, after Hannah had conceived, that she gave birth to a son; she named him Samuel, *saying*, “Because I have asked for him from the LORD.”

²¹Then the man Elkanah and all his household went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice and *pay* his vow.

²²But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, “*I will not go up* until the child is weaned; and then I will bring him, so that he may appear before the LORD and remain there as long as he lives.”

²³Elkanah her husband said to her, “Do what seems best to you. Wait until you have weaned him; only may the LORD establish *and* confirm His word.” So the woman remained [behind] and nursed her son until she weaned him.

²⁴Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a leather bottle of wine [to pour over the burnt offering for a sweet fragrance], and she brought Samuel to the LORD’s house in Shiloh, although the child was young.

²⁵Then they slaughtered the bull, and brought the child to Eli.

²⁶Hannah said, “Oh, my lord! As [surely as] your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood beside you here, praying to the LORD.

²⁷“For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my request which I asked of Him.

²⁸“Therefore I have also dedicated him to the LORD; as long as he lives he is dedicated to the LORD.” And they worshiped the LORD there.

2 HANNAH PRAYED and said,

“My heart rejoices *and* triumphs in the LORD;
My horn (strength) is lifted up in the LORD,
My mouth has opened wide [to speak boldly] against my
enemies,
Because I rejoice in Your salvation.

²“There is no one holy like the LORD,
There is no one besides You,
There is no Rock like our God.

³“Do not go on boasting so very proudly,
Do not let arrogance come out of your mouth;

**A Prayer To
Renew Your Mind**



Lord, my heart rejoices and triumphs in You. My strength is lifted up in You. I speak boldly against my enemies because I rejoice in Your salvation.

• adapted from 1 Samuel 2:1

For the LORD is a God of knowledge,
And by Him actions are weighed (examined).

4““The bows of the mighty are broken,
But those who have stumbled equip themselves with strength.

5““Those who were full hire themselves out for bread,
But those who were hungry cease [to hunger].
Even the barren [woman] gives birth to seven,
But she who has many children withers away.

6““The LORD puts to death and makes alive;
He brings down to Sheol (the grave) and raises up [from the grave].

7““The LORD makes poor and makes rich;
He brings low and He lifts up.

8““He raises up the poor from the dust,
He lifts up the needy from the ash heap

To make them sit with nobles,
And inherit a seat of honor *and* glory;
For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's,
And He set the land on them.

⁹“He guards the feet of His godly (faithful) ones,
But the wicked ones are silenced *and* perish in darkness;
For a man shall not prevail by might.

¹⁰“The adversaries of the LORD will be broken to pieces;
He will thunder against them in the heavens,
The LORD will judge the ends of the earth;
And He will give strength to His king,
And will exalt the horn (strength) of His anointed.” [Luke
1:46]

¹¹Elkanah [and his wife Hannah] returned to Ramah to his house. But the child [Samuel] served the LORD under the guidance of Eli the priest.

¹²The sons of Eli [Hophni and Phinehas] were worthless (dishonorable, unprincipled) men; they did not know [nor respect] the LORD

¹³and the custom of the priests with [the sacrifices of] the people. When any man was offering a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged [meat] fork in his hand;

¹⁴then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; everything that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. This is what they did in Shiloh to all [the sacrifices of] the Israelites who came there.

¹⁵Also, before they burned (offered) the fat, the priest's

servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, “Give the priest meat to roast, since he will not accept boiled meat from you, only raw.”

¹⁶If the man said to him, “Certainly they are to burn (offer) the fat first, and then you may take as much as you want,” then the priest’s servant would say, “No! You shall give *it to me* now or I will take it by force.”

¹⁷So the sin of the [two] young men [Hophni and Phinehas] was very great before the LORD, for the men treated the offering of the LORD disrespectfully.

¹⁸Now Samuel was ministering before the LORD, as a child dressed in a linen ephod [a sacred item of priestly clothing].

¹⁹Moreover, his mother would make him a little robe and would bring it up to him each year when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.

²⁰Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife and say, “May the LORD give you children by this woman in place of the one she asked for which was dedicated to the LORD.” Then they would return to their own home.

²¹And [the time came when] the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew before the LORD.

²²Now Eli was very old; and he heard about everything that his sons were doing to all [the people of] Israel, and how they were lying with the women who served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting (tabernacle).

²³Eli said to them, “Why do you do such things, the evil things that I hear from all these people?”

²⁴“No, my sons; for the report that I keep hearing from the

passers-by among the LORD's people is not good.

²⁵“If one man does wrong *and* sins against another, God will intercede (arbitrate) for him; but if a man does wrong to the LORD, who can intercede for him?” But they would not listen to their father, for it was the LORD's will to put them to death.

²⁶But the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor both with the LORD and with men.

²⁷Then a man of God (prophet) came to Eli and said to him, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Did I *not* plainly reveal Myself to the house of your father (ancestor) when they were in Egypt *in bondage* to Pharaoh's house?’

²⁸“Moreover, I selected him out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest, to go up to My altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before Me. And [from then on] I gave to the house of your father all the fire *offerings* of the sons of Israel.

²⁹“Why then do you kick at (despise) My sacrifice and My offering which I commanded in My dwelling place, and honor your sons more than Me, by fattening yourselves with the choicest part of every offering of My people Israel?”

³⁰“Therefore the LORD God of Israel declares, ‘I did indeed say that your house and that of [Aaron] your father would walk [in priestly service] before Me forever.’ But now the LORD declares, ‘Far be it from Me—for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me will be insignificant *and* contemptible.

³¹“Behold, the time is coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your house.

³²“You will look at the distress of *My* house (the

tabernacle), in *spite of* all the good which God will do for Israel, and there will never again be an old man in your house.

³³‘Yet I will not cut off every man of yours from My altar; your eyes will fail *from weeping* and your soul will grieve, and all those born in your house will die as men [in the prime of life]. [1 Sam 22:17–20]

³⁴‘This will be the sign to you which shall come concerning your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas: on the same day both of them shall die. [1 Sam 4:17, 18]

³⁵‘But I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who will do according to what is in My heart and in My soul; and I will build him a permanent *and* enduring house, and he will walk before My anointed forever. [1 Sam 2:10]

³⁶‘And it will happen that everyone who is left in your house will come and bow down to him for a piece of silver and a loaf of bread and say, “Please assign me to one of the priest’s offices so I may eat a piece of bread.””

3 NOW THE boy Samuel was attending to the service of the LORD under the supervision of Eli. The word of the LORD was rare *and* precious in those days; visions [that is, new revelations of divine truth] were not widespread.

²Yet it happened at that time, as Eli was lying down in his own place (now his eyesight had begun to grow dim and he could not see *well*).

³and the [oil] lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was,

⁴that the LORD called Samuel, and he answered, “Here I am.”

⁵He ran to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But Eli said, “I did not call you; lie down again.” So he went and lay down.

⁶Then the LORD called yet again, “Samuel!” So Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But Eli answered, “I did not call, my son; lie down again.”

⁷Now Samuel did not yet know [or personally experience] the LORD, and the word of the LORD was not yet revealed [directly] to him.

⁸So the LORD called Samuel a third time. And he stood and went to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you did call me.” Then Eli understood that it was the LORD [who was] calling the boy.

⁹So Eli said to Samuel, “Go, lie down, and it shall be that if He calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

¹⁰Then the LORD came and stood and called as at the previous times, “Samuel! Samuel!” Then Samuel answered, “Speak, for Your servant is listening.”

¹¹The LORD said to Samuel, “Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will ring.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Listen, Learn, and Be Led

One of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is to lead each of us into God's will for our lives: "But when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth [full and complete truth]. For He will not speak on His own initiative, but He will speak whatever He hears... and He will disclose to you what is to come [in the future]" (John 16:13).

People frequently pray for God to tell them what to do in specific situations. Divine guidance is God's will for all His children, and as we grow in believing we have inherited the right to be led by the Spirit in this way, we will also grow in hearing His voice.

Discerning the voice of God will take some practice—you need to practice listening—and you will probably make a few mistakes, as Samuel did (see 1 Sam. 3:9). But don't be afraid to step out in faith. Be willing to listen, to learn, and to be led.

¹²“On that day I will carry out against Eli everything that I have spoken concerning his house (family), from beginning to end.

¹³“Now I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the sinful behavior which he knew [was happening], because his sons were bringing a curse on themselves [dishonoring and blaspheming God] and he did not rebuke

them.

¹⁴“Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the sinful behavior of Eli’s house (family) shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever.”

¹⁵So Samuel lay down until morning. Then he opened the doors of the LORD’s house. But Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli.

¹⁶But Eli called Samuel and said, “Samuel, my son.” And he answered, “Here I am.”

¹⁷Then Eli said, “What is it that He said to you? Please do not hide it from me. May God do the same to you, and more also, if you hide from me anything of all that He said to you.”

¹⁸So Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him. And Eli said, “It is the LORD; may He do what seems good to Him.”

¹⁹Now Samuel grew; and the LORD was with him and He let none of his words fail [to be fulfilled]. [Josh 23:14]

²⁰And all Israel from Dan [in the north] to Beersheba [in the south] knew that Samuel was appointed as a prophet of the LORD.

²¹And the LORD continued to appear in Shiloh, for the LORD revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

4 AND THE word of [the LORD through] Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out to meet the Philistines in battle and they camped beside Ebenezer while the Philistines camped at

Aphek.

²The Philistines assembled in battle formation to meet Israel, and when the battle was over, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men on the battlefield.

³When the people (soldiers) came into the camp, the elders of Israel said, “Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD here from Shiloh, so that He may come among us and save us from the hand of our enemies.”

⁴So the people sent *word* to Shiloh, and from there they carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts who sits *above* the cherubim; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were with the ark of the covenant of God.

⁵So it happened that as the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all [the people of] Israel shouted with a great shout, and the earth resounded.

⁶When the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, “What *does* the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews *mean*?” Then they understood that the ark of the LORD had come into the camp.

⁷The Philistines were afraid, for they said, “God has come into the camp.” And they said, “Woe [disaster is coming] to us! For nothing like this has happened before.

⁸“Woe to us! Who will rescue us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness.

⁹“Take courage, and be men, O Philistines, so that you do not become servants to the Hebrews, as they have been

servants to you; act like men and fight!”

¹⁰So the Philistines fought; Israel was defeated and every man fled to his tent. It was a very great defeat, for thirty thousand foot soldiers of Israel fell.

¹¹Also the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were killed. [1 Sam 2:34]

¹²Now a man [from the tribe] of Benjamin ran from the battle line and came to Shiloh that same day with his clothes torn and dust on his head [as signs of mourning over the disaster].

¹³When he arrived, Eli was sitting on his seat by the road, keeping watch, because his heart was anxious about the ark of God. When the man arrived to report [the news] in the city, everyone in the city cried out [to God, for help].

¹⁴When Eli heard the noise of the outcry, he asked, “What is the noise of this uproar?” And the man came hurriedly and told Eli.

¹⁵Now Eli was ninety-eight years old; his eyes were dim so that he could not see.

¹⁶The man said to Eli, “I have come from the battle line. Indeed, I escaped from the battle line today.” Eli said, “How did things go, my son?”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Living Without Worry, Anxiety, and Fear

Eli was worried and fearful concerning what was going to happen to the Ark (see 1 Sam. 4:13). There are many, many things in life we can find to worry about if that is what we choose to do, but it is useless. Worry is like sitting in a rocking chair, rocking back and forth; it's always in motion and it keeps us busy, but it never gets us anywhere. In fact, if we do it too long, it wears us out!

Trusting God allows us to enter His rest—a place of peace where we are able to enjoy life while we are waiting for Him to provide a solution to our problems. He cares for us; He will solve “the worries and cares of the world [the distractions of this age with its worldly pleasures]” (Mark 4:19) and meet our needs, but we need to stop thinking and worrying about them.

I realize this is easier said than done, but worry has never made any situation better. There is no time like the present to begin learning a new way to live without worry, anxiety, and fear.

¹⁷The messenger replied, “Israel has fled before the Philistines and there has also been a great slaughter among the people. Also your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been taken.”

¹⁸When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell off the seat backwards by the side of the [city] gate. His neck was broken and he died, for he was old and heavy. He had judged Israel for forty years.

¹⁹Now his daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was pregnant, and was about to give birth; so when she heard the news that the ark of God had been taken and that her father-in-law and her husband had died, she kneeled down and gave birth, because her [labor] pains began.

²⁰And about the time of her death [following the sudden birth] the women attending her said to her, "Do not be afraid, for you have given birth to a son." But she did not answer or pay any attention.

²¹And she named the boy Ichabod, saying, "The glory has left Israel," because the ark of God had been taken and because of [the deaths of] her father-in-law and her husband.

²²She said, "The glory has left Israel, for the ark of God has been taken."

5 THEN THE Philistines took the ark of God, and they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod.

²They took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and set it beside [the image of] Dagon [their chief idol].

³When the people of Ashdod got up early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and returned him to his place.

⁴But when they got up early the next morning, behold,

Dagon had [again] fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the LORD, and his head and both palms of his hands were [lying] cut off on the threshold; only the trunk [portion] of [the idol of] Dagon was left on him.

⁵This is the reason neither the priests of Dagon nor any who enter Dagon's house step on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

⁶Then the hand of the LORD was heavy on the people of Ashdod, and He caused them to be dumbfounded and struck them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territory.

⁷When the men of Ashdod saw what had happened, they said, "The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for His hand is heavy on us and on Dagon our god."

⁸So they sent *word* and gathered all the lords (governors) of the Philistines to them and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?" They answered, "Let the ark of the God of Israel be brought around to Gath." So they took the ark of the God of Israel there.

⁹But it happened that after they had taken it *to Gath*, the hand of the LORD was against the city, causing an extremely great panic [because of the deaths from the plague], for He struck the people of the city, both young and old, and tumors broke out on them.

¹⁰So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. And as the ark of God came to Ekron, the Ekronites cried out, "They have brought the ark of the God of Israel [from Gath] to us, to kill us and our people."

¹¹So they sent *word* and gathered all the lords of the Philistines and said, "Send away the ark of the God of Israel; let

it be returned to its own place, so that it will not kill us and our people.” For there was a deadly panic throughout the city; the hand of God was very heavy (severe) there.

¹²The men who had not died were stricken with tumors and the cry of the city [for help] went up to heaven.

6 NOW THE ark of the LORD had been in the country of the Philistines for seven months.

²And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners (seers), saying, “What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Let us know how we can send it *back* to its place.”

³They said, “If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty [without a gift]; but be sure to return [it] to Him [together with] a guilt offering. Then you will be healed, and it will be known to you why His hand is not removed from you.”

⁴Then they said, “What shall the guilt offering be which we shall return to Him?” They answered, “Five golden tumors and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords (governors) of the Philistines, for one plague was on all of you and on your lords.

⁵“So you shall make replicas of your tumors and of your mice that ravage the land, and give glory to the God of Israel; perhaps He will lighten His hand [of judgment] on you and your gods and your land.

⁶“Why then do you harden your hearts [allowing pride to cause your downfall] just as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When He had severely dealt with them

and mocked them, did they not allow the people [of Israel] to go, and they departed?

⁷“Now then, make a new cart and prepare two milk cows on which a yoke has never been placed; and hitch the cows to the cart and take their calves back home, away from them.

⁸“Then take the ark of the LORD and put it on the cart; and put the articles of gold which you are returning to Him as a guilt offering in a box beside it. Then send it away [without a driver].

⁹“But watch, if it goes up by the way of its own territory to Beth-shemesh, then [you will know that] He has done us this great evil. But if not, then we will know that it was not His hand that struck us; this disaster happened to us by chance.”

¹⁰And the men did so, and took two milk cows and hitched them to the cart, and corralled their calves at home.

¹¹They put the ark of the LORD on the cart, and the box containing the golden mice and the replicas of their tumors.

¹²And the cows went straight toward Beth-shemesh along the highway, lowing as they went, and did not turn away to the right or the left. And the Philistine lords (governors) followed them to the border of Beth-shemesh.

¹³Now *the men of* Beth-shemesh were gathering their wheat harvest in the valley, and they looked up and saw the ark and rejoiced to see it.

¹⁴The cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh and stopped there. A large stone was there; and the men split up the wood of the cart [for firewood] and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD.

¹⁵The Levites had taken down the ark of the LORD and the

box beside it, in which were the articles of gold, and put them on the large stone. And the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and made sacrifices that day to the LORD.

¹⁶When the five lords of the Philistines saw what happened, they returned to Ekron that day.

¹⁷These are the golden tumors which the Philistines returned as a guilt offering to the LORD: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath and one for Ekron [the five chief cities of the Philistines];

¹⁸also the golden mice, *according* to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both fortified cities and [unwalled] country villages. The large stone on which the Levites set the ark of the LORD *remains a witness* to this day in the field of Joshua of Beth-shemesh.

¹⁹The LORD struck down some of the men of Beth-shemesh because they had looked into the ark of the LORD. He struck down 50,070 men among the people, and the people mourned because the LORD had struck the people with a great slaughter.

²⁰The men of Beth-shemesh said, “Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God? And to whom shall He go up from us?”

²¹So they sent messengers to the residents of Kiriath-jearim, saying, “The Philistines have returned the ark of the LORD. Come down and take it up to you.”

7 SO THE men of Kiriath-jearim came and took up the ark of the Lord and brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill, and they consecrated Eleazar his son to care for the ark of the

Lord.

²And from that day the ark remained in Kiriath-jearim for a very long time, for it was twenty years [until the reign of King David]; and all the house of Israel lamented (wailed) *and* grieved after the LORD. [2 Sam 6:3, 4; 1 Chr 13:5–7]

³Then Samuel said to all the house of Israel, “If you are returning to the LORD with all your heart, remove the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth (pagan goddesses) from among you and direct your hearts to the LORD and serve Him only; and He will rescue you from the hand of the Philistines.”

⁴So the Israelites removed the Baals and the Ashtaroth and served the LORD alone.

⁵Samuel said, “Gather all Israel together at Mizpah and I will pray to the LORD for you.”

⁶So they gathered at Mizpah, and drew water and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day and said there, “We have sinned against the LORD.” And Samuel judged the Israelites at Mizpah.

⁷Now when the Philistines heard that the Israelites had gathered at Mizpah, the lords (governors) of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the Israelites heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines.

⁸And the sons of Israel said to Samuel, “Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us, so that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines.”

⁹So Samuel took a nursing lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD; and Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel and the LORD answered him.

¹⁰As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines approached for the battle against Israel. Then the LORD thundered with a great voice that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion, and they were defeated *and* fled before Israel.

¹¹And the men of Israel came out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and struck them down as far as [the territory] below Beth-car.

¹²Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpah and Shen, and he named it Ebenezer (stone of help), saying, “Thus far the LORD has helped us.”

¹³So the Philistines were subdued and they did not come anymore into Israelite territory. And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

¹⁴The cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron to Gath; and Israel recovered the cities’ territory from the Philistines. Also there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

¹⁵Now Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.

¹⁶He used to go annually on a circuit to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, and he judged Israel in all these places.

¹⁷Then he would return to Ramah, because his home was there; and there he judged Israel, and there he built an altar to the LORD.

8 AND IT came about when Samuel was old that he appointed his sons as judges over Israel.

²Now the name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judging in Beersheba.

³His sons, however, did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice.

⁴Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah

⁵and said to him, “Look, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint us a king to judge us [and rule over us] like all the other nations.”

⁶But their demand displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge *and* rule over us.” So Samuel prayed to the LORD.

⁷The LORD said to Samuel, “Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being King over them.

⁸“Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day—in that they have abandoned (rejected) Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also.

⁹“So now listen to their voice; only solemnly warn them and tell them the ways of the king who will reign over them.”

¹⁰So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king.

POWERPOINT

Anytime we read what the Word says and refuse to obey it, reasoning has somehow become involved and is deceiving us into believing something other than the truth. We cannot spend excessive time trying to understand everything God's Word says. I have found that God wants me to obey Him, whether or not I feel like it, want to, or think it is a good idea.



¹¹He said, “These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them for himself to his chariots and among his horsemen and they will run before his chariots.

¹²“He will appoint them for himself to be commanders over thousands and over fifties, and *some* to do his plowing and to reap his harvest and to make his implements of war and

equipment for his chariots.

¹³“He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers.

¹⁴“He will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants.

¹⁵“He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants.

¹⁶“He will take your male servants and your female servants and your best young men and your donkeys and use them for his work.

¹⁷“He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves shall be his servants.

¹⁸“Then you will cry out on that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you on that day [because you have rejected Him as King].”

¹⁹Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, “No, but there shall be a king over us,

²⁰so that we too may be like all the nations [around us], that our king may judge [and govern] us and go out before us and fight our battles.”

²¹Samuel had heard all the words of the people and repeated them to the LORD.

²²And the LORD said to Samuel, “Listen to their request and appoint a king for them.” So Samuel said to the men of Israel, “Go, each man to his own city.”

9 THERE WAS a man of [the tribe of] Benjamin whose name was Kish the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Becorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of influence *and* wealth.

²Kish had a son named Saul, a choice and handsome man; among the sons of Israel there was not a man more handsome than he. From his shoulders and up he was [a head] taller than any of the people.

POWERPOINT

In 1 Samuel 9:5, Saul talks about his father's worrying. Some people worry to the point of being addicted to worry. If they do not have something of their own to be anxious about, they will worry over someone else's situation. Anxiety and worry are both attacks on the mind that are intended to distract us from obeying and serving the Lord. The enemy also uses both to press our faith down, so it cannot rise up and help us live in victory. It is absolutely impossible to worry and live in peace at the same time.



³Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, had wandered off *and* were lost. Kish said to his son Saul, "Please take one of the servants with you and arise, go look for the donkeys."

⁴And they passed through the hill country of Ephraim and the land of Shalishah, but did not find *them*. Then they passed through the land of Shaalim, but they were not *there* and the land of the Benjamites, but they [still] did not find *them*.

⁵When they came to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant who was with him, "Come, let us return, otherwise my father will stop *worrying* about the donkeys and become anxious about us."

⁶The servant said to him, "Look here, in this city there is a man of God, and the man is held in honor; everything that he says comes true. Now let us go there; perhaps he can advise us about our journey [and tell us where we should go]."

⁷Then Saul said to his servant, "But look, if we go [to see him], what shall we bring to the man? For the bread from our sacks is gone and there is no gift to bring to the man of God. What do we have [to offer]?"

⁸The servant replied again to Saul, "Here in my hand I have a quarter of a shekel of silver; I will give that to the man of God, and he will advise us as to [where we should go on] our journey [to find the donkeys]."

⁹(Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he would say, "Come, let us go to the seer"; for *he who is called* a prophet today was formerly called a seer.)

¹⁰Saul said to his servant, "Well said; come, let us go." So they went to the city where the man of God was living.

¹¹As they went up the hill to the city, they met some young women going out to draw water, and said to them, "Is the seer (prophet) here?"

¹²They answered them, "He is; look, he is ahead of you."

Hurry now, for he has come into the city today because the people have a sacrifice on the high place today.

¹³“As you enter the city you will find him before he goes up to the high place to eat, for the people will not eat until he comes, because he must ask the blessing on the sacrifice; afterward, those who are invited will eat. So go up now, for about now you will find him.”

¹⁴So they went up to the city. And as they came into the city, there was Samuel coming out toward them to go up to the high place.

¹⁵Now a day before Saul came, the LORD had informed Samuel [of this], saying,

¹⁶“About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him as leader over My people Israel; and he will save My people from the hand of the Philistines. For I have looked upon [the distress of] My people, because their cry [for help] has come to Me.”

¹⁷When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said to him, “There is the man of whom I spoke to you. This one shall rule over My people [as their king].”

¹⁸Then Saul approached Samuel in the [city] gate and said, “Please tell me where the seer’s house is.”

¹⁹Samuel answered Saul, “I am the seer. Go on ahead of me to the high place, for you shall eat with me today; and in the morning I will let you go, and will tell you all that is on your mind.

²⁰“As for your donkeys which were lost three days ago, do not be concerned about them, for they have been found. And for whom are all things that are desirable in Israel? Are they not

for you and for all your father's household (family)?"

²¹Saul replied, "Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? And is not my family the smallest of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then have you spoken this way to me [as if I were very important]?"

²²Then Samuel took Saul and his servant and brought them into the hall [at the high place] and gave them a place [to sit] at the head of the persons—about thirty men—who were invited [while the rest ate outside].

²³Samuel said to the cook, "Bring the [priests'] portion that I gave you, regarding which I told you, 'Set it aside.'"

²⁴Then the cook lifted up the leg (thigh) with *the meat* that was on it [indicating that it was the priest's honored portion] and placed it before Saul. Samuel said, "Here is what has been reserved [for you]. Set it before you and eat, because it has been kept for you until the appointed time, ever since I invited the people." So Saul ate with Samuel that day.

²⁵When they came down from the high place into the city, Samuel spoke with Saul on the roof [of his house].

²⁶They got up early [the next day]; and at dawn Samuel called Saul [who was sleeping] on the roof, saying, "Get up, so that I may send you on your way." Saul got up, and both he and Samuel went outside.

²⁷As they were going down to the outskirts of the city, Samuel said to Saul, "Tell the servant to go on ahead of us so that he may pass by but you stand still now so that I may proclaim the word of God to you."

10 THEN SAMUEL took the flask of oil and poured it on Saul's head, kissed him, and said, "Has the LORD not anointed you as ruler over His inheritance (Israel)?"

²"When you leave me today, you will meet two men beside Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah; they will say to you, 'The donkeys you went to look for have been found. And your father has stopped caring about them and is worried about you, saying, "What shall I do about my son?"' "

³"Then you will go on further from there, and you will come to the terebinth tree of Tabor, and three men going up to [sacrifice to] God at Bethel will meet you there, one carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a jug of wine.

⁴They will greet you and give you two *loaves* of bread, which you will accept from their hand.

⁵"After that you will come to the hill of God where the garrison of the Philistines is; and when you come there to the city, you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place [of worship] with harp, tambourine, flute, and lyre before them, and they will be prophesying.

⁶"Then the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you mightily, and you will prophesy with them, and you will be changed into another man.

⁷"When these signs come to you, do for yourself whatever the situation requires, for God is with you.

⁸"You shall go down ahead of me to Gilgal; and behold, I will be coming down to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. You shall wait seven days until I

come to you and show you what you must do.”

⁹Then it happened when Saul turned his back to leave Samuel, God changed his heart; and all those signs came to pass that day.

¹⁰When they came to the hill [Gibeah], behold, a group of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came on him mightily, and he prophesied [under divine guidance] among them.

¹¹Now when all who knew Saul previously saw that he actually prophesied now [by inspiration] with the prophets, the people said one to another, “What has happened to [Saul, who is nobody but] the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?”

¹²And a man from there answered, “But who is the father of the others?” So it became a proverb, “Is Saul also among the prophets?”

¹³When Saul had finished prophesying, he went to the high place [of worship].

¹⁴Saul’s uncle said to him and to his servant, “Where did you go?” And Saul said, “To look for the donkeys. And when we saw that they were nowhere to be found, we went to Samuel [for help].”

¹⁵Saul’s uncle said, “Please tell me, what did Samuel say to you?”

¹⁶And Saul said to his uncle, “He told us plainly that the donkeys had been found.” But he did not tell him about the matter of the kingdom which Samuel had mentioned.

¹⁷Then Samuel called the people together to the LORD at Mizpah,

¹⁸and he said to Israel, “Thus says the LORD, the God of

Israel, 'It was I who brought Israel up from Egypt, and I rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and from all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.'

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Thoughts Express Themselves

In 1 Samuel 10:27, Saul knew how the worthless men felt about him. He could tell by the way they acted. You don't always have to verbalize your thoughts for people to see them. Think about how you act on a first date with someone you like. You show signs of acceptance and approval. You smile a lot. You encourage him or her with your eyes and head nods to show your interest. You haven't said a word, but your body language says: "I like you!"

Now think about how you act when you are in a grocery checkout line and the cashier is taking forever. You shift your weight from side to side, cross your arms, huff, or even roll your eyes. Your posture speaks for you. You may think your thoughts are hidden, but your thoughts show up in your attitudes, body language, words, and actions. It might even be seen in not sending a gift (see 1 Sam. 10:27). Make sure you display a good attitude.

¹⁹“But today you have rejected your God, who Himself saves you from all your disasters and distresses; yet you have said, ‘No! Set a king over us.’ Now then, present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your families (clans).”

²⁰And when Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, the tribe of Benjamin was chosen by lot.

²¹Then he brought the tribe of Benjamin near by their families, and the family of Matri was chosen by lot. And Saul the son of Kish was chosen by lot; but when they looked for him, he could not be found.

²²So they inquired further of the LORD, “Has the man come here yet?” And the LORD answered, “He is there, hiding himself by the provisions *and* supplies.” [Ex 28:30]

²³So they ran and took him from there, and when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward.

²⁴Samuel said to all the people, “Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen? For there is no one like him among all the people.” So all the people shouted and said, “*Long* live the king!”

²⁵Then Samuel told the people the requirements of the kingdom, and wrote them in a book and placed it before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his home.

²⁶Saul also went home to Gibeah; and the brave men whose hearts God had touched went with him.

²⁷But some worthless men said, “How can this man save *and* rescue us?” And they regarded Saul with contempt and did not bring him a gift. But he ignored the insult *and* kept silent.

11 NOW NAHASH the Ammonite [king] went up and besieged Jabesh-gilead; and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, “Make a treaty [of peace] with us and we will serve

you.”

²But Nahash the Ammonite told them, “I will make *a treaty* with you on this condition, that I will gouge out the right eye of every one of you, and make it a disgrace upon all Israel.”

³The elders of Jabesh said to Nahash, “Give us seven days so that we may send messengers throughout the territory of Israel. Then, if there is no one to save us, we will come out [and surrender] to you.”

⁴Then the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and told the news to the people; and all the people raised their voices and wept aloud.

⁵Now Saul was coming out of the field behind the oxen, and he said, “What is *the matter* with the people that they are weeping?” So they told him about the report of the men of Jabesh.

⁶The Spirit of God came upon Saul mightily when he heard these words, and he became extremely angry.

⁷He took a team of oxen and cut them in pieces, and sent them throughout the territory of Israel by the hand of messengers, saying, “Whoever does not come out to follow Saul and Samuel, the same shall be done to his oxen.” Then fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out [united] as one man [with one purpose].

⁸He assembled *and* counted them at Bezek; and the sons of Israel numbered 300,000, and the men of Judah 30,000.

⁹They said to the messengers who had come, “You shall say to the men of Jabesh-gilead: ‘Tomorrow, by the time the sun is hot, you will have help [against the Ammonites].’” So the messengers came and reported this to the men of Jabesh;

and they were overjoyed.

¹⁰So the men of Jabesh said [to Nahash the Ammonite], “Tomorrow we will come out to you [to surrender], and you may do to us whatever seems good to you.”

¹¹The next morning Saul put the men into three companies; and they entered the [Ammonites'] camp during the [darkness of the early] morning watch and killed the Ammonites until the heat of the day; and the survivors were scattered, and no two of them were left together.

¹²The people said to Samuel, “Who is the one who said, ‘Shall Saul reign over us?’ Bring the men, and we will put them to death.”

¹³But Saul said, “No man shall be put to death this day, for today the LORD has brought victory to Israel.”

¹⁴Samuel said to the people, “Come, let us go to Gilgal and there restore the kingdom.”

¹⁵So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. There they also sacrificed peace offerings before the LORD; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

12 THEN SAMUEL said to all Israel, “Behold, I have listened to your voice in everything that you have said to me and have appointed a king over you.

²“And now, here is the king walking before you. As for me, I am old and gray, and here are my sons with you. I have walked before you from my childhood to this day.

³“Here I am; testify against me before the LORD and [Saul]

His anointed [if I have done someone wrong]. Whose ox have I taken, or whose donkey have I taken, or whom have I exploited? Whom have I oppressed or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes [to the truth]? [Tell me and] I will restore it to you.”

⁴They said, “You have not exploited us or oppressed us or taken anything at all from a man’s hand.”

⁵Samuel said to them, “The LORD is a witness against you, and [Saul] His anointed is a witness this day that you have not found anything in my hand.” And they answered, “*He is a witness.*”

⁶Then Samuel said to the people, “It is the LORD who appointed Moses and Aaron and brought your fathers (ancestors) up from the land of Egypt.

⁷“Now then, take your stand, so that I may plead *and* contend with you before the LORD concerning all the righteous acts of the LORD which He did for you and for your fathers.

⁸“When Jacob [and his sons] had come into Egypt [and later when the Egyptians oppressed them] and your fathers cried out to the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron who brought your fathers out of Egypt and settled them in this place.

⁹“But when they forgot the LORD their God, He sold them into the hand of Sisera, commander of Hazor’s army, and into the hand of the Philistines and of the king of Moab, and they fought against them.

¹⁰“They cried out to the LORD, saying, ‘We have sinned because we have abandoned (rejected) the Lord and have served the Baals and the Ashtaroath; but now rescue us from

the hands of our enemies, and we will serve You.’

¹¹“Then the LORD sent Jerubbaal (Gideon) and Bedan and Jephthah and Samuel, and He rescued you from the hand of your enemies on every side, and you lived in security.

¹²“But when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites had come against you, you said to me, ‘No, but a king shall reign over us’—although the LORD your God was your King.

¹³“Now therefore, here is [Saul] the king whom you have chosen, and for whom you asked; behold, the LORD has set a king over you.

¹⁴“If you will fear the LORD [with awe and profound reverence] and serve Him and listen to His voice and not rebel against His commandment, then both you and your king will follow the LORD your God [and it will be well].

¹⁵“But if you do not listen to the LORD’s voice, but rebel against His command, then the hand of the LORD will be against you [to punish you], as it was against your fathers.

¹⁶“So now, take your stand and see this great thing which the LORD will do before your eyes.

¹⁷“Is it not [the beginning of the] wheat harvest today? I will call to the LORD and He will send thunder and rain; then you will know [without any doubt], and see that your evil which you have done is great in the sight of the LORD by asking for yourselves a king.”

¹⁸So Samuel called to the LORD [in prayer], and He sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.

¹⁹Then all the people said to Samuel, “Pray to the LORD

your God for your servants, so that we will not die, for we have added to all our sins *this* evil—to ask for a king for ourselves.”

²⁰Samuel said to the people, “Do not be afraid. You have [indeed] done all this evil; yet do not turn away from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart.

²¹“You must not turn away, for *then you would go* after futile things which cannot profit or rescue, because they are futile.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that You
will not abandon me for Your
great name's sake, because
You have been pleased to
make me one of Your people.*

• adapted from 1 Samuel 12:22

²²“The LORD will not abandon His people for His great name's sake, because the LORD has been pleased to make you a people for Himself.

²³“Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin

against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you; but I will instruct you in the good and right way.

²⁴“Only fear the LORD [with awe and profound reverence] and serve Him faithfully with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you.

²⁵“But if you still do evil, both you and your king will be swept away [to destruction].”

13 SAUL WAS *thirty* years old when he began to reign, and he reigned *forty-two* years over Israel.

²Saul chose for himself 3,000 men of Israel; of whom 2,000 were with him in Michmash and in the hill country of Bethel, while 1,000 were with Jonathan at Gibeah of Benjamin. But he sent the rest of the people away, each one to his own tent.

³Jonathan attacked *and* defeated the Philistine garrison which was at Geba, and the Philistines heard about it. Then Saul blew the trumpet throughout the land, saying, “Let the Hebrews hear.”

⁴All Israel heard that Saul had defeated the Philistine garrison, and also that Israel had become despicable to the Philistines. And the people were summoned to join Saul at Gilgal.

⁵Now the Philistines gathered to fight against Israel, 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen, and troops in multitude, like sand on the seashore. They came up and camped at Michmash, east of Beth-aven.

⁶When the men of Israel saw that they were in a tight situation (for their troops were hard-pressed), they hid in

caves, in thickets, in cellars, and in [dry] cisterns (pits).

⁷Also *some of* the Hebrews had crossed the [river] Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him, trembling [in fear and anticipation].

⁸Now Saul waited seven days, according to the appointed time which Samuel had set, but Samuel had not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattering away from Saul.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Submit Your Plans to God

Rather than wait for Samuel, King Saul panicked and offered the burnt offering on his own (see 1 Sam. 13:9). It is so easy to make our own plan instead of waiting on God to show us His plan. Sometimes we are so entrenched in our own plans that we don't even sense the leading of the Holy Spirit. But Proverbs 3:6 says to acknowledge God in all our ways, and that means to submit our plans to Him for approval.

Having a plan is not a bad thing; we can simply say to God each day, "Lord, I have a plan for today, and I acknowledge You in it. If You don't approve of any part of it, I'm willing to change and do what You want." If you truly care about what God desires, He will direct you in the way you should go if any changes need to be made to your plans.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Know What God Says About You

Even before David was anointed to be king, we're told that our Lord described the young shepherd "as a man... after His own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14). Even with David's faults and failings, the rest of his story confirms the truth of those powerful words.

If we want to walk with God, we need to learn to think like God thinks. What does God think of you? He thinks you are awesome and that you have great possibilities. He is not blind to our faults, but He looks at them in light of our entire life and not just one event in which we didn't behave well. If you love God, that is the most important thing to Him, and love covers a multitude of sins (see 1 Pet. 4:8). Don't focus on your faults, because God doesn't. I can assure you that there is more right with you than there is wrong, and I would like to point out some of those things.

Here are some truths God says about you in His Word:

You are a new creature in Christ, old things have passed

*away and all things are made new (see 2 Cor. 5:17).
Jesus became sin for you and has made you the
righteousness of God in Him (see 2 Cor. 5:21).
He has handpicked you. He has chosen you to be His
own in Christ because He loves you (see Eph. 1:4-5).
You have the mind of Christ, the ability to think as He
thinks (see 1 Cor. 2:16).
You have gifts, talents, and abilities (see Rom. 12:5-6).
God has a good plan for your future (see Jer. 29:11).
God has accepted you and will never reject you (see
Eph. 2:6).
You are completely forgiven and God has forgotten your
sins (see Heb. 10:17).
God dwells in you (see 1 Cor. 3:16).
God created you and everything He created is good (see
Gen. 1:31).
God calls us His friend (see John 15:15).
We are called God's beloved (see Rom. 9:25).*

If you will treat yourself better in your thoughts and your actions, you will begin to treat others better too.

APRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord God, in the light of what You say about me in Your Word, forgive me for not always embracing Your words with all my heart. In the name of Jesus, I receive these truths as my own and choose to focus on Your words. Amen.

⁹So Saul said, “Bring me the burnt offering and the peace offerings.” And he offered the burnt offering [which he was forbidden to do].

¹⁰As soon as he finished offering the burnt offering, Samuel finally came; Saul went out to meet and to welcome him.

¹¹But Samuel said, “What have you done?” Saul said, “Since I saw that the people were scattering away from me, and that you did not come within the appointed time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash,

¹²therefore, I said, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not asked for the LORD’s favor [by making supplication to Him].’ So I forced myself to offer the burnt offering.”

¹³Samuel said to Saul, “You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, for [if you had obeyed] the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.

¹⁴“But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man (David) after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as leader *and* ruler over His people, because you have not kept (obeyed) what the LORD commanded you.”

¹⁵Then Samuel arose and went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul assembled *and* counted the people who were still with him, [only] about six hundred [fighting] men.

¹⁶Saul and his son Jonathan and the people with them were staying in Geba of Benjamin, while the Philistines camped at

Michmash.

¹⁷And the raiding party came from the Philistine camp in three companies: one company turned toward Ophrah, to the land of Shual,

¹⁸another company turned toward Beth-horon, and another toward the border overlooking the Valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness.

¹⁹Now no blacksmith (metal-worker) could be found in all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, “Otherwise the Hebrews will make swords or spears.”

²⁰So all [the men of] Israel went down to the Philistines, each to get his plowshare, pick, axe, or sickle sharpened.

²¹The fee [for sharpening] was a pim (two-thirds of a shekel) for the plowshares, the picks, the pitchforks, and the axes, and to straighten the goads (cattle prods).

²²So it came about on the day of battle that neither sword nor spear was found in the hands of any of the people who were with Saul and Jonathan; but Saul and Jonathan his son had them.

²³And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the pass at Michmash.

14 ONE DAY Jonathan the son of Saul said to his young armor bearer, “Come, let us go over to the Philistine garrison on the other side.” But he did not tell his father.

²Saul was staying in the outskirts of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree in Migron; and with him were about six hundred men,

³and Ahijah the son of Ichabod's brother Ahitub the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD's priest at Shiloh, was wearing the ephod. And the people did not know that Jonathan had gone.

⁴Between the passes by which Jonathan sought to cross over to get to the Philistine garrison, there was a rocky crag on the one side and a rocky crag on the other side; one [crag] was named Bozez, and the other, Seneh.

⁵The one crag was on the north in front of Michmash, and the other on the south in front of Geba.

⁶Jonathan said to his young armor bearer, "Come, let us cross over to the garrison of these uncircumcised men; it may be that the LORD will work for us. For there is nothing to prevent the LORD from saving, whether by many or by few."

⁷And his armor bearer said to him, "Do everything that is in your heart (mind); here I am with you in whatever you think [best]."

⁸Jonathan said, "See now, we are going to cross over to the [Philistine] men and reveal ourselves to them.

⁹"If they say to us, 'Wait until we come to you,' then we will stand in our place and not go up to them.

¹⁰"But if they say, 'Come up to us,' we will go up, for the LORD has handed them over to us; and this shall be the sign to us."

¹¹When both of them revealed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines, the Philistines said, "Look, the Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden themselves."

¹²So the men of the garrison responded to Jonathan and his armor bearer, "Come up to us and we will tell you

something.” Jonathan said to his armor bearer, “Climb up after me, for the LORD has given them into the hands of Israel.”

¹³Then Jonathan climbed up on his hands and feet, his armor bearer following after him. The enemy fell before Jonathan [in combat], and his armor bearer killed *some of them* after him.

¹⁴That first slaughter which Jonathan and his armor bearer made was about twenty men within about half a [plow] furrow in a plot of land [the area of which a yoke of oxen could plow in a day].

¹⁵And there was trembling in the [Philistine] camp, in the field, and among all the people; even the garrison and the raiding party trembled [in fear], and the earth quaked and it became a trembling *and* terror from God.

¹⁶Saul’s watchmen in Gibeah of Benjamin looked, and behold, the multitude melted away and they went here and there.

¹⁷Then Saul said to the people with him, “Take a count and see who has left us.” When they had taken a count, behold, Jonathan and his armor bearer were missing.

¹⁸Saul said to Ahijah [the priest], “Bring the ark of God here.” For at that time the ark of God was with the sons of Israel.

¹⁹While Saul talked to the priest, the commotion in the Philistine camp continued and increased, so Saul said to the priest, “Withdraw your hand.”

²⁰Then Saul and all the people who were with him rallied and went into the battle; and behold, every [Philistine] man’s sword was against his companion, in wild confusion.

²¹Now the Hebrews who were with the Philistines previously, who went up with them all around in the camp, they also *turned* to be with the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan.

²²When all the men of Israel who had hidden themselves in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines had fled, they too pursued them closely in the battle.

²³So the LORD saved Israel that day, and the battle spread beyond Beth-aven.

²⁴But the men of Israel were hard-pressed that day, because Saul had put the people under a curse, saying, “Cursed be the man who eats food before evening, and before I have taken vengeance on my enemies.” So none of the people ate any food.

²⁵All *the people of* the land came to a forest, and there was honey on the ground.

²⁶When the people entered the forest, the honey was dripping, but no man put his hand to his mouth [to taste it], because the people feared the oath [of Saul].

²⁷But Jonathan had not heard when his father put the people under the oath. So he put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and dipped it into a honeycomb, and then he put his hand to his mouth, and his energy was restored.

²⁸But one of the people told him, “Your father strictly put the people under an oath, saying, ‘Cursed be the man who eats food today.’” And the people were exhausted [and hungry].

²⁹Then Jonathan said, “My father has troubled the land [with his foolish curse]. See how my energy is restored because I tasted a little of this honey.

³⁰How much better [it would have been] if only the people had eaten freely today from the spoil of their enemies which they found! For now the slaughter among the Philistines has not been great.”

³¹They struck the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon. And the people were very tired.

³²[When night came and the oath ended] the people rushed greedily upon the spoil. They took sheep, oxen, and calves, and slaughtered them on the ground; and they ate them [raw] with the blood [still in them].

³³Then Saul was told, “Look, the people are sinning against the LORD by eating [the meat] with the blood.” And he said, “You have violated [the Law] *and* acted treacherously; roll a large stone to me today.” [Lev 7:26, 27]

³⁴Saul said, “Spread out among the people and tell them, ‘Each one of you bring me his ox or his sheep, and butcher it [properly] here and eat; and do not sin against the LORD by eating [the meat with] the blood.’” So that night each one brought his ox with him and butchered it there.

³⁵And Saul built an altar to the LORD; it was the first altar that he built to the LORD.

³⁶Then Saul said, “Let us go down after the Philistines by night and plunder them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them [alive].” They said, “Do whatever seems good to you.” Then the priest said, “Let us approach God here.”

³⁷Saul asked [counsel] of God, “Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will You hand them over to Israel?” But He did not answer him that day.

³⁸Then Saul said, “Come here, all you who are leaders of the people, and let us find out how this sin [causing God’s silence] happened today.

³⁹“For as the LORD lives, who saves Israel, for *even if the guilt* is in my son Jonathan, he shall most certainly die.” But not one of all the people answered him.

⁴⁰Then he said to all the Israelites, “You shall be on one side; I and my son Jonathan will be on the other side.” The people said to Saul, “Do what seems good to you.”

⁴¹Therefore, Saul said to the LORD, the God of Israel, “Give a perfect lot [identifying the transgressor].” Then Saul and Jonathan were selected [by lot], but the other men went free.

⁴²Saul said, “Cast [lots] between me and my son Jonathan.” And Jonathan was selected.

⁴³Saul said to Jonathan, “Tell me what you have done.” So Jonathan told him, “I tasted a little honey with the end of the staff that was in my hand. Here I am, I must die!”

⁴⁴Saul answered, “May God do so [to me], and more also [if I do not keep my word], for you shall most certainly die, Jonathan.”

⁴⁵But the people said to Saul, “Must Jonathan, who has brought about this great victory in Israel, be put to death? Far from it! As the LORD lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day.” So the people rescued Jonathan and he was not put to death.

⁴⁶Then Saul stopped pursuing the Philistines, and the Philistines went to their own place.

⁴⁷When Saul assumed control of the kingdom of Israel, he fought against all his enemies on every side: Moab, the sons

(descendants) of Ammon, Edom, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines. Wherever he turned, he inflicted punishment.

⁴⁸He acted valiantly and defeated the Amalekites, and rescued Israel from the hands of those who had plundered them.

⁴⁹Now Saul's sons were Jonathan, Ishvi, and Malchi-shua. The names of his two daughters *were these*: the name of the firstborn was Merab, and the name of the younger, Michal.

⁵⁰The name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam the daughter of Ahimaaz. The commander of his army was named Abner, the son of Ner, Saul's uncle.

⁵¹Kish was the father of Saul, and Ner the father of Abner was the son of Abiel.

⁵²Now the war against the Philistines was severe (brutal, relentless) all the days of Saul; and whenever Saul saw any mighty or courageous man, he recruited him for his staff.

15 SAMUEL SAID to Saul, "The Lord sent me to anoint you king over His people Israel. Now listen *and* pay close attention to the words of the Lord.

²"Thus says the LORD of hosts (armies), 'I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he set himself against him on the way when Israel came up from Egypt.

³'Now go and strike Amalek and completely destroy everything that they have; do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.'"

⁴So Saul summoned the people and numbered them at

Telaim—200,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 men of Judah.

⁵Saul came to the city of Amalek and set an ambush in the valley.

⁶Saul said to the Kenites, “Go, leave, go down from the Amalekites, so that I do not destroy you along with them; for you showed kindness to all the Israelites when they went up from Egypt.” So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.

⁷Saul defeated the Amalekites, from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt.

⁸He captured Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, though he totally destroyed all [the rest of] the people with the sword.

⁹Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and everything that was good, and they were not willing to destroy them entirely; but everything that was undesirable or worthless they destroyed completely.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Believe God's Word and Obey

King Saul allowed the fear of his own people to cause him to not obey God's voice (see 1 Sam. 15), which ultimately cost him and his family the throne. For good reason, James exhorts us to "prove yourselves doers of the word [actively and continually obeying God's precepts], and not merely listeners [who hear the word but fail to internalize its meaning], deluding yourselves [by unsound reasoning contrary to the truth]" (James 1:22).

As a minister of God's Word, it was difficult for me to grasp how anyone could seem to truly know God's Word and yet not do it. I learned that "unsound reasoning" is often the cause. Many people have deceived themselves into believing something other than the truth. They may even agree with a principle found in the Word but somehow excuse themselves from needing to obey it.

I've met people who think God always wants them to feel good, and if something happens to make them feel bad, they don't believe it is God's will for them. Or they dismiss what

they read in the Bible by saying, “That doesn’t make sense.”

I’ve known and talked with people who, when a decision to obey God’s Word was not convenient for them, convinced themselves God didn’t expect *them* to do *that*. It is fairly easy to justify disobedience if that is what we want to do.

In contrast, I remember a very dignified woman who had been a member of a traditional church most of her life and often criticized the worship style of many of today’s churches. Then she visited a service where I spoke and her attitude changed. “I couldn’t believe that God would ask me to clap my hands or sing loudly,” she said, “but when I heard that Scripture commands us to clap our hands and shout, what else could I do? That was God speaking to me.”

She had exactly the right attitude. She didn’t try to reason it out or wonder why God commanded her to take that kind of action. She believed His word and simply obeyed.

When the Bible speaks about obeying the Lord, it is not a suggestion. God *commands* us to take action by being a doer of His Word, and when we are obedient, He promises that we will be blessed.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Holy God, I thank You for the instructions found in Your Word. I may not always like what I read, and following You without hesitation may be difficult sometimes, but I know it is for my good. Please help me to always be obedient. Amen.

¹⁰Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying,

¹¹“I regret that I made Saul king, for he has turned away from following Me and has not carried out My commands.” Samuel was angry [over Saul’s failure] and he cried out to the LORD all night.

¹²When Samuel got up early in the morning to meet Saul, he was told, “Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set up for himself a monument [commemorating his victory], then he turned and went on and went down to Gilgal.”

¹³So Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, “Blessed are you of the LORD. I have carried out the command of the LORD.”

¹⁴But Samuel said, “What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?”

¹⁵Saul said, “They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen to sacrifice to the LORD your God; but the rest we have destroyed completely.”

¹⁶Then Samuel said to Saul, “Stop, and let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night.” Saul said to him, “Speak.”

¹⁷Samuel said, “Is it not true that even though you were small (insignificant) in your own eyes, you were *made* the head of the tribes of Israel? And the LORD anointed you king over Israel,

¹⁸and the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, ‘Go, totally destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are eliminated.’

¹⁹“Why did you not obey the voice of the LORD, but [instead] swooped down on the plunder [with shouts of victory] and did evil in the sight of the LORD?”

²⁰Saul said to Samuel, “I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and have brought back Agag the king of Amalek, and have completely destroyed the Amalekites.

²¹“But the people took some of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the best of the things [that were] to be totally destroyed, to sacrifice to the LORD your God at Gilgal.”

²²Samuel said,

“Has the LORD as great a delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices

As in obedience to the voice of the LORD?

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,

And to heed [is better] than the fat of rams.

²³“For rebellion is as [serious as] the sin of divination (fortune-telling),

And disobedience is as [serious as] false religion and idolatry.

Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,

He also has rejected you as king.”

²⁴Then Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned; for I have transgressed the command of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice.

²⁵“Now, please, pardon my sin and return with me, so that I may worship the LORD.”

²⁶But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you; for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel."

²⁷As Samuel turned to go [away], *Saul* grabbed the hem of his robe [to stop him], and it tore.

²⁸So Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to your neighbor, who is better than you.

²⁹"Also the Splendor *and* Glory *and* Eminence of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind."

³⁰Saul said, "I have sinned; but please honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel, and go back with me, so that I may worship the LORD your God."

³¹So Samuel went back following Saul, and Saul worshiped the LORD.

³²Then Samuel said, "Bring me Agag, the king of the Amalekites." And Agag came to him cheerfully. And Agag said, "Surely the bitterness of death has come to an end."

³³Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." And Samuel cut Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.

³⁴Then Samuel went to Ramah, but Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul.

³⁵Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, for Samuel grieved over Saul. And the LORD regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Prompts Us Toward Peace

First Samuel 15:23 mentions rebellion. To rebel against God is to fail to do what He is leading us to do or even to do the opposite. Obeying God is not always easy, but refusing to obey Him or to reject His Word, as Saul did, is never a good idea.

God enables us, or gives us an anointing of the Holy Spirit, to do what He commands us. Even after He has prompted us to go another direction, we sometimes keep pressing on with our original plan. If we continue in something He has not approved for us, He is under no obligation to give us the energy for it. We then become frustrated, stressed, or burned out. We may take out our frustrations on other people simply because we chose to ignore or did not recognize the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Many people end up in stressful situations when they go a different direction from the one God prompted (see Rom. 6:16). They burn out in the midst of the disobedience and, struggling to finish what they started outside of His direction, beg God to anoint them (see 1 Sam. 15:22–23).

God is merciful, and He helps us in the midst of our mistakes. But He will not give us strength and energy to disobey Him continually. We can avoid many stressful situations and living “tied up in knots” simply by obeying the Holy Spirit’s

promptings moment by moment. He will always direct us toward peace.

Obedying Him in the little things makes a major difference in keeping stress out of our lives. Learn to recognize His promptings. Learn to listen to that still small voice. "Be still and know (recognize, understand) that I am God" (Ps. 46:10).

16 THE LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve for Saul, when I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have chosen a king for Myself among his sons."

²But Samuel said, "How can I go? When Saul hears *about it*, he will kill me." And the LORD said, "Take a heifer from the herd with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.'

³"You shall invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do [after that]; and you shall anoint for Me the one whom I designate."

⁴So Samuel did what the LORD said, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the city came trembling to meet him and said, "Do you come in peace?"

⁵And he said, "In peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." He also consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

⁶So it happened, when they had come, he looked at Eliab [the eldest son] and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed is

before Him.”

⁷But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

⁸Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass before Samuel. But Samuel said, “The LORD has not chosen this one either.”

⁹Next Jesse had Shammah pass by. And Samuel said, “The LORD has not chosen him either.”

¹⁰Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, “The LORD has not chosen [any of] these.”

¹¹Then Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all your sons here?” Jesse replied, “There is still one left, the youngest; he is tending the sheep.” Samuel said to Jesse, “Send *word* and bring him; because we will not sit down [to eat the sacrificial meal] until he comes here.”

¹²So Jesse sent *word* and brought him in. Now he had a ruddy complexion, with beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance. The LORD said [to Samuel], “Arise, anoint him; for this is he.”

¹³Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed David in the presence of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel arose and went to Ramah.

¹⁴Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented *and* terrified him.

¹⁵Saul's servants said to him, "Behold, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you.

¹⁶"Let our lord now command your servants who are here before you to find a man who plays skillfully on the harp; and when the evil spirit from God is on you, he shall play *the harp* with his hand, and you will be well."

¹⁷So Saul told his servants, "Find me a man who plays well and bring him to me."

¹⁸One of the young men said, "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite who is a skillful musician, a brave *and* competent man, a warrior, discerning (prudent, eloquent) in speech, and a handsome man; and the LORD is with him."

¹⁹So Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, "Send me David your son, who is with the flock."

²⁰Jesse took a donkey [loaded with] bread and a jug of wine and a young goat, and sent them to Saul with David his son.

²¹Then David came to Saul and attended him. Saul loved him greatly and [later] David became his armor bearer.

²²Saul sent *word* to Jesse, saying, "Please let David be my attendant, for he has found favor in my sight."

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Depending on God

Samuel's anxiety over Saul (1 Sam. 16:1) reflects how we think we can solve our problems better than God can. But we were not built to handle problems in our own strength. We were created by God to be dependent upon Him and to bring Him our challenges in life and allow Him to help us with them.

Can you imagine your life without worry? You can pray about everything and worry about nothing (see Phil. 4:6). Why not start today to live a worry-free life? Ask the Lord to show you every time you are taking on care instead of casting it on Him (see 1 Pet. 5:7). When He makes you aware of it, as He did Samuel, be willing to immediately cast it on Him—you will enjoy life so much more. After a period of time, you will actually come to enjoy peace so much that worrying is the last thing you would choose to do.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Look at the Heart

God is the God of hearts. He does not look only at the exterior of a person, or even the things other people look at and base their judgments on. People judge others according to the flesh, but God judges by the heart (see 1 Sam. 16:7).

It is possible to do good works and still have a wrong heart attitude. It is also possible to do some things wrong but still have a right heart on the inside. God is much more inclined to use a person with a good heart and a few problems than He is to use a person who seems to have it all together but who has a wicked heart.

It is very important that we get in touch with our inner life and our heart attitude, the way we feel and think about things, or what the Bible calls “the hidden man of the heart” (1 Pet. 3:4 KJV), if we want to live in victory as a Christian. It is not the show we put on for others on the outside that matters; it is being truthful in our inner being that pleases God (see Ps. 51:6).

When God seeks to promote someone, He chooses a person after His own heart. Let’s pray as David did, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right and steadfast spirit within me” (Ps. 51:10).

²³So it came about that whenever the [evil] spirit from God

was on Saul, David took a harp and played it with his hand; so Saul would be refreshed and be well, and the evil spirit would leave him.

17 NOW THE Philistines gathered their armies for battle and were assembled at Socoh, which belongs to Judah; and they camped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim.

²Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together and they camped in the Valley of Elah, and assembled in battle formation to meet the Philistines.

³The Philistines were standing on the mountain on one side and Israel was standing on the mountain on the other side, with the valley between them.

⁴Then a champion came out from the camp of the Philistines named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span.

⁵*He had* a bronze helmet on his head, and wore a coat of scale-armor (overlapping metal plates) which weighed 5,000 shekels of bronze.

⁶*He had* bronze shin protectors on his legs and a bronze javelin hung between his shoulders.

⁷The [wooden] shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam; the blade-head of his spear *weighed* six hundred shekels of iron. And a shield-bearer walked in front of him.

⁸Goliath stood and shouted to the battle lines of Israel, saying to them, "Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not the Philistine and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves and have him come down

to me.

⁹“If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will become your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall become our servants and serve us.”

¹⁰Again the Philistine said, “I defy the battle lines of Israel this day; give me a man so that we may fight together.”

¹¹When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

¹²Now David was the son of the Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, named Jesse, who had eight sons. Jesse was old in the days of Saul, advanced *in years* among men.

¹³His three older sons had followed Saul into battle. The names of his three sons who went to battle were Eliab, the firstborn; next, Abinadab; and third, Shammah.

¹⁴David was the youngest. Now the three oldest followed Saul,

¹⁵but David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father’s flock at Bethlehem.

¹⁶The Philistine [Goliath] came out morning and evening, and took his stand for forty days.

¹⁷Then Jesse said to David his son, “Take for your brothers an ephah of this roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread and run quickly to the camp to your brothers.

¹⁸“Also take these ten cuts of cheese to the commander of the unit. See how your brothers are doing and bring back news of them.

¹⁹“Now they are with Saul and all the men of Israel in the Valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines.”

²⁰So David got up early in the morning, left the flock with a keeper, picked up *the provisions* and went just as Jesse had directed him. And he came to the encampment as the army was going out in battle formation shouting the battle cry.

²¹Israel and the Philistines drew up in battle formation, army against army.

²²Then David left his provisions in the care of the supply keeper, and ran to the ranks and came and greeted his brothers.

²³As he was talking with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine of Gath named Goliath, was coming up from the army of the Philistines, and he spoke these same words *again*; and David heard *him*.

²⁴When the men of Israel all saw the man, they fled from him, and were very frightened.

²⁵The men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who is coming up? Surely he is coming up to defy Israel. The king will reward the man who kills him with great riches, and will give him his daughter [in marriage] and make his father's house (family) free [from taxes and service] in Israel."

²⁶Then David spoke to the men who were standing by him, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes the disgrace [of his taunting] from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he has taunted *and* defied the armies of the living God?"

²⁷The men told him, "That is what will be done for the man who kills him."

²⁸Now Eliab his oldest brother heard what he said to the men; and Eliab's anger burned against David and he said, "Why have you come down here? With whom did you leave

those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption (overconfidence) and the evil of your heart; for you have come down in order to see the battle.”

²⁹But David said, “What have I done now? Was it not just a [harmless] question?”

³⁰Then David turned away from Eliab to someone else and asked the same question; and the people gave him the same answer as the first time.

³¹When the words that David spoke were heard, the men reported them to Saul, and he sent for him.

³²David said to Saul, “Let no man’s courage fail because of him (Goliath). Your servant will go out and fight with this Philistine.”

³³Then Saul said to David, “You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight him. For you are [only] a young man and he has been a warrior since his youth.”

³⁴But David said to Saul, “Your servant was tending his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock,

³⁵I went out after it and attacked it and rescued the lamb from its mouth; and when it rose up against me, I seized it by its whiskers and struck and killed it.

³⁶“Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has taunted *and* defied the armies of the living God.”

³⁷David said, “The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.” And Saul said to David, “Go, and may the LORD be with you.”

³⁸Then Saul dressed David in his garments and put a bronze helmet on his head, and put a coat of mail (armor) on him.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Face Your Giants with God's Word

Like David, we all have enemies or what we call giants in our lives who need to be defeated. First Samuel 17:42–48 tells us that when David was preparing to do battle with the giant Goliath, he ran toward him (not away from him), with the power of God as his weaponry, confessing out loud what he believed the end result of the battle would be. “This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I will strike you down” (v. 46).

We can easily see from David's example how we should approach the enemies we face in our own lives: We need to open our mouths and speak the Word of God. We don't ever have to be afraid of the giants in our lives because the greatest One lives in us, and we can release His power by boldly speaking out our faith in Him.

³⁹Then David fastened his sword over his armor and tried to walk, [but he could not,] because he was not used to them. And David said to Saul, “I cannot go with these, because I am not used to them.” So David took them off.

⁴⁰Then he took his [shepherd's] staff in his hand and chose for himself five smooth stones out of the stream bed, and put them in his shepherd's bag which he had, that is, in his shepherd's pouch. With his sling in his hand, he approached

the Philistine.

⁴¹The Philistine came and approached David, with his shield-bearer in front of him.

⁴²When the Philistine looked around and saw David, he derided *and* disparaged him because he was [just] a young man, with a ruddy *complexion*, and a handsome appearance.

⁴³The Philistine said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come to me with [shepherd’s] staffs?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.

⁴⁴The Philistine also said to David, “Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the beasts of the field.”

⁴⁵Then David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted.

⁴⁶“This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the corpses of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel,

⁴⁷and that this entire assembly may know that the LORD does not save with the sword or with the spear; for the battle is the LORD’s and He will hand you over to us.”

⁴⁸When the Philistine rose and came forward to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine.

⁴⁹David put his hand into his bag and took out a stone and slung it, and it struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone

penetrated his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

⁵⁰So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and he struck down the Philistine and killed him; but there was no sword in David's hand.

⁵¹So he ran and stood over the Philistine, grasped his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their [mighty] champion was dead, they fled.

⁵²The men of Israel and Judah stood with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as the entrance to the valley and the gates of Ekron. And the [fatally] wounded Philistines fell along the way to Shaaraim, even as far as Gath and Ekron.

⁵³The sons of Israel returned from their pursuit of the Philistines and plundered their camp.

⁵⁴Then David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his weapons in his tent.

⁵⁵When Saul saw David going out against the Philistine, he said to Abner the captain of the army, "Abner, whose son is this young man?" And Abner answered, "By your life, O king, I do not know."

⁵⁶The king said, "Ask whose son the young man is."

⁵⁷When David returned from killing [Goliath] the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand.

⁵⁸Saul asked him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David answered, "*I am* the son of your servant Jesse of Bethlehem."

18 WHEN DAVID had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was bonded to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself.

²Saul took David that day and did not let him return to his father's house.

³Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself.

⁴Jonathan stripped himself of the outer robe that he was wearing and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword, his bow, and his belt.

⁵So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and he acted wisely *and* prospered; and Saul appointed him over the men of war. And it pleased all the people and also Saul's servants.

⁶As they were coming [home], when David returned from killing the Philistine, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul with tambourines, [songs of] joy, and musical instruments.

⁷The women sang as they played *and* danced, saying,
"Saul has slain his thousands,
And David his ten thousands."

⁸Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed [only] thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?"

⁹Saul looked at David with suspicion [and jealousy] from that day forward.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

What You Really Need

When David's popularity soared after he killed Goliath and defeated the Philistines, King Saul saw it as a threat to his position and authority (see 1 Sam. 18:8–9). Don't let your value become attached to a position of power or authority. Positions can come and go in life, but God and His love for you remain. Our worth and value, our acceptance and approval, come from Him. As long as we have Him, we have the most valuable treasure in all the world.

When we believe we need what the world offers in order to feel good about ourselves, God often withholds it. Once we no longer need those things, He can give them to us because He knows they will not control us. You may have friends, influence, position, authority, acceptance, etc., but the key to keeping them is knowing that beyond a shadow of doubt you don't need to have them to be happy and fulfilled.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Nobody's Perfect

From the day David received greater praise than King Saul for his success on the battlefield, “Saul looked at David with suspicion [and jealousy]” (1 Sam. 18:9). That continual suspicion and jealousy consumed Saul and nearly killed David.

Over the years, I’ve met many people tormented by their judgmental attitudes, critical spirits, and suspicious minds. These people always seem to think the worst of everyone, and they’re not shy about telling you their suspicions. If you challenge their criticism, they say, “I just call things as I see them.” They also destroy many relationships by their words. Jesus said that such “bad fruit” tells us a lot about the “tree” it comes from (see Matt. 7:18), and I think it’s wise to not be too closely associated with critical people.

People’s faults do not give us the right to judge them according to our standards and beliefs. No one is perfect—each of us is a work in progress—and we need to remember that. When we encounter difficult or judgmental people, we can pray for them and keep a godly attitude toward them. Part of

being a loving, caring Christian is to realize that people may not see things in this life exactly as we do. We are not all at the same level of Christian maturity, but we can be sure that God knows everything about each one of us. We need to leave any judging to the only righteous judge—Jesus Christ.

James writes: “Believers, do not speak against *or* slander one another. He who speaks [self-righteously] against a brother or judges his brother [hypocritically], speaks against the Law and judges the Law. If you judge the Law, you are not a doer of the Law but a judge of it. There is *only* one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy [the one God who has the absolute power of life and death]; but who are you to [hypocritically or self-righteously] pass judgment on your neighbor?” (James 4:11–12).

Paul asks, “Who are you to judge the servant of another? Before his own master he stands [approved] or falls [out of favor]. And he [who serves the Master—the Lord] will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand” (Rom. 14:4).

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Dear heavenly Father, forgive me for criticizing others. I know that You are the only One qualified to judge Your children. Help me to bear good fruit in my own life that will bring glory to You. Amen.

¹⁰Now it came about on the next day that an evil spirit from God came forcefully on Saul, and he raved [madly] inside his house, while David was playing *the harp* with his hand, as usual; and there was a spear in Saul's hand.

¹¹Saul hurled the spear, for he thought, "I will pin David to the wall." But David evaded him twice.

¹²Now Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, but had departed from Saul.

¹³So Saul had David removed from his presence and appointed him as his commander of a thousand; and he publicly associated with the people.

¹⁴David acted wisely *and* prospered in all his ways, and the LORD was with him.

¹⁵When Saul saw that he was prospering greatly, he was afraid of him.

¹⁶But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he publicly associated with them.

¹⁷Then Saul said to David, "Behold I will give you my older daughter Merab as a wife; only be brave for me and fight the LORD's battles." For Saul thought, "My hand shall not be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him."

¹⁸David said to Saul, "Who am I, and what is my life or my father's family in Israel, that I should be the king's son-in-law?"

¹⁹But at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, she was [instead] given to Adriel the Meholahite as a wife.

²⁰Now Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David; and when

they told Saul, it pleased him.

²¹Saul said, “I will give her to him so that she may become a snare (bad influence, source of trouble) to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him.” So Saul said to David for a second time, “You shall be my son-in-law today.”

²²Then Saul commanded his servants, “Speak to David secretly, saying, ‘Listen, the king delights in you, and all his servants love you; now then, become the king’s son-in-law.’”

²³So Saul’s servants spoke these words to David. But David said, “Is it a trivial thing in your sight to become a king’s son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man and insignificant?”

²⁴The servants of Saul told him what David said.

²⁵Then Saul said, “This is what you shall say to David: ‘The king wants no dowry except a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to take vengeance on the king’s enemies.’” Now Saul’s intention was to cause David’s death at the hand of the Philistines.

²⁶When his servants told David these words, it pleased him to become the king’s son-in-law. Before the time [for the marriage] arrived,

²⁷David arose and went, he and his men, and killed two hundred Philistine men, and David brought their foreskins [as proof of death] and presented every one of them to the king, so that he might become the king’s son-in-law. So Saul gave him Michal, his [younger] daughter, as a wife.

²⁸When Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and that Michal, his daughter, loved him,

²⁹Saul was even more afraid of David; and Saul became David’s constant enemy.

³⁰Then the Philistine commanders (princes) came out *to battle*, and it happened as often as they did, that David acted more wisely *and* had more success than all Saul's servants. So his name was highly esteemed.

19 NOW SAUL told his son Jonathan and all his servants to kill David, but Jonathan, Saul's son, greatly delighted in David.

²So he told David, "Saul my father is seeking to kill you. Now then, please be on guard in the morning, and stay in a secret place and hide yourself.

³"As for me, I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak with my father about you, and if I learn anything, then I will tell you."

⁴Then Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, "May the king not sin against his servant David, since he has not sinned against you, and since his deeds have been very beneficial to you.

⁵"For he took his life in his hand and killed the Philistine, and the LORD brought about a great victory for all Israel; you saw it and rejoiced. Why then would you sin against innocent blood by killing David without a cause?"

⁶Saul listened to Jonathan and swore [an oath], "As the LORD lives, he shall not be put to death."

⁷So Jonathan called David and told him all these things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence [serving him] as previously.

⁸Then there was war again, and David went out and fought with the Philistines and defeated them with a great slaughter,

and they fled before him.

⁹Then an evil spirit from the LORD came on Saul as he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand, and David was playing the harp with his hand.

¹⁰Saul tried to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he escaped from Saul's presence, so that Saul only stuck the spear into the wall. Then David fled and escaped that night.

¹¹Then Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch for him, so that he might kill him in the morning. But Michal, David's wife, told him, "If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed."

¹²So Michal let David down through the window, and he fled and escaped.

¹³And Michal took the household idol and laid it on the bed, put a pillow of goats' *hair* at its head, and covered it with clothes.

¹⁴And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, "He is sick."

¹⁵Then Saul sent the messengers [again] to see David, saying, "Bring him up to me on his bed [if necessary], so that I may kill him."

¹⁶When the messengers came in, there was the household idol on the bed with a quilt of goats' *hair* at its head.

¹⁷Saul said to Michal, "Why have you deceived me like this and let my enemy go, so that he has escaped?" Michal answered Saul, "He said to me, 'Let me go! Why should I kill you?'"

¹⁸So David fled and escaped and came to Samuel at Ramah, and told him everything that Saul had done to him. And he and

Samuel went and stayed in Naioth.

¹⁹Saul was told, “David is at Naioth in Ramah.”

²⁰Then Saul sent messengers to take David; but when they saw the group of prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing and presiding over them, the Spirit of God came on the messengers of Saul; and they also prophesied.

²¹When Saul was informed, he sent other messengers, and they also prophesied. So Saul sent messengers again, the third time, and they prophesied as well.

²²Then Saul went to Ramah himself and came to the great well that is in Secu; and he asked, “Where are Samuel and David?” And he was told, “They are at Naioth [with the prophets] in Ramah.”

²³So he went on to Naioth in Ramah; and the Spirit of God came upon him too, and he went along continually prophesying until he came to Naioth in Ramah.

²⁴He also took off his [royal] robes [and armor] and prophesied before Samuel and lay down naked all that day and night. So they say, “Is Saul also among the prophets?” [1 Sam 10:10]

20 DAVID FLED from Naioth in Ramah and he came and said to Jonathan, “What have I done? What is my guilt? What is my sin before (against) your father, that he is seeking my life?”

²Jonathan said to him, “Far from it! You shall not die. My father does nothing important or insignificant without telling me. So why would he hide this thing from me? It is not so!”

³But David vowed again, saying “Your father certainly

knows that I have found favor in your sight, and he has said, ‘Do not let Jonathan know this, or he will be worried.’ But truly as the LORD lives and as your soul lives, there is hardly a step between me and death.”

⁴Then Jonathan said to David, “Whatever you say, I will do for you.”

⁵David said to Jonathan, “Behold, tomorrow is the New Moon [observance], and I should sit at the table to eat [the sacrificial meal] with the king; but let me go, so that I may hide myself in the field until the third evening.

⁶“If your father misses me at all, then say, ‘David earnestly asked *permission* from me to go to Bethlehem, his city, because it is the yearly sacrifice there for the entire family.’

⁷“If he says, ‘All right,’ your servant will be safe; but if he is very angry, then be certain that he has decided on evil.

⁸“Therefore show kindness to your servant, because you have brought your servant into a covenant of the LORD with you. But if there is iniquity (guilt) in me, kill me yourself; for why should you bring me to your father [to be killed]?”

⁹Jonathan said, “Far be it from [happening to] you! In fact, if I indeed learn that my father has decided to harm you, would I not tell you about it?”

¹⁰Then David said to Jonathan, “Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?”

¹¹Jonathan said to David, “Come, let us go out into the field [to talk].” So they went out to the field.

¹²Then Jonathan said to David, “The LORD, the God of Israel, *is my witness!* When I have sounded out my father about this time tomorrow, or the third day, behold, if he has a

good *feeling* toward you, shall I not then send *word* to you and make it known to you?

¹³“But if it pleases my father *to do* you harm, may the LORD do so to Jonathan, and more if I do not let you know about it and send you away, so that you may go in safety. And may the LORD be with you as He has been with my father.

¹⁴“If I am still alive, will you not show me the lovingkindness *and* faithfulness of the LORD, so that I will not die?

¹⁵“You shall never cut off your lovingkindness *and* faithfulness from my house, not even when the LORD cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth.”

¹⁶So Jonathan made a *covenant* with the house of David. [He added,] “May the LORD require it at the hands of David’s enemies. [that is, hold them accountable for any harm they inflict on David].”

¹⁷Jonathan made David vow again because of his love for him, for Jonathan loved him as himself.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Don't Be Afraid To Say No

Those who are addicted to approval frequently get “burned out.” They so desperately want to please others that they do everything they feel is expected of them and then some. They may be committed to being “nice.” Sometimes they say yes because they cannot say no, not because they think their actions are the will of God. They burn out for lack of discernment or because of unwarranted guilt. And so, also, their anger builds, as is reflected in Jonathan’s anger toward his father’s abusive demands (see 1 Sam. 20:34).

We become angry when we feel all used up and pulled in every direction. Burnout makes us angry because we recognize that deep down inside that it is not normal. We become angry with the people pressuring us when in reality we are allowing ourselves to be pressured. To avoid pressure from others and from ourselves, we can take responsibility for our lives and make needed changes under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

God desires that we have enjoyable, healthy relationships. A relationship is not healthy if one person is in control while the other struggles for approval, gaining it only by doing whatever the other party wants, no matter what it is or how the other person feels about it personally.

You can buy friends by letting them control you, but you will have to keep them the same way you obtained them.

Eventually you will get tired of having no freedom. It is actually better to be lonely than manipulated and controlled. I have come to the conclusion that if I lose a relationship because I tell someone no, I really never had a true relationship at all.

¹⁸Then Jonathan said to David, “Tomorrow is the New Moon [festival], and you will be missed because your seat will be empty.

¹⁹“When you have stayed for three days, you shall go down quickly and come to the place where you hid yourself on that eventful day [when my father tried to kill you], and shall stay by the stone Ezel.

²⁰“I will shoot three arrows to the side of it, as though I shot at a target.

²¹“And I will send a boy, *saying*, ‘Go, find the arrows.’ If I specifically say to the boy, ‘Look, the arrows are on this side of you, get them,’ then come [back to my father’s table]; for it is safe for you and there is no danger, as the LORD lives.

²²“But if I say to the boy, ‘Look, the arrows are beyond you,’ then go, for the LORD has sent you away.

²³“As for the agreement of which you and I have spoken, behold, the LORD is between you and me forever [making sure that we each keep our word].”

²⁴So David hid in the field; and when the New Moon [festival] came, the king sat down to eat food.

²⁵The king sat on his seat as on previous occasions, on his seat by the wall; then Jonathan stood up, and Abner [his commander] sat down by Saul’s side, but David’s place was

empty.

²⁶Yet Saul did not say anything that day, for he thought, “It is an incident [of some kind] and he is not [ceremonially] clean—surely he is unclean.”

²⁷But on the next day, the second *day* of the new moon, David’s place was empty [again]; and Saul said to Jonathan his son, “Why has the son of Jesse not come to the meal, either yesterday or today?”

²⁸Jonathan answered Saul, “David earnestly asked me for permission *to go* to Bethlehem.

²⁹He said, ‘Please let me go because our family is holding a sacrifice in the city, and my brother has commanded me to attend. Now, if I have found favor in your eyes, please let me slip away so that I may see my brothers.’ That is why he has not come to the king’s table.”

³⁰Then Saul’s anger burned against Jonathan and he said to him, “You son of a wayward, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse [over me] to your own shame, and to the shame of your mother’s nakedness?

³¹“For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you [as heir to the throne] nor your kingdom will be established. So now, send [someone] and bring him to me, for he must die.”

³²Jonathan answered Saul his father, “Why must he be put to death? What has he done?”

³³Then Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him down, so Jonathan knew [without any doubt] that his father had decided to put David to death.

³⁴Then Jonathan stood up from the table in the heat of

anger, and ate no food on that second day of the new moon (month), for he grieved *and* worried about David because his father had dishonored him.

³⁵In the morning Jonathan went out to the field for the meeting with David, and a young boy was with him.

³⁶And he said to his boy, "Run, please find the arrows which I am about to shoot." As the boy ran, he shot an arrow past him.

³⁷When the boy came to the place where Jonathan had shot the arrow, Jonathan called to him, "Is the arrow not beyond you?"

³⁸And Jonathan called out after the boy, "Hurry, be quick, do not stay!" So Jonathan's boy picked up the arrow and came back to his master.

³⁹But the boy was not aware of anything; only Jonathan and David knew about the matter.

⁴⁰Jonathan gave his weapons to his boy and said to him, "Go, take them to the city."

⁴¹As soon as the boy was gone, David got up from the south side [beside the mound of stones] and fell on his face to the ground [in submission and respect], and bowed three times. Then they kissed one another and wept together, but David *wept* more.

⁴²Jonathan told David, "Go in safety, inasmuch as we have sworn to each other in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The LORD shall be between me and you, and between my descendants and yours forever.'" Then he stood and left, while Jonathan went into the city.

21 THEN DAVID went to Nob to Ahimelech the priest; and Ahimelech came trembling [in fear] to meet David and said to him, “Why are you alone, and no one with you?”

²David said to Ahimelech the priest, “The king has commissioned me with a matter and has told me, ‘Let no one know anything about the matter for which I am sending you and with which I have commissioned you. I have directed the young men to a certain place.’”

³“Now what [food] do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever can be found.”

⁴The priest answered David, “There is no ordinary (unconsecrated) bread on hand, but there is consecrated bread; [you may have it] if only the young men have kept themselves from women.”

⁵David answered the priest, “Be assured that women have been kept from us in these three days since I set out, and the bodies of the young men were consecrated (ceremonially clean), although it was an ordinary (unconsecrated) journey; so how much more will their vessels be holy today?”

⁶So the priest gave him the consecrated *bread*; for there was no bread there except the bread of the Presence which was removed from before the LORD in order to put hot bread *in its place* when it was taken away.

⁷Now one of Saul’s servants was there that day, detained before the LORD; his name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of Saul’s shepherds.

⁸David said to Ahimelech, “Do you not have a sword or spear here on hand? For I brought neither my sword nor my

[other] weapons with me, because the king's business was urgent.”

⁹Then the priest said, “The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the Valley of Elah, is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod; if you would take it for yourself, do so. For there is no other here except for it.” And David said, “There is none like that; give it to me.”

¹⁰Then David arose and fled from Saul that day, and went to Achish king of Gath.

¹¹The servants of Achish said to him, “Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing in praise of this one as they danced, saying,

‘Saul has slain his thousands,
And David his ten thousands?’”

¹²David took these words to heart and was greatly afraid of Achish king of Gath.

¹³So [fearing for his life] he changed his behavior in their sight, and acted insanely in their hands, and he scribbled on the doors of the gate, and drooled on his beard.

¹⁴Then Achish said to his servants, “Look, you see that the man is insane. Why have you brought him to me?”

¹⁵“Do I lack madmen, that you bring this one to behave like a madman in my presence? Shall this one come into my house?”

22 SO DAVID departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam; and when his brothers and all his father's house

heard about it, they went down there to him.

²Everyone who was suffering hardship, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him; and he became captain over them. There were about four hundred men with him.

³And David went from there to Mizpah of Moab; and he said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and my mother come [out of Judah] and stay with you until I know what God will do for me."

⁴Then he left them with the king of Moab; and they stayed with him all the time that David was in the stronghold.

⁵Then the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not stay in the stronghold; leave, and go into the land of Judah." So David left and went into the forest of Hereth.

⁶But Saul heard that David and the men who were with him had been discovered. Now Saul was in Gibeah, sitting under the tamarisk tree on the high place with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing around him.

⁷Saul said to his servants who were standing around him, "Listen now, you Benjamites! Will the son of Jesse also give every one of you fields and vineyards? Will he make you all commanders of thousands and hundreds?"

⁸"For all of you have conspired against me so that no one informs me when my son [Jonathan] makes *a covenant* with the son of Jesse. None of you cares about me or informs me that my son has stirred up my servant against me to lie in ambush, as *he does* this day?"

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Choose Ahead of Time To Be Happy

When King Saul said to his servants, “For all of you have conspired against me.... None of you cares about me or informs me that my son has stirred up my servant against me” (1 Sam. 22:8), his self-pity was showing. Self-pity is one of the most destructive thinking patterns we can have.

I well remember days like this when I let a self-centered, self-pitying attitude ruin my day and cause me to be cranky with my family. I can assure you that whatever I have to do to maintain a good attitude now is worth it. It is easier on my health and everyone around me; it also makes life enjoyable.

Self-pity is truly pitiful; it is actually idolatry, because we are turning inward and idolizing ourselves. We think incessantly about ourselves and all the ways we are mistreated or disadvantaged. When we allow our minds to rotate around and around the things we don't like about our lives, we have no peace of mind.

Your life may not be perfect, and perhaps you're not as appreciated as you should be, but feeling sorry for yourself will never change it. Use your energy for something useful instead. Self-pity is a trap. It is like being in a prison in solitary confinement. All that is in our thinking is how bad off we are. We live in the darkness of selfishness and fail to see how truly blessed we are in many ways.

I heard a story about a ninety-two-year-old woman who had been moved to a nursing home and waited many hours in the lobby as the facility staff prepared her room. Because she was legally blind, a kind staff member described the room in great detail as final preparations were being made. "I love it already!" the new resident exclaimed.

"How can you love it? You haven't even been in the room yet," the staff member said.

Then this woman said something truly extraordinary: "That doesn't have anything to do with it. Happiness is something you decide on ahead of time." I love that attitude, don't you? It didn't matter how the furniture was arranged or where the room was located; she had already made a choice—the same choice you and I can make today. Let's choose to be happy!

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord God, forgive me for the times I have allowed myself to be trapped in a prison of self-pity. I choose to fix my eyes upon You today and to be delighted with all the good things You have done in my life. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

⁹Then Doeg the Edomite, who was standing with Saul's servants, replied, "I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech [the priest] the son of Ahitub.

¹⁰"Ahimelech inquired of the LORD for him, and gave him provisions and the sword of Goliath the Philistine."

¹¹Then the king sent someone to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's household, the priests who were at Nob; and all of them came to the king.

¹²Then Saul said, "Listen now, son of Ahitub." He replied, "Here I am [at your service], my lord."

¹³Saul said to him, "Why have you and the son of Jesse conspired against me, in that you have given him bread and a sword and have inquired of God for him, so he would rebel against me by lying in ambush, as *he does* this day?"

¹⁴Then Ahimelech answered the king, "And who among all your servants is as faithful *and* trustworthy as David, who is the king's son-in-law, and who is captain over your guard [and your confidant], and is honored in your house?"

¹⁵"Did I *just* begin to inquire of God for him today? Far be it from me! Do not let the king impute any *guilt* to his servant or to any of the household of my father, for your servant knows nothing at all about this entire matter."

¹⁶But Saul said, "Be assured that you shall die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's household (extended family)."

¹⁷And the king said to the guards who stood around him, "Turn around and kill the priests of the LORD, because their loyalty also is with David, and because they knew that he was

fleeing and did not inform me.” But the servants of the king were not willing to put out their hands to attack the LORD’s priests.

¹⁸So the king said to Doeg, “You turn around and attack the priests.” And Doeg the Edomite turned and attacked the priests, and that day he killed eighty-five men who wore the [priest’s] linen ephod.

¹⁹And he struck Nob the city of the priests with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and infants; also *he struck* oxen and donkeys and sheep with the edge of the sword.

²⁰But one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled to David.

²¹Abiathar told David that Saul had murdered the LORD’s priests.

²²Then David said to Abiathar, “I knew that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would certainly tell Saul. I have brought about *the death* of everyone in your father’s household (extended family).

²³“Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life, but you are safe with me.”

23 THEN THEY told David, saying, “Behold, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are plundering (robbing) the threshing floors [of the grain].”

²So David inquired of the LORD, saying, “Shall I go and attack these Philistines?” And the Lord said to David, “Go and attack the Philistines and save Keilah.”

³But David's men said to him, "Listen, we are afraid here in Judah. How much more then if we go to Keilah against the battle lines of the Philistines?"

⁴Then David inquired of the LORD again. And the LORD answered him, "Arise, go down to Keilah, for I will hand over the Philistines to you."

⁵So David and his men went to Keilah and fought the Philistines; he drove away their cattle and struck them with a great slaughter. So David rescued the inhabitants of Keilah.

⁶When Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keilah, he came down with an ephod in his hand.

⁷Now when Saul was informed that David had come to Keilah, Saul said, "God has handed him over to me, for he shut himself in by entering a city that has double gates and bars."

⁸So Saul summoned all the people (soldiers) for war, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men.

⁹But David knew that Saul was plotting evil against him; and he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod here."

¹⁰Then David said, "O LORD, the God of Israel, Your servant has heard for certain that Saul intends to come to Keilah, to destroy the city on my account.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Give What You Want

The Bible teaches us to treat others as we want them to treat us (see Luke 6:31). Think about what you want and start to give it away. For example, we all love to be encouraged and made to feel really good about ourselves. If you want to be encouraged, be encouraging!

Be careful of your thoughts toward people. If you think uncomplimentary or discouraging thoughts, they will usually slip out of your mouth. Instead, look for and magnify the good in every person, and you'll treat people accordingly.

At a crucial moment when Saul was seeking to kill David, Jonathan risked his own life and went into the wilderness to David and "encouraged him in God" (1 Sam. 23:16). Never underestimate the power of encouragement in another's life. Choose a person you would like to have a better relationship with and begin to aggressively encourage and compliment him or her.

¹¹“Will the men of Keilah hand me over to him? Will Saul come down just as Your servant has heard? O LORD, God of Israel, I pray, tell Your servant.” And the LORD said, “He will come down.”

¹²Then David asked, “Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men to Saul?” The LORD said, “They will surrender

you.”

¹³Then David and his men, about six hundred, arose and left Keilah, and they went wherever they could go. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the pursuit.

¹⁴David stayed in the wilderness in strongholds, in the hill country of the Wilderness of Ziph. Saul searched for him every day, but God did not hand David over to him.

¹⁵Now David became aware that Saul had come out to seek his life. David was in the Wilderness of Ziph [in the woods] at Horesh.

¹⁶And Jonathan, Saul’s son, arose and went [into the woods] to David at Horesh, and encouraged him in God.

¹⁷He said to him, “Do not be afraid; the hand of my father Saul will not find you. You will be king over Israel and I will be second in command to you; my father Saul knows this too.”

¹⁸So the two of them made a covenant before the LORD; and David stayed [in the woods] at Horesh and Jonathan went to his house.

¹⁹Then the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, “Is David not hiding with us in strongholds of Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah, which is south of Jeshimon?”

²⁰“Now then, O king, come down [to Ziph] in accordance with all your heart’s desire to do so [and capture him]; and our part shall be to hand him over to the king.”

²¹Saul said, “May you be blessed by the LORD, because you have had compassion on me.

²²“Go now, be very persistent and investigate, and see where his haunt is and who has seen him there; for I am told he

is very cunning.

²³“So look, and take note of all the places where he hides and come back to me with the established facts, then I will go with you. If he is [anywhere] in the land, I will search him out among all the thousands of Judah.”

²⁴So they arose and went to Ziph ahead of Saul. Now David and his men were in the Wilderness of Maon, in the Arabah south of Jeshimon.

²⁵Then Saul and his men went to search for him. When David was told *about it*, he went down to the rock and stayed [there] in the Wilderness of Maon. When Saul heard it, he pursued David in the Wilderness of Maon.

²⁶Saul went on one side of the mountain, and David and his men on the other side of the mountain. And David was hurrying to get away from Saul, for Saul and his men were surrounding David and his men to capture them.

²⁷But a messenger came to Saul, saying, “Hurry and come, because the Philistines have attacked the land.”

²⁸So Saul returned from pursuing David and went to meet the Philistines; therefore they called that place the Rock of Escape.

²⁹David went up from there and stayed in the strongholds of Engedi.

24 WHEN SAUL returned from following the Philistines, he was told, “Behold, David is in the Wilderness of Engedi.”

²Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel and went to search for David and his men in front of the

Rocks of the Wild Goats.

³On the way he came to the sheepfolds where there was a cave; and Saul went in to relieve himself. Now David and his men were sitting in the cave's innermost recesses.

⁴David's men said to him, "Behold, *this is* the day of which the LORD said to you, 'Behold, I will hand over your enemy to you, and you shall do to him as seems good to you.'" Then David arose [in the darkness] and stealthily cut off the hem (edge) of Saul's robe.

⁵Afterward, David's conscience bothered him because he had cut off the hem of Saul's *robe*.

⁶He said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the LORD's anointed, to put out my hand against him, since he is the anointed of the LORD."

⁷So David strongly rebuked his men with these words and did not let them rise up against Saul. Saul got up, left the cave and went on his way.

⁸Then David also got up afterward and went out of the cave and called after Saul, saying, "My lord the king!" And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the ground and lay himself face down.

⁹David said to Saul, "Why do you listen to the words of men who say, 'David seeks to harm you?'"

¹⁰"Behold, your eyes have seen today how the LORD had given you into my hand in the cave. Some told me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, 'I will not reach out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD's anointed.'

¹¹"Look, my father! Indeed, see the hem of your robe in my hand! Since I cut off the hem of your robe and did not kill you,

know and understand [without question] that there is no evil or treason in my hands. I have not sinned against you, though you are lying in wait to take my life.

¹²“May the LORD judge between me and you; and may the LORD avenge me on you; but my hand shall not be against you.

¹³“As the proverb of the ancients says, ‘Out of the wicked comes wickedness’; but my hand shall not be against you.

¹⁴“After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue [with three thousand men]? A dead dog, a single flea?

¹⁵“May the LORD be the judge and render judgment between me and you; and may He see and plead my cause and vindicate me *by saving me* from your hand.” [Ps 142]

POWERPOINT

Though Saul had wronged David severely, David refused to judge him and said in 1 Samuel 24:12, “May the LORD judge between me and you... but my hand shall not be against you.” God is the only One Who has the right to condemn or sentence; therefore, when we pass judgment on another person, we are, in a sense, setting ourselves up as God in his life. Much torment comes because of judgmental attitudes. Being judgmental, opinionated, and critical are three sure ways to damage relationships. The enemy often attacks our minds in these areas.



¹⁶When David had finished saying these words to Saul,

Saul said, “Is this your voice, my son David?” Then Saul raised his voice and wept.

¹⁷He said to David, “You are more righteous *and* upright [in God’s eyes] than I; for you have done good to me, but I have done evil to you.

¹⁸“You have declared today the good that you have done to me, for when the LORD put me into your hand, you did not kill me.

¹⁹“For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away unharmed? So may the LORD reward you with good in return for what you have done for me this day.

²⁰“Now, behold, I know that you will certainly be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hand.

²¹“So now swear to me by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants after me and that you will not destroy my name from my father’s household (extended family).”

²²David gave Saul his oath; and Saul went home, but David and his men went up to the mountain stronghold.

25 NOW SAMUEL died; and all Israel assembled and mourned for him, and they buried him at his house in Ramah. Then David left and went down to the Wilderness of Paran.

²Now *there was* a man in Maon whose business *and* possessions were in Carmel; and the man was very rich. He had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats, and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel

³(now the man’s name was Nabal and his wife’s name was Abigail. She was intelligent and beautiful in appearance, but

the man was harsh and evil in his dealings; he was a Calebite).

⁴David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep.

⁵So David sent ten young men; and David said to the young men, "Go up to Carmel and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name;

⁶and this is what you shall say, 'Have a long life! Peace be to you, and peace to your house, and peace to all that you have.

⁷'Now I have heard that you have shearers. Now your shepherds have been with us and we have not harmed them, nor were they missing anything all the time they were in Carmel.

⁸'Ask your young men and they will tell you. Therefore let my young men find favor in your sight [and be well-treated], for we have come on a good (festive) day. Please, give whatever you find at hand to your servants and to your son David.'"

⁹When David's young men came, they spoke to Nabal according to all these words in the name of David; then they waited.

¹⁰But Nabal answered David's servants and said, "Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants today, each of whom is breaking away from his master.

¹¹"So should I take my bread and my water and my meat that I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men when I do not know where they are from?"

¹²So David's young men made their way back and returned; and they came and told him everything that was said

[to them by Nabal].

¹³David said to his men, “Each man put on your sword.” So each man put on his sword. David also put on his sword, and about four hundred men went up behind David while two hundred stayed *back* with the provisions and supplies.

¹⁴But one of *Nabal’s* young men told Abigail, Nabal’s wife, “Listen, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to bless (greet) our master, and he shouted at them [in contempt].

¹⁵“But *David’s* men were very good to us, and we were not harmed *or* treated badly, nor did we miss anything as long as we were with them, when we were in the fields.

¹⁶“They were a wall [of protection] to us both night and day, all the time that we were with them tending the sheep.

¹⁷“Now then, know this and consider what you should do, for evil is [already] planned against our master and against all his household; but he is such a worthless *and* wicked man that one cannot speak [reasonably] to him.”

¹⁸Then Abigail hurried and took two hundred *loaves* of bread, two jugs of wine, five sheep already prepared [for roasting], five measures of roasted grain, a hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded them on donkeys.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Words Indicate Maturity

In 1 Samuel 25, the rash words of Nabal in reaction to David's request as compared to Abigail's conciliatory words represent the opposite ends of the spectrum of a person's power to control their words as well as the consequences that follow their words.

According to Scripture, the one thing that proves our level of spiritual maturity isn't how religious we are—whether we can quote Scripture, or the good works we do—it is the words from our mouths (see James 1:26). No matter how religious we think we are, the true test proving our spirituality is whether we can “control” our tongue or not. Control means “to restrain or bridle.” The more we learn to control our tongues, the more we grow into the level of maturity God wants us to have.

¹⁹She said to her young men (servants), “Go on ahead of me; behold, I am coming after you.” But she did not tell her husband Nabal.

²⁰It happened that as she was riding on her donkey and coming down by [way of] the hidden part of the mountain, that suddenly David and his men were coming down toward her, and she met them.

²¹Now David had said, “Surely in vain I have protected

and guarded all that this man has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missing of all that belonged to him; and he has repaid me evil for good.

²²“May God do so to the enemies of David, and more also, if by morning I leave [alive] even one male of any who belong to him.”

²³When Abigail saw David, she hurried and dismounted from the donkey, and kneeled face downward before David and bowed down to the ground [in respect].

²⁴Kneeling at his feet she said, “My lord, let the blame *and* guilt be on me alone. And please let your maidservant speak to you, and listen to the words of your maidservant.

²⁵“Please do not let my lord pay attention to this worthless man, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal (fool) is his name and foolishness (stupidity) is with him; but I your maidservant did not see my lord’s young men whom you sent.

²⁶“So now, my lord, as the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, since the LORD has prevented you from shedding blood, and from avenging yourself by your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek to do evil to my lord, be as [self-destructive as] Nabal.

²⁷“Now this gift, which your maidservant has brought my lord, let it be given to the young men who accompany *and* follow my lord.

²⁸“Please forgive the transgression of your maidservant; for the LORD will certainly make my lord a secure *and* enduring house, because my lord is fighting the battles of the LORD, and evil will not be found in you all your days.

²⁹“Should anyone rise up to pursue you and to seek your

life, then the life of my lord will be bound in the [precious] bundle of the living with the LORD your God; but the lives of your enemies—those He will hurl out as from the center of a sling.

³⁰“And it will happen when the LORD does for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken (promised) concerning you, and appoints you ruler over Israel,

³¹that this [incident] will not cause grief or [bring] a troubled conscience to my lord, both by having shed blood without cause and by my lord having avenged himself. When the LORD deals well with my lord, then remember [with favor] your maidservant.”

³²David said to Abigail, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who sent you to meet me this day.

³³“And blessed be your discretion *and* discernment, and blessed be you, who has kept me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself by my own hand.

³⁴“Nevertheless, as the LORD the God of Israel lives, who has prevented me from harming you, if you had not come quickly to meet me, most certainly by the morning light there would not have been left to Nabal so much as one male.”

³⁵So David accepted what she had brought to him and said to her, “Go up to your house in peace. See, I have listened to you and have granted your request.”

³⁶Then Abigail came to Nabal, and he was holding a feast in his house [for the shearers], like the feast of a king. And Nabal’s mood was joyous because he was very drunk; so she told him nothing at all until the morning light.

³⁷But in the morning, when Nabal was sober, and his wife

told him these things, his heart died within him and he became [paralyzed and helpless] like a stone.

³⁸About ten days later, the LORD struck Nabal and he died.

³⁹When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, “Blessed be the LORD, who has pleaded the cause of my reproach [suffered] at the hand of Nabal and has kept His servant from [retaliating with] evil. For the Lord has returned the wickedness of Nabal on his own head.” Then David sent word to Abigail, proposing to take her as his wife.

⁴⁰When the servants of David came to Abigail at Carmel, they said to her, “David sent us to you to take you [to him] to be his wife.”

⁴¹And she stood and bowed with her face to the ground and said, “Behold, your maidservant is [ready to be] a maid to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.”

⁴²Then Abigail quickly got up, and rode on a donkey, with five of her maidens who attended her; and she followed the messengers of David and became his wife.

⁴³David had also taken Ahinoam of Jezreel, and they both became his wives.

⁴⁴But Saul had given Michal his [younger] daughter, David’s wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who was from Gallim.

26 THE ZIPHITES came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, “Is David not hiding on the hill of Hachilah, *east of* Jeshimon?”

²So Saul arose and went down to the Wilderness of Ziph, taking with him three thousand chosen men of Israel, to search for David [there] in the wilderness of Ziph.

³Saul camped on the hill of Hachilah, which is beside the road east of Jeshimon, but David stayed in the wilderness. When he saw that Saul came into the wilderness after him,

⁴David sent out spies, and he learned that Saul was definitely coming.

⁵So David arose and went to the place where Saul had camped, and saw the spot where Saul lay, as well as Abner the son of Ner, the commander of his army; and Saul was lying inside the circle of the camp, with the army camped around him.

⁶Then David said to Ahimelech the Hittite and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother of Joab, "Who will go down with me to Saul in the camp?" And Abishai said, "I will go down with you."

⁷So David and Abishai went to the army during the night, and there was Saul lying asleep inside the circle of the camp with his spear stuck in the ground by his head; and Abner and the people were lying around him.

⁸Then Abishai said to David, "God has given your enemy into your hand this day; now then, please let me strike him with the spear *driving it* to the ground with one stroke, and I will not strike him the second time."

⁹But David said to Abishai, "Do not kill him, for who can put out his hand against the LORD's anointed [king] and be guiltless (innocent)?"

¹⁰David also said, "As the LORD lives, most certainly the LORD will strike him [in His own time and way], or his day will come and he will die, or he will go down into battle and be carried off [dead].

¹¹"The LORD forbid that I would put out my hand against

the LORD's anointed; but now take the spear that is by his head and the jug of water, and let us go."

¹²So David took the spear and the jug of water from *beside* Saul's head, and they left, and no one saw or knew nor did anyone awaken, because they were all *sound* asleep, for a deep sleep from the LORD had fallen on them.

¹³Then David crossed over to the other side and stood on the top of the mountain at a distance, with a large area between them.

¹⁴David called to the army and to Abner the son of Ner, "Will you not answer, Abner?" Abner replied, "Who are you who calls [and disturbs] the king?"

¹⁵David said to Abner, "Are you not a [brave] man? Who is like you in Israel? Why then have you not guarded your lord the king? For one of the people came [into your camp] to kill the king your lord.

¹⁶"This thing that you have done is not good. As the LORD lives, you surely deserve to die, because you have not guarded your lord, the LORD's anointed. And now, see where the king's spear is, and the jug of water that was by his head."

¹⁷Then Saul recognized David's voice and said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" And David said, "It is my voice, my lord the king!"

¹⁸And David said, "Why is my lord pursuing his servant? For what have I done? Or what evil is in my hand?"

¹⁹"Now therefore, please let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the LORD has incited you against me, let Him accept an offering [from me]; but if it is men, may they be cursed before the LORD, because they have driven me out

this day to keep me from sharing in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, ‘Go, serve other gods.’

²⁰“Now then, do not let my blood fall to the ground away from the presence of the LORD; for the king of Israel has come out to search for a single flea, just as when one hunts a [defenseless] partridge in the mountains.”

²¹Then Saul said, “I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will not harm you again because my life was precious in your sight this day. Hear me, I have played the fool and have done a very great wrong [to you].”

²²David answered, “Look, here is the king’s spear! Now let one of the young men come over and get it.

²³“The LORD will repay each man for his righteousness and his faithfulness; for the LORD handed you over to me today, but I refused to put out my hand against the LORD’s anointed.

²⁴“Now behold, just as your life was precious in my sight this day, so let my life be precious in the sight of the LORD, and may He rescue me from all distress.”

²⁵Then Saul said to David, “May you be blessed, my son David; you will both accomplish much and certainly prevail.” So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

27 BUT DAVID said in his heart, “Now I will die one day by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than to escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up searching for me inside the borders of Israel, and I will escape from his hand [once and for all].”

²So David and the six hundred men who were with him

arose and crossed over to Achish the son of Maach, king of Gath.

³And David lived with Achish at Gath, he and his men, each man with his household, and David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, [who was] Nabal's widow.

⁴When Saul was told that David had fled to Gath, he no longer searched for him.

⁵Then David said to Achish, "If I have found favor in your sight, let me be given a place [of my own] in one of the cities in the country, so that I may live there; for why should your servant live in the royal city with you?"

⁶Then Achish gave David [the town of] Ziklag that day. Therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day.

⁷The number of days that David lived in the country of the Philistines was a year and four months.

⁸Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites [the enemies of Israel that Joshua had failed to annihilate]; for they had inhabited the land from ancient times, as one comes to Shur even as far as the land of Egypt. [Deut 25:19; Josh 13:1, 2, 13]

⁹David attacked the land and did not leave a man or a woman alive, but he took the sheep, the cattle, the donkeys, the camels, and the clothing, and returned to Achish.

¹⁰When Achish asked, "Where did you raid today?" David replied, "Against the Negev (the South country) of Judah, and against the Negev of the Jerahmeelites, and against the Negev of the Kenites."

¹¹David did not leave a man or a woman alive to bring *news* to Gath, saying [to himself], “Otherwise they will tell about us, saying, ‘This is what David has done, and this has been his practice all the time that he has lived in the country of the Philistines.’”

¹²Achish believed David, saying, “He has certainly become hated by his people in Israel; so he will always be my servant.”

28 IN THOSE days the Philistines gathered their forces for war to fight against Israel. Achish said to David, “Understand for certain that you and your men will go out with me to battle.”

²David said to Achish, “All right, you shall know what your servant can do.” So Achish said to David, “Therefore I will make you my bodyguard for life.”

³Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own city. And Saul had removed the mediums and the spiritists (soothsayers) from the land.

⁴The Philistines assembled and came and camped at Shunem; and Saul gathered all the Israelites and they camped at Gilboa.

⁵When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was afraid and badly shaken.

⁶So Saul inquired of the LORD, but the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim [used like lots by the priest to determine the will of God] or by prophets. [Prov 1:24–30]

⁷Then Saul said to his servants, “Find for me a woman who is a medium [between the living and the dead], so that I may go to her and ask her advice.” His servants said to him, “There is a

woman who is a medium at En-dor.”

⁸So Saul disguised himself by wearing different clothes, and he left with two men, and they came to the woman at night. He said *to her*, “Conjure up for me, please, and bring up [from the dead] for me [the spirit] whom I shall name to you.”

⁹But the woman said to him, “See here, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off (eliminated) those who are mediums and spiritists from the land. So why are you laying a trap for my life, to cause my death?”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Feelings Don't Have To Influence Decisions

When the Bible says that God has not given us “a spirit of timidity or cowardice or fear, but... of power and of love and of sound judgment and personal discipline,” it does not mean we will never feel fear (see 2 Tim. 1:7). Feeling fear is part of being alive. We may feel fearful when we are doing something we have never done before, or when obstacles seem insurmountable. But feeling fear does not mean we are cowards; it simply means we are human. It is cowardly only when we allow our fears to dictate our actions or decisions instead of following our hearts.

Feeling fear is not the same as letting fearful feelings control our actions, which Saul did in seeking out a medium (see 1 Sam. 28:5–7). I might feel angry, but I can still choose not to act on my anger and, instead, respond with forgiveness and love. In the same way, we can feel fear while not letting it influence our decisions. People who live by their feelings will never walk in victory.

¹⁰Then Saul swore [an oath] to her by the LORD, saying, “As the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this.”

¹¹So the woman said, “Whom shall I bring up for you?” He said, “Bring up Samuel for me.”

¹²When the woman saw Samuel, she screamed with a loud voice; and she said to Saul, “Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!”

¹³The king said to her, “Do not be afraid; but [tell me] what do you see?” The woman said to Saul, “I see a divine [superhuman] being coming up from the earth.”

¹⁴He said to her, “What is his appearance?” And she said, “An old man is coming up, wrapped in a robe.” Then Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and paid respect [to him].

¹⁵Then Samuel said to Saul, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?” Saul answered, “I am greatly distressed; for the Philistines are making war against me, and God has left me and no longer answers me, either through prophets or by dreams; therefore I have called you to make known to me what I should do.”

¹⁶Samuel said, “Why then do you ask me, since the LORD has left you and has become your enemy?”

¹⁷“The LORD has done [to you] just as He said through me [when I was with you]; for the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, to David. [1 Sam 15:22–28]

¹⁸“Because you did not obey the voice of the LORD and did not execute His fierce wrath on Amalek, therefore the LORD has done this thing to you this day.

¹⁹“Moreover, the LORD will also put Israel along with you into the hands of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me [among the dead]. Indeed, the LORD will put the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines.”

²⁰Then Saul immediately fell full length on the earth [floor of the medium's house], and was very afraid because of Samuel's words; and he was thoroughly exhausted because he had not eaten all day and all night.

²¹The woman came to Saul and saw that he was greatly troubled, and she said to him, "Look, your maidservant has obeyed you, and I have taken my life in my hand and have listened to everything you said to me.

²²"So now, please listen to the voice of your maidservant, and let me set a piece of bread before you, and eat, so that you may have strength when you go on your way."

²³But he refused and said, "I will not eat." But his servants together with the woman urged him, and he [finally] listened to them. So he got up from the ground and sat on the bed.

²⁴The woman had a fattened calf in the house; she quickly killed it, and took flour, kneaded it and baked unleavened bread.

²⁵She brought it before Saul and his servants, and they ate. Then they got up and went away that night.

29 NOW THE Philistines gathered all their forces at Aphek, while Israel camped by the spring in Jezreel.

²As the Philistine lords (governors) were proceeding on [marching] by hundreds and by thousands, and David and his men were proceeding on in the rear with Achish [the king of Gath],

³the Philistine commanders [having noticed David] said, "What are these Hebrews *doing here?*" Achish said to the

Philistine commanders, “Is this not David, the servant of Saul king of Israel, who has been with me these days and years, and I have found no fault in him from the day he deserted *to me* to this day?”

⁴But the Philistine commanders were angry with Achish and they said to him, “Make this man return, so that he may go back to his place where you have assigned him, and do not let him go down to battle with us, or in the battle he may [turn and] become our adversary. For how could David reconcile himself to his lord [Saul]? *Would it* not be with the heads of these [Philistine] men?

⁵“Is this not David, of whom they used to sing in dances,
‘Saul killed his thousands,
And David his ten thousands’?”

⁶Then Achish called David and said to him, “As the LORD lives, you *have been* upright (righteous), and your behavior in the army is pleasing in my sight. For from the day you came to me to this day I have found no evil in you. Nevertheless, the [Philistine] lords do not approve of you.

⁷“So return now and go in peace [to your place], so that you do not displease the Philistine lords.”

⁸David said to Achish, “But what have I done? What have you found in your servant from the day when I [first] came before you to this day, that I may not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?”

⁹Achish answered David, “I know that you are blameless in my sight, like an angel of God; nevertheless the commanders of the Philistines have said, ‘He must not go up with us to the battle.’

¹⁰“So now, get up early in the morning with your master’s servants who have come with you, and as soon as you are up in the morning and have light, leave.”

¹¹So David and his men got up early to leave in the morning, to return to the land of the Philistines. But the Philistines went up to Jezreel [to fight against Israel].

30 NOW IT happened when David and his men came [home] to Ziklag on the third day, [they found] that the Amalekites had made a raid on the Negev (the South country) and on Ziklag, and had overthrown Ziklag and burned it with fire;

²and they had taken captive the women [and all] who were there, both small and great. They killed no one, but carried them off [to be used as slaves] and went on their way.

³When David and his men came to the town, it was burned, and their wives and their sons and their daughters had been taken captive.

⁴Then David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept until they were too exhausted to weep [any longer].

⁵Now David’s two wives had been captured, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite.

⁶Further, David was greatly distressed because the people spoke of stoning him, for all of them were embittered, each man for his sons and daughters. But David felt strengthened *and* encouraged in the LORD his God.

Speak God's Word

*No matter who is against me,
I will feel strengthened and
encouraged in the Lord.*

| adapted from 1 SAMUEL 30:6 |

⁷David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, "Please bring me the ephod." So Abiathar brought him the ephod.

⁸David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I pursue this band [of raiders]? Will I overtake them?" And He answered him, "Pursue, for you will certainly overtake them, and you will certainly rescue [the captives]."

⁹So David went, he and the six hundred men who were with him, and came to the brook Besor; there those [who could not continue] remained behind.

¹⁰But David pursued [the Amalekites], he and four hundred men, for two hundred who were too exhausted to cross the brook Besor stayed *behind*.

¹¹They found an Egyptian [who had collapsed] in the field and brought him to David, and gave him bread and he ate, and they gave him water to drink,

¹²and they gave him a piece of a fig cake and two clusters

of raisins; and when he had eaten, his energy returned, for he had not eaten bread or had any water to drink for three days and three nights.

POWERPOINT

Throughout the biblical accounts of David's life we see that David "inquired of the LORD" (1 Sam. 30:8), as he did here in a seemingly hopeless situation. When faced with a need or a decision, first inquire of the Lord rather than run to your friends for advice. I like to say, "Don't run to the phone; run to the throne." God cares for you, and He will answer.



¹³David said to him, "To whom do you belong, and where are you from?" He said, "I am a young man from Egypt, a servant of an Amalekite; and my master abandoned me [as useless] when I fell sick three days ago.

¹⁴"We made a raid on the Negev of the Cherethites, and on that which belongs to Judah, and on the Negev of Caleb, and we burned Ziklag with fire."

¹⁵Then David said to him, "Will you take me down to this

band [of raiders]?” And he said, “Swear to me by God that you will not kill me or turn me over to the hand of my master, and I will bring you down to this band.”

¹⁶When he brought David down, the Amalekites had disbanded *and* spread over all the land, eating and drinking and dancing because of all the great spoil they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah.

¹⁷Then David [and his men] struck them down [in battle] from twilight until the evening of the next day; and not a man of them escaped, except four hundred young men who rode camels and fled.

¹⁸So David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken, and rescued his two wives.

¹⁹Nothing of theirs was missing whether small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that had been taken; David recovered it all.

²⁰So David captured all the flocks and herds [which the enemy had], and [the people] drove those animals before him and said, “This is David’s spoil.”

²¹David came to the two hundred men who were so exhausted that they could not follow him and had been left at the brook Besor [with the provisions]. They went out to meet David and the people with him, and when he approached the people, he greeted them.

²²Then all the wicked and worthless men among those who went with David said, “Because they did not go with us, we will give them none of the spoil that we have recovered, except that each man may take his wife and children away and leave.”

²³David said, “You must not do so, my brothers, with what

the LORD has given us. He has kept us safe and has handed over to us the band [of Amalekites] that came against us.

²⁴“And who will listen to you in regard to this matter? For as is the share of him who goes down into the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the provisions and supplies; they shall share alike.”

²⁵So from that day forward he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day.

²⁶When David came to Ziklag, he sent part of the spoil to the elders of Judah, his friends, saying, “Here is a blessing (gift) for you from the spoil of the enemies of the LORD:

²⁷For those in Bethel, Ramoth of the Negev, Jattir,

²⁸Aroer, Siphmoth, Eshtemoa,

²⁹Racal, the cities of the Jerahmeelites, the cities of the Kenites,

³⁰Hormah, Bor-ashan, Athach,

³¹Hebron, and for [those elders in] all the places where David himself and his men were accustomed to go.”

31 NOW THE Philistines fought against Israel, and the men of Israel fled before them and fell slain on Mount Gilboa.

²The Philistines overtook Saul and his sons; and they killed Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchi-shua, Saul's sons.

³The battle went heavily against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was severely wounded by the archers.

⁴Saul said to his armor bearer, “Draw your sword and pierce me through with it, otherwise these uncircumcised [Philistines]

will come and pierce me through and abuse *and* mock me.” But his armor bearer would not, because he was terrified [of doing such a thing]. So Saul took his sword and fell on it.

⁵When his armor bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword and died with him.

⁶So Saul, his three sons, his armor bearer, and all his men died together on that day.

⁷When the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley [of Jezreel], and those who were beyond the Jordan, saw that the *other* men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned the cities and fled; then the Philistines came and lived in them.

⁸The next day, when the Philistines came to plunder the dead, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa.

⁹So they cut off Saul’s head and stripped off his weapons *and* armor and sent them throughout the land of the Philistines, to bring the good news to the house of their idols and to the people.

! REMEMBER, when you
are in Christ, victory
belongs to you!

¹⁰And they put Saul’s weapons *and* armor in the temple of the Ashtarothe (female goddesses), and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan.

¹¹When the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard what the

Philistines had done to Saul,

¹²all the brave men stood and walked all night, and they took the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Bethshan, and they came to Jabesh and cremated them there.

¹³They took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and fasted [as a sign of mourning and respect] for seven days.

2 Samuel

Author: | Uncertain

Date: | Between 931
BC and 722 BC

Second Samuel continues the story begun in 1 Samuel and gives us more insight into Israel's history, into David's reign as king, and into David's thoughts and actions.

David did not always make good choices (see 2 Samuel 11). His sin with Bathsheba had painful consequences, and it started with the thought that she was beautiful and he wanted a relationship with her. This is an example of a person whose heart was loyal to God, but who allowed the enemy to ensnare him in sin. When David sinned, he acknowledged it (see 2 Samuel 12:13), repented, and received God's forgiveness (see Psalm 51). His predecessor, Saul, in contrast, had a history of bad decisions, did not repent, and died a tormented man. Always seek to be like David, to have a heart of loyalty to God, to be quick to repent of sin and receive God's forgiveness, and serve the Lord for the rest of your life.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM :

Just as David became greater and greater because God was with him (see 2 Samuel 5:10), you can too. Because He is with you, there is no limit to who you can become or what you can accomplish.

If you'll only ask Him, the Lord will help you wherever you go (see 2 Samuel 8:6).

For David, the sin of adultery led to the sin of murder (see 2 Samuel 11:3–5, 14–15). Sin that is not dealt with properly always leads to more sin. With every temptation to sin, God always provides a way out (see 1 Corinthians 10:13).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM 2 SAMUEL:

In my distress I called upon the LORD; I cried out to my God, and from His temple [in the heavens] He heard my voice; my cry for help came into His ears. | 2 Samuel 22:7

You have also given me the shield of Your salvation, and Your help and gentleness make me great. | 2 Samuel 22:36

For You have surrounded me with strength for the battle; You have subdued under me those who stood against me. | 2 Samuel 22:40

THE SECOND BOOK OF
SAMUEL

1 NOW IT happened after the death of Saul, when David had returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, that he stayed two days in Ziklag.

²On the third day a man came [unexpectedly] from Saul's camp with his clothes torn and dust on his head [as in mourning]. When he came to David, he bowed to the ground and lay himself face down [in an act of great respect and submission].

³Then David asked him, "Where do you come from?" He said, "I have escaped from the camp of Israel."

⁴David said to him, "How did it go? Please tell me." He answered, "The people have fled from the battle. Also, many of the people have fallen and are dead; Saul and Jonathan his son are also dead."

⁵So David said to the young man who informed him, "How do you know Saul and his son Jonathan are dead?"

⁶And the young man who told him explained, "By chance I happened to be on Mount Gilboa, and there was Saul leaning on his spear, and the chariots and horsemen [of the Philistines] were close behind him.

⁷“When he turned to look behind him, he saw me, and called to me. And I answered, ‘Here I am.’

⁸“He asked me, ‘Who are you?’ I answered him, ‘I am an Amalekite.’

⁹“He said to me, ‘Stand up facing me and kill me, for [terrible] agony has come over me, yet I still live [and I will be taken alive].’

¹⁰“So I stood facing him and killed him, because I knew that he could not live after he had fallen. Then I took the crown which was on his head and the band which was on his arm, and I have brought them here to my lord.” [1 Sam 31:4]

¹¹Then David grasped his own clothes and tore them [in mourning]; so did all the men who were with him.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Believe the Best About Others

Thinking good thoughts and believing the best about people is very helpful in the process of forgiving those who hurt or offend us. As human beings, we tend to be suspicious of others, and we often get hurt due to our own imaginations. It is possible to believe others hurt us on purpose when, in reality, they are not aware they did anything at all and would be grieved to know they wounded us. God calls us to love others, and love always believes the best (see 1 Cor. 13:7).

Even after having long endured horrible mistreatment from Saul, David spoke forgivingly of Saul as “beloved and lovely” (2 Sam. 1:23). I encourage you to believe the best about others. Resist the temptation to question their motives or to think they hurt you intentionally. Believing the best about others will keep offense and bitterness out of your life and help you to stay peaceful and joyful. Always do your best to believe the best.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Being a Good Friend

Loving, loyal friends, such as Jonathan and David, bless and enrich each other's lives in many ways.

Not everyone feels they have good friends. In fact, a major problem facing many people is loneliness. Genesis 2:18 tells us that it is not good for us to be alone, and there is no question that one of the enemy's tactics in the battle of our minds is to isolate us from the love of others and keep us feeling lonely.

Our thoughts and attitudes affect our friendships in many ways. For example, a positive attitude attracts many friends, whereas people who are negative may find themselves alone and isolated. Those who are happy will quickly discover that being with negative people doesn't help them attain or maintain joy, and they will want to avoid being with that type of person. In fact, those who are negative can have a joy-draining effect on others.

I want to be the kind of person people are glad to know and call an acquaintance or a friend. I'm sure you do as well. But if we want to have that kind of positive effect on people, we need

to be positive. If we want to be well liked, we can choose to be likable. If we want friends, we can choose to be friendly! We should be kind and do things that make people feel good about themselves when they spend time with us.

Instead of being focused on myself when I am with other people, I need to be focused on them. I want to train myself to truly be aware of the people around me, of their needs, and of how I am making them feel. I want to know what they are trying to communicate to me, which is sometimes different from what they are saying. The only way we will really “hear” others is if we listen with our spiritual ears as well as our physical ears.

Jesus taught us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. One of the spiritual laws that God’s Word teaches is that we reap what we sow (see Gal. 6:7). I encourage you to sow love into your friendships. Give, and you will reap a harvest of good things in return.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Loving and caring Father, thank You for helping me to be a blessing to others and for granting me good friendships. Help me to focus on and be aware of other people, and pour out Your love on them through me for Your glory. Amen.

¹²They mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and Jonathan his son, and for the LORD's people and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword [in battle].

¹³David said to the young man who informed him, "Where are you from?" He answered, "I am the son of a foreigner (resident alien, sojourner), an Amalekite."

¹⁴David said to him, "How is it that you were not afraid to put out your hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?"

¹⁵David called one of the young men and said, "Go, execute him." So he struck the Amalekite and he died.

¹⁶David said to the [fallen] man, "Your blood is on your own head, for your own mouth has testified against you, saying, 'I have killed the LORD's anointed.'"

¹⁷Then David sang this dirge (funeral song) over Saul and his son Jonathan,

¹⁸and he told *them* to teach the sons of Judah, *the song of* the bow. Behold, it is written in the Book of Jashar:

¹⁹"Your glory *and* splendor, O Israel, is slain upon your high places!

How the mighty have fallen!

²⁰"Tell it not in Gath,

Proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon,

Or the daughters of the Philistines will rejoice,

The daughters of the uncircumcised (pagans) will exult.

²¹"O mountains of Gilboa,

Let not dew or rain be upon you, nor fields with offerings;

- For there the shield of the mighty was defiled,
The shield of Saul, [dry, cracked] not anointed with oil.
- 22“From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty,
The bow of Jonathan did not turn back,
And the sword of Saul did not return empty.
- 23“Saul and Jonathan, beloved and lovely *and* friends in their
lives,
And in their death they were not separated;
They were swifter than eagles,
They were stronger than lions.
- 24“O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
Who clothed you luxuriously in scarlet,
Who put ornaments of gold on your apparel.
- 25“How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle!
Jonathan lies slain upon your high places.
- 26“I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan;
You have been a good friend to me.
Your love toward me was more wonderful
Than the love of women.
- 27“How the mighty have fallen,
And the weapons of war have perished!”

2 SO IT happened after this that David inquired of the LORD, saying, “Shall I go up into one of the cities of Judah?” And the LORD said to him, “Go up.” David asked, “Where shall I go?” And He said, “To Hebron.”

²So David went up there [to Hebron] with his two wives

also, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel [in Judah].

³And David brought up his men who were with him, each one with his household; and they lived in the cities of Hebron.

⁴Then the men of Judah came and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah.

Then they told David, "It was the men of Jabesh-gilead who buried Saul." [1 Sam 31:11–13]

⁵So David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead, and said to them, "May you be blessed by the LORD because you showed this graciousness *and* loyalty to Saul your lord (king), and buried him.

⁶"Now may the LORD show lovingkindness and truth *and* faithfulness to you. I too will show this goodness to you, because you have done this thing.

⁷"So now, let your hands be strong and be valiant; for your lord Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah has anointed me king over them."

⁸Now [Saul's cousin] Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, had taken Ish-bosheth the son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim.

⁹He made him king over Gilead, over the Ashurites, over Jezreel, over Ephraim, over Benjamin, even over all Israel [except Judah].

¹⁰Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, was forty years old when he became king over Israel, and he reigned for two years. But the house of Judah followed David.

¹¹And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.

¹²Now Abner the son of Ner and the servants of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon.

¹³Joab [David's nephew] the son of Zeruiah and the servants of David also went out and met them by the pool of Gibeon. They sat down, with one group on one side of the pool and the other group on the other side of the pool.

¹⁴Then Abner said to Joab, "Let the young men now stand and have a contest before us." And Joab said, "Let them stand."

¹⁵So they stood up and went over by number, twelve for Benjamin and Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David.

¹⁶Each one of them seized his opponent by the head and *thrust* his sword into his opponents side; so they fell down together. Therefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim [that is, the Field of Sides], which is in Gibeon.

¹⁷There was a very fierce battle that day, and Abner and the men of Israel were beaten before the servants of David.

¹⁸Three sons of Zeruiah [the half sister of David] were there: Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Now Asahel was as light *and* swift-footed as one of the [wild] gazelles in the field.

¹⁹Asahel pursued Abner and did not turn to the right or to the left as he followed him.

²⁰Then Abner looked behind him and said, "Is that you, Asahel?" He answered, "It is I."

²¹So Abner said to him, "Turn to your right or to your left, and grab one of the young men and take his armor for yourself." But Asahel was not willing to turn away from pursuing Abner.

²²Abner repeated again, “Turn away from following me. Why should I have to strike you to the ground? How would I be able to face Joab your brother [and look him in the eye]?”

²³But Asahel refused to turn away; so Abner struck him in the abdomen with the butt end of his spear, and the spear came out his back; and he fell there and died on that spot. And it came about that everyone who came to the place where Asahel fell and died, stood still [and reflected].

²⁴But Joab and Abishai [Asahel’s brothers] pursued Abner. When the sun was going down, they came to the hill of Ammah, which is in front of Giah on the way to the wilderness of Gibeon.

²⁵And the sons of [the tribe of] Benjamin gathered together behind Abner and became one troop, and took their stand on the top of a hill.

²⁶Then Abner called to Joab, “Must the sword devour forever? Do you not know that it will be bitter in the end? How long [will it be] before you tell the people to stop pursuing their brothers?”

²⁷Joab said, “As God lives, if you had not spoken, then the people certainly would have stopped pursuing their brothers in the morning.”

²⁸So Joab blew the trumpet; and all the people halted and no longer pursued Israel, nor did they fight anymore.

²⁹Then Abner and his men went through the Arabah (desert region) all that night, crossed the Jordan, went through Bithron and walked the whole morning and came to Mahanaim [where Ish-bosheth ruled Israel].

³⁰Joab returned from pursuing Abner; and when he had

gathered all the people together, nineteen of David's servants were missing, besides Asahel.

³¹But the servants of David had struck down many of Benjamin and Abner's men; *so that* three hundred and sixty men died.

³²And they picked up [the body of] Asahel and buried him in the tomb of his father in Bethlehem. Then Joab and his men walked all night and they arrived in Hebron at daybreak.

3 THERE WAS a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David; but David grew steadily stronger, while the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker [to the point of being powerless].

²Sons were born to David in Hebron: his firstborn was Amnon, by Ahinoam of Jezreel;

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

From Fear to Faith

In 2 Samuel 3:11, Ish-bosheth was afraid of Abner. Many people are afraid. Some, like Ish-bosheth, are afraid of others; some have fear in the area of finances, and some fear sickness, disease, or other health problems. Regardless of what the specific fears are, lots of people fight fear in some area of their lives.

In many situations, our natural instinct is to be afraid and to try to protect and take care of ourselves. But God invites us to a life of faith. Fear is tormenting. Sadly, some people have lived in fear for so long that they do not realize it is abnormal. They have developed behavior systems that allow them to function in their dysfunction.

I had many fears in my life due to being raised in an abusive and dysfunctional home. I learned to function with my fears, but as I studied the Word of God, I also learned that I did not have to live with them. I learned there was a better way—the way of faith. However, getting from fear to faith was and still is a step-by-step journey. I was afraid of being rejected, of

displeasing people, and of not being known and loved for my true self. I feared failure, making wrong choices, and being criticized for my decisions or actions. I also feared my past mistakes, the unknown future, and not having enough money and needing to depend on someone else.

I can now say truly that none of these fears prevail in my life now. They may rear their ugly heads from time to time, but they no longer control me. I have learned to live in faith and you can too.

In the Bible God says frequently, “Fear not, for I am with you.” God is with you and has promised never to leave you or forsake you. You don’t grow in faith by wishing that you felt a certain way or didn’t feel a certain way. You grow in faith by stepping out and trusting the promises of God. Each time you do, you gain experience that will help you trust the next time. Don’t be discouraged with yourself if it takes awhile to move from fear to faith. I don’t think anyone operates in perfect faith one hundred percent of the time. Thankfully, we can continue to grow.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord God, I thank You for leading me on the journey from fear to faith, one step at a time, as I discover that I really can trust You. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

³his second, Chileab, by Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel; the third, Absalom the son of [his wife] Maacah, daughter of Talmai the king of Geshur;

⁴the fourth, Adonijah the son of [his wife] Haggith; the fifth, Shephatiah the son of [his wife] Abital;

⁵and the sixth, Ithream, by David's wife Eglah. These [sons] were born to David in Hebron.

⁶Now while war continued between the houses of Saul and David, Abner was proving himself strong in the house of Saul.

⁷Now Saul had a concubine whose name was Rizpah the daughter of Aiah; and Ish-bosheth said to Abner, "Why have you gone in to my father's concubine?"

⁸Then Abner was very angry at the words of Ish-bosheth, and he said, "Am I a dog's head [a despicable traitor] that belongs to Judah? Today I show loyalty *and* kindness to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers and his friends, by not having you handed over to David; and yet you charge me today with guilt concerning this woman.

⁹"May God do so to Abner, and more also, if I do not do for David just as the LORD has sworn to him,

¹⁰to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and establish the throne of David over Israel and Judah from Dan [in the north] to Beersheba [in the south]."

¹¹And Ish-bosheth could not say another word to Abner, because he was afraid of him.

¹²Then Abner sent messengers to David [who was] in his place [at Hebron], saying, "Whose is the land? Make your

covenant (treaty) with me, and behold, my hand shall be with you to bring all Israel over to you.”

¹³David said, “Good! I will make a covenant (treaty) with you, but I require one thing of you: you shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul’s daughter, when you come to see me.”

¹⁴So David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth, Saul’s son, saying, “Give me my wife Michal, to whom I was betrothed for [the price of] a hundred foreskins of the Philistines.”

¹⁵So Ish-bosheth sent and took her from her husband, from Paltiel the son of Laish [to whom Saul had given her].

¹⁶But her husband went with her, weeping continually behind her as far as Bahurim. Then Abner told him, “Go, return.” And he did so.

¹⁷Abner talked with the elders (tribal leaders) of Israel, saying, “In times past you were seeking for David to be king over you.

¹⁸“Now then, do it [and make him king]! For the LORD has spoken of David, saying, ‘By the hand of My servant David I will save My people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and the hand of all their enemies.’” [1 Sam 9:16]

¹⁹Abner also spoke to [the men of] Benjamin. Then he also went to tell David at Hebron everything that seemed good to Israel and to the entire house of Benjamin.

²⁰So Abner came to David at Hebron, and [brought] twenty men along with him. And David prepared a feast for Abner and the men with him.

²¹Abner said to David, “Let me stand up and go, and gather all Israel to my lord the king, so that they may make a

covenant (treaty) with you, and that you may reign over all that your soul desires.” So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.

²²Then the servants of David came with Joab from a raid and brought a great quantity of spoil with them; but Abner was not with David at Hebron, because David had sent him away, and he had gone in peace.

²³When Joab and all the army that was with him arrived, they told Joab, “Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he has sent him away, and he has gone in peace.”

²⁴Then Joab came to the king and said, “What have you done? Behold, Abner came to you; why did you send him away, so that he is already gone?”

²⁵“You know Abner the son of Ner, that he [only] came to deceive you [with flattering words] and to learn of your going out and coming in, and to find out what you are doing.”

²⁶When Joab left David, he sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the well of Sirah; but David knew nothing [about Joab’s action].

²⁷So when Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside to the middle of the gate to speak to him privately, and there he struck Abner in the abdomen so that he died, to avenge the blood of Asahel, Joab’s brother.

²⁸Afterward, when David heard of it, he said, “I and my kingdom are forever innocent before the LORD of the blood of Abner the son of Ner.

²⁹“Let the guilt fall on the head of Joab and on all his father’s house (family); and may there never disappear from the house of Joab one who suffers with a discharge or one who is

a leper or one who walks with a crutch [being unfit for war], or one who falls by the sword, or one who lacks food.”

³⁰So Joab and Abishai his brother murdered Abner because he had killed their brother Asahel in the battle at Gibeon.

³¹Then David said to Joab and to all the people with him, “Tear your clothes, put on sackcloth, and mourn before Abner.” And King David walked behind the bier.

³²They buried Abner in Hebron; and the king raised his voice and wept at the grave of Abner, and all the people wept.

³³And the king sang a dirge (funeral song) over Abner and said,

“Should Abner [the great warrior] die as a fool dies?

³⁴“Your hands were not bound, nor your feet put in fetters;
As a man falls before the wicked, so you have fallen.”

And all the people wept again over him.

³⁵All the people came to urge David to eat food while it was still day; but David took an oath, saying, “May God do so to me, and more also, if I taste bread or anything else before the sun sets.”

POWERPOINT

Because of another's actions, Mephibosheth would live the rest of his life physically handicapped. But it was his poor self-image that was his real problem. If you have a poor self-image, as Mephibosheth did, read the end of his story in 2 Samuel 9. The story of his restoration can be the story of your restoration. Don't miss the great things God has in store for you, and don't let a physical disadvantage rule your life.



³⁶And all the people took notice of it and it pleased them, just as everything that the king did pleased all the people.

³⁷So all the people and all Israel understood that day that it had not been the will of the king to put Abner the son of Ner to death.

³⁸Then the king said to his servants, “Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel?”

³⁹“Today I am weak, though anointed king; these men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too difficult for me. May the LORD repay the evildoer [Joab] in accordance with his wickedness!”

4 WHEN SAUL’S son Ish-bosheth [king of Israel], heard that Abner had died in Hebron, he lost courage, and all Israel was horrified.

²Saul’s son had two men who were commanders of [raiding] bands [of soldiers]. One was named Baanah and the other Rechab, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite of the sons (tribe) of Benjamin (for Beeroth is also considered part of [the tribe of] Benjamin,

³and the Beerothites fled to Gittaim, and have been resident aliens there to this day).

⁴Jonathan, Saul’s son, had a son whose feet were crippled. He was five years old when the news [of the deaths] of Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel. And the boy’s nurse picked him up and fled; but it happened that while she was hurrying to flee, he fell and became lame. His name was Mephibosheth.

⁵So the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, left and came to the house of Ish-bosheth in the heat of the day while he was taking his midday rest.

⁶They came into the interior of the house as if to get wheat [for the soldiers], and they struck him in the stomach. Then Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped [unnoticed].

⁷Now when they entered the house he was lying on his bed

in his bedroom. They [not only] struck and killed him, [but] they also beheaded him. Then they took his head and traveled all night by way of the Arabah.

⁸They brought the head of Ish-bosheth to David at Hebron, and said to the king, “Look, the head of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, your enemy, who sought your life; thus the LORD has granted my lord the king vengeance this day on Saul and on his descendants.”

⁹David replied to Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said to them, “As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life from every adversity,

¹⁰when a man told me, ‘Behold, Saul is dead,’ thinking that he was bringing good news, I seized and killed him in Ziklag, to reward him for his news.

¹¹“How much more, when wicked men have killed a righteous *and* just man in his own house on his bed, shall I not require his blood from your hand and remove you from the earth?”

¹²So David commanded his young men, and they killed them and cut off their hands and feet and hung them beside the pool in Hebron. But they took Ish-bosheth’s head and buried it in Hebron in the tomb of Abner [his relative].

5 THEN ALL the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, “Behold, we are your bone and your flesh.

²“In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led Israel out [to war] and brought Israel in [from battle]. And the LORD told you, ‘You shall shepherd My people Israel

and be ruler over them.” [1 Sam 15:27–29; 16:1]

³So all the elders (tribal leaders) of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD; and they anointed him king over Israel.

⁴David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years.

⁵In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah.

⁶Now the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, “You shall not enter here, for the blind and the lame [even the weakest among us] will turn you away”; they thought, “David cannot come in here [because the walls are impenetrable].”

⁷Nevertheless, David captured the stronghold (fortress) of Zion, that is, the City of David.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, help me to believe I can
become greater and greater in
life because You, the Lord of*

hosts, are with me.

• adapted from 2 Samuel 5:10

⁸Then David said on that day, “Whoever strikes the Jebusites, let him go up through the [underground] water shaft to strike the lame and the blind, who are detested by David’s soul [because of their arrogance].” So [for that reason] they say, “The blind or the lame (Jebusites) shall not come into the [royal] house [of Israel].” [1 Chr 11:6]

⁹So David lived in the stronghold and called it the City of David. And he built all around [the surrounding area] from the Millo [fortification] and inward.

¹⁰David became greater and greater, for the LORD, the God of hosts (armies), was with him.

¹¹Now Hiram the king of Tyre sent messengers to David with cedar trees, carpenters, and stonemasons; and they built a house (palace) for David.

¹²And David knew that the LORD had established him as king over Israel, and that He had exalted his kingdom for His people Israel’s sake.

¹³David took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem, after he came from Hebron; and more sons and daughters were born to him.

¹⁴And these are the names of those who were born to him in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon,

¹⁵Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia,

¹⁶Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.

¹⁷When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed

king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to look for him, but he heard about it and went down to the stronghold.

¹⁸Now the Philistines had come and spread out [for battle] in the Valley of Rephaim.

¹⁹David inquired of the LORD, saying, “Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You hand them over to me?” And the LORD said to David, “Go up, for I will certainly hand them over to you.”

²⁰So David came to Baal-perazim, and he defeated them there, and said, “The LORD has broken through my enemies before me, like a breakthrough of water.” So he named that place Baal-perazim (master of breakthroughs).

²¹The Philistines abandoned their [pagan] idols there, so David and his men took them away [to be burned].

²²The Philistines came up once again and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim.

²³When David inquired of the LORD, He said, “You shall not go up, but circle around behind them and come at them in front of the balsam trees.

²⁴“And when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then you shall pay attention *and* act promptly, for at that time the LORD will have gone out before you to strike the army of the Philistines.”

²⁵David did just as the LORD had commanded him, and struck down the Philistines from Geba as far as Gezer.

6 AGAIN DAVID gathered together all the chosen men of

Israel, thirty thousand.

²And David arose and went with all those who were with him to Baale-judah [Kiriath-jearim], to bring up from there [to Jerusalem] the ark of God which is called by the Name—the very Name of the LORD of hosts, who dwells enthroned *above* the cherubim.

³They placed the ark of God on a new cart and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were leading the new cart.

⁴So they brought it with the ark of God from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Ahio was walking in front of the ark. [1 Sam 7:2]

⁵Meanwhile, David and all the house of Israel were celebrating *and* dancing before the LORD with all kinds of *instruments made of fir or cypress wood*, with lyres, harps, tambourines, castanets, and cymbals.

⁶When they came to Nacon's threshing floor, Uzzah reached out [with his hand] to the ark of God and took hold of it, because the oxen [stumbled and] nearly overturned it.

⁷And the anger of the LORD burned against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his irreverence; and he died there by the ark of God.

⁸David became angry *and* grieved *and* offended because of the LORD's outburst against Uzzah, and that place has been called Perez-uzzah (outburst against Uzzah) to this day.

⁹So David was afraid of the LORD that day; and he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?"

¹⁰David was unwilling to move the ark of the LORD into the City of David with him; instead he took it aside to the house of

Obed-edom the Gittite.

¹¹So the ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite for three months, and the LORD blessed Obed-edom and all his household (family).

¹²Now King David was told, "The LORD has blessed the house of Obed-edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God." So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the City of David with rejoicing *and* gladness.

¹³And when those who were carrying the ark of the LORD [by its poles] had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling.

¹⁴And David was dancing before the LORD with great enthusiasm, and David was wearing a linen ephod [a priest's upper garment].

¹⁵So David and all the house of Israel were bringing the ark of the LORD up [to the City of David] with shouts [of joy] and with the sound of the trumpet.

¹⁶Then, as the ark of the LORD came into the City of David, Michal, Saul's daughter [David's wife], looked down from the window above and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she felt contempt for him in her heart [because she thought him undignified].

¹⁷They brought in the ark of the LORD and set it in its place inside the tent which David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.

¹⁸When David had finished offering the burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts (armies),

¹⁹and distributed to all the people, the entire multitude of Israel, both to men and women, to each a [ring-shaped] loaf of bread, a cake of dates, and a cake of raisins. Then all the people departed, each to his house.

²⁰Then David returned to bless his household. But [his wife] Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, “How glorious *and* distinguished was the king of Israel today, who uncovered himself *and* stripped [off his kingly robes] in the eyes of his servants’ maids like one of the riffraff who shamelessly uncovers himself!”

²¹So David said to Michal, “It was before the LORD [that I did this], who chose me above your father and all his house, to appoint me as ruler over Israel, the people of the LORD. Therefore I will celebrate [in pure enjoyment] before the LORD.

²²“Yet I will demean myself *even* more than this, and will be humbled (abased) in my own sight [and yours, as I please], but by the maids whom you mentioned, by them I shall be held in honor.”

²³Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death.

1 WHEN KING David lived in his house (palace) and the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies,

²the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within tent curtains.”

³And Nathan said to the king, “Go, do everything that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you.”

⁴But it happened that night that the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying,

⁵“Go and tell My servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Should you be the one to build Me a house in which to dwell?

⁶“For I have not dwelt in a house since the day I brought the sons (descendants) of Israel up from Egypt, even to this day; but I have been moving about in a tent, even in a tabernacle.

⁷“Wherever I have gone with all the Israelites, did I speak a word to any from the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, asking, ‘Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?’” ’

Speak God's Word

I can do everything that is in my heart, for the Lord is with me.

| adapted from 2 SAMUEL 7:3 |

⁸“So now, say this to My servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel.

⁹“I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name, like that of the great men of the earth.

¹⁰“I will appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in a place of their own and not be disturbed again. The wicked will not afflict them again, as formerly,

¹¹even from the day that I appointed judges over My people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also declares to you that He will make a house (royal dynasty) for you.

¹²“When your days are fulfilled and you lie down [in death] with your fathers (ancestors), I will raise up your descendant after you, who shall be born to you, and I will

establish his kingdom.

¹³“He [is the one who] shall build a house for My Name *and* My Presence, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

¹⁴“I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. When he commits iniquity (wrongdoing), I will discipline him with the rod of men and with the strokes of the sons of man.

¹⁵“But My lovingkindness *and* mercy will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you.

¹⁶“Your house (royal dynasty) and your kingdom will endure forever before Me; your throne will be established forever.””

¹⁷Nathan spoke to David in accordance with all these words and all of this vision.

¹⁸Then King David went in and sat [in prayer] before the LORD, and said, “Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house (family), that You have brought me this far?

¹⁹“Yet this was very insignificant in Your eyes, O Lord GOD, for You have spoken also of Your servant’s house (royal dynasty) in the distant future. And this is the law *and* custom of man, O Lord GOD.

²⁰“What more can David say to You? For You know (acknowledge, choose) Your servant, O Lord GOD.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Something Great Is on Its Way

It is God's will for us to grow up and mature spiritually. It is also God's will for us to have good relationships and to enjoy our lives.

If you've had a negative past, chances are it's because the enemy interfered and got in. No matter what you went through or what you might be going through right now, you can be positive about your future. Think about it positively; talk about it positively, and expect good things to happen.

It's self-defeating to say, "I guess I'll just have more of what I've always had." I encourage you to have a positive vision for your future. God says that people without vision perish (see Prov. 29:18). In the case of David, God promised great things for a royal dynasty extending into the future (see 2 Sam. 7:19). No matter what has happened in the past, no matter what is going on right now, you can believe something great will happen in your future.

²¹“Because of Your word (promise), and in accordance with Your own heart, You have done all these great *and* astounding things to let Your servant know (understand).

²²“Therefore You are great, O Lord GOD; for there is none like You, and there is no God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

²³“What one nation on earth is like Your people Israel, whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people and to make a name for Himself, and to do great and awesome things for Yourself and for Your land, before Your people whom You have redeemed for Yourself from Egypt, *from* nations and their gods?

²⁴“You established for Yourself Your people Israel as Your people forever, and You, O LORD, have become their God.

²⁵“Now, O LORD God, confirm forever the word [of the covenant] that You have spoken in regard to Your servant and his house (royal dynasty); and do just as You have spoken,

²⁶so that Your Name may be magnified forever, saying, ‘The LORD of hosts (armies) is God over Israel;’ and may the house (royal dynasty) of Your servant David be established before You.

²⁷“For You, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, have revealed this to Your servant, saying, ‘I will build you a house (royal dynasty).’ For that reason Your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to You.

²⁸“And now, O Lord GOD, You are God, and Your words are truth, and You have promised this good thing to Your servant.

²⁹“Therefore now, may it please You to bless the house (royal dynasty) of Your servant, so that it may continue forever before You; for You, O Lord GOD, have spoken it, and with Your blessing may the house of Your servant be blessed forever.”

8 NOW IT came about after this that David defeated the Philistines and subdued (humbled) them, and he took control of Metheg-ammah [the main city] from the hand of the

Philistines.

²He defeated Moab, and measured them with a length of rope, making them lie down on the ground; he measured two lengths to [choose those to] put to death, and one full length to [choose those to] be kept alive. And the [surviving] Moabites became servants to David, bringing tribute.

³Then David defeated Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to restore his power at the River [Euphrates].

⁴David captured from him 1,700 horsemen and 20,000 foot soldiers. David also hamstringed all the chariot horses (making them lame), but reserved *enough* of them for a hundred chariots.

⁵When the Arameans (Syrians) of Damascus came to help Hadadezer, king of Zobah, David struck down 22,000 Arameans.

⁶Then David put garrisons among the Arameans in Damascus, and the Arameans became his servants and brought tribute. The LORD helped David wherever he went.

⁷David took the shields of gold that were carried by the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem.

⁸And from Betah and Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, King David took an immense quantity of bronze.

⁹When Toi king of Hamath heard about David's defeat of all the forces of Hadadezer,

¹⁰Toi sent Joram his son to King David to greet and congratulate him for his battle and defeat of Hadadezer; for Hadadezer had been at war with Toi. *Joram* brought with him articles of silver, gold, and bronze [as gifts].

¹¹King David also dedicated these [gifts] to the LORD, along with the silver and gold that he had dedicated from all the nations which he subdued:

¹²from Aram (Syria), Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, and Amalek, and from the spoil of Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah.

¹³So David made a name *for himself* when he returned from killing 18,000 Arameans (Syrians) in the Valley of Salt.

¹⁴He put garrisons in Edom; in all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became servants to David. And the LORD helped him wherever he went.

¹⁵So David reigned over all Israel, and continued to administer justice and righteousness for all his people.

¹⁶Joab the son of Zeruiah was [commander] over the army; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder (secretary);

¹⁷Zadok the son of Ahitub and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar were the [chief] priests, and Seraiah was the scribe;

¹⁸Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was [head] over both the Cherethites and Pelethites [the king's bodyguards]; and David's sons were chief [confidential] advisers (officials) [to the king]. [1 Chr 18:17]

9 AND DAVID said, "Is there still anyone left of the house (family) of Saul to whom I may show kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

²There was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba, so they called him to David. And the king said to him,

“Are you Ziba?” He said, “*I am* your servant.”

³And the king said, “Is there no longer anyone *left* of the house (family) of Saul to whom I may show the goodness *and* graciousness of God?” Ziba replied to the king, “There is still a son of Jonathan, [one] whose feet are crippled.” [1 Sam 20:14–17]

⁴So the king said to him, “Where is he?” And Ziba replied to the king, “He is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, in Lo-debar.”

⁵Then King David sent *word* and had him brought from the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar.

⁶Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David and fell face down and lay himself down [in respect]. David said, “Mephibosheth.” And he answered, “Here is your servant!”

⁷David said to him, “Do not be afraid, for I will certainly show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and will restore to you all the land of your grandfather Saul; and you shall always eat at my table.”

POWERPOINT

Because of David's covenant with his friend Jonathan, he searched for someone he could be kind and merciful to for Jonathan's sake. Today God looks for people He can be kind and merciful to for Jesus' sake.

We do not have to talk God into being good to us. He is good, and He is looking for someone to receive His awesome grace, which is freely available to all who will believe.



POWERPOINT

People who are really positive won't have everything work out the way they want it to all the time. But positive people decide to enjoy themselves no matter what happens. On the other hand, negative people, such as Mephibosheth, have a hard time enjoying even the best of moments. They bring a gloomy overcast and "heaviness" to those around them. Even when good things are going on, they seem to spot the one thing that could be a potential problem. You can choose to be positive or negative. Will you choose to have positive thoughts and a positive attitude?



⁸Again Mephibosheth lay himself face down and said,

“What is your servant, that you would be concerned for a dead dog like me?”

⁹Then the king summoned Ziba, Saul’s servant, and said to him, “I have given your master’s grandson everything that belonged to Saul and to all his house (family).

¹⁰“You and your sons and your servants shall cultivate the land for him, and you shall bring in *the produce*, so that your master’s grandson may have food to eat; but Mephibosheth, your master’s grandson, shall always eat at my table.” Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.

¹¹Then Ziba said to the king, “Your servant will do according to everything that my lord the king commands.” So Mephibosheth ate at David’s table as one of the king’s sons.

¹²Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Mica. And all who lived in Ziba’s house were servants to Mephibosheth.

¹³So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he always ate at the king’s table. And he was lame in both feet.

10 NOW IT happened later that [Nahash] the king of the Ammonites died, and his son Hanun became king in his place.

²Then David said, “I will show kindness to Hanun the son of Nahash, just as his father did to me.” So David sent [a letter along with] some of his servants to console him in regard to his father’s death; and David’s servants came into the land of the Ammonites.

³But the princes of the Ammonites [were suspicious and] said to Hanun their lord, “Do you think that David is honoring

your father because he has sent comforters to you? Has David not sent his servants to you in order to search the city, to spy it out and overthrow it?”

⁴So Hanun took David’s servants and shaved off half their beards, and cut off their robes in the middle as far as their hips, and sent them away.

⁵When David was informed, he sent [messengers] to meet them [before they reached Jerusalem], for the men were greatly ashamed *and* humiliated. And the king said, “Stay at Jericho until your beards grow, and *then* return.”

⁶When the Ammonites saw that they had become an object of hatred to David, they sent *word* and hired the Arameans (Syrians) of Beth-rehob and the Arameans of Zobah, 20,000 foot soldiers, and the king of Maacah with 1,000 men, and the men of Tob with 12,000 men [to fight for them].

⁷When David heard about it, he sent Joab and the entire army, the strong *and* brave men.

⁸The Ammonites came out and lined up for battle at the entrance of the [city] gate, but the Arameans of Zobah and Rehob and the men of Tob and Maacah were [stationed] by themselves in the field.

⁹Now when Joab saw that the battlefield was against him in front and in the rear, he selected some of all the choice men in Israel and set them in battle formation to meet the Arameans (Syrians).

¹⁰But he placed the rest of the men in the hand of his brother Abishai, and he placed them in battle formation to meet the Ammonites.

¹¹Joab said [to Abishai], “If the Arameans are too strong

for me, then you shall help me; but if the Ammonites are too strong for you, I will come to help you.

¹²“Be courageous, and let us show ourselves courageous for the benefit of our people and the cities of our God. And may the LORD do what is good in His sight.”

¹³So Joab and the people who were with him approached the battle against the Arameans, and they fled before him.

¹⁴When the Ammonites saw that the Arameans had fled, they also fled before Abishai and entered the city. So Joab returned from *battling* against the Ammonites and came to Jerusalem.

¹⁵When the Arameans saw that they were defeated by Israel, they gathered together.

¹⁶Hadadezer sent *word* and brought out the Arameans who were beyond the River [Euphrates]; and they came to Helam; and Shobach the commander of the army of Hadadezer led them.

¹⁷When David was informed, he gathered all Israel together and crossed the Jordan, and came to Helam. Then the Arameans assembled in battle formation to meet David and fought against him.

¹⁸But the Arameans fled before Israel, and David killed 700 Aramean charioteers and 40,000 horsemen, and struck Shobach the commander of their army, and he died there.

¹⁹When all the kings serving Hadadezer saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel and served them. So the Arameans (Syrians) were afraid to help the Ammonites anymore.

11 THEN IT happened in the spring, at the time when the kings go out *to battle*, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all [the fighting men of] Israel, and they destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.

²One evening David got up from his couch and was walking on the [flat] roof of the king's palace, and from there he saw a woman bathing; and she was very beautiful in appearance.

³David sent *word* and inquired about the woman. *Someone* said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"

⁴David sent messengers and took her. When she came to him, he lay with her. And when she was purified from her uncleanness, she returned to her house.

⁵The woman conceived; and she sent *word* and told David, "I am pregnant."

⁶Then David sent *word* to Joab, *saying*, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." So Joab sent Uriah to David.

⁷When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the people were doing, and how the war was progressing.

⁸Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house, and wash your feet (spend time at home)." Uriah left the king's palace, and a gift from the king was sent out after him.

⁹But Uriah slept at the entrance of the king's palace with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house.

¹⁰When they told David, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Have you not [just] come from a

[long] journey? Why did you not go to your house?"

¹¹Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in huts (temporary shelters), and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Should I go to my house to eat and drink and lie with my wife? By your life and the life of your soul, I will not do this thing."

¹²Then David said to Uriah, "Stay here today as well, and tomorrow I will let you leave." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next.

¹³Now David called him [to dinner], and he ate and drank with him, so that he made Uriah drunk; in the evening he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, and [still] did not go down to his house.

¹⁴In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah.

¹⁵He wrote in the letter, "Put Uriah in the front line of the heaviest fighting and leave him, so that he may be struck down and die."

¹⁶So it happened that as Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew the [enemy's] valiant men were *positioned*.

¹⁷And the men of the city came out and fought against Joab, and some of the people among the servants of David fell; Uriah the Hittite also died.

¹⁸Then Joab sent *word* and informed David of all the events of the war.

¹⁹And he commanded the messenger, "When you have finished reporting all the events of the war to the king,

²⁰then if the king becomes angry and he says to you, 'Why

did you go so near to the city to fight? Did you not know that they would shoot [arrows] from the wall?

²¹‘Who killed Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth (Gideon)? Was it not a woman who threw an upper millstone on him from the wall so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?’ Then you shall say, ‘Your servant Uriah the Hittite is also dead.’” [Judg 9:35, 53]

²²So the messenger left, and he came and told David everything that Joab had sent him *to report*.

²³The messenger said to David, “The men indeed prevailed against us and came out to us in the field, but we were on them *and* pushed them as far as the entrance of the [city] gate.

²⁴“Then the archers shot at your servants from the wall. Some of the king’s servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is also dead.”

²⁵Then David said to the messenger, “Tell Joab this, ‘Do not let this thing disturb you, for the sword devours one [side] as well as another. Strengthen your battle against the city and overthrow it’; and so encourage Joab.”

²⁶When Uriah’s wife [Bathsheba] heard that her husband Uriah was dead, she mourned for her husband.

²⁷And when the time of mourning was past, David sent *word* and had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done [with Bathsheba] was evil in the sight of the LORD.

12 AND THE LORD sent Nathan [the prophet] to David. He came and said to him,

“There were two men in a city, one rich and the other poor.

²“The rich man had a very large number of flocks and herds,

³But the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb

Which he had purchased and nourished;

And it grew up together with him and his children.

It ate his food, drank from his cup, it lay in his arms,

And was like a daughter to him.

⁴“Now a traveler (visitor) came to the rich man,

And to avoid taking one from his own flock or herd

To prepare [a meal] for the traveler who had come to him,

He took the poor man’s ewe lamb and prepared it for his guest.”

⁵Then David’s anger burned intensely against the man, and he said to Nathan, “As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die.

⁶“He shall make restitution for the ewe lamb four times as much [as the lamb was worth], because he did this thing and had no compassion.”

⁷Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man! Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘I anointed you as king over Israel, and I spared you from the hand of Saul.

⁸‘I also gave you your master’s house, and put your master’s wives into your care *and* under your protection, and I gave you the house (royal dynasty) of Israel and of Judah; and if *that had been* too little, I would have given you much more!

⁹“Why have you despised the word of the LORD by doing evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife. You have

killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. [Lev 20:10; 24:17]

¹⁰“Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.’

¹¹“Thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, I will stir up evil against you from your own household; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your companion, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight.

¹²“Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and in broad daylight.” [2 Sam 16:21, 22]

¹³David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” And Nathan said to David, “The LORD also has allowed your sin to pass [without further punishment]; you shall not die. [Ps 51]

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

God's Word Chases Away Unkind Thoughts

Sometimes pointing a finger at someone in judgment is the way people try to cover up their own weaknesses. They avoid dealing with their own faults by focusing on the faults of other people. One of the most extreme illustrations of this is when David immediately pronounced judgment on a man whose crime was merely a shadow compared to David's own crime (see 2 Sam. 12).

I grew up in a family where judgment and criticism were part of everyday life. I became an expert at deciding how other people should live. Had anyone called me a judgmental or critical person, I would have denied it, because I wasn't aware of my negative attitude. I thought I was just giving my opinion.

The devil loves to keep us busy mentally judging the faults of others. Their shortcomings are often easy to see, especially when we're looking for them. When we choose to be judgmental, which is exactly what I did, we will find there is no

end to the possibilities.

It took me awhile, but I eventually learned that when the enemy brings those harsh, unkind, judgmental thoughts to us, we can use God's Word to chase them away. There may be no better verse to repeat than Philippians 4:8 to get our thoughts properly centered: "Finally, believers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable *and* worthy of respect, whatever is right *and* confirmed by God's word, whatever is pure *and* wholesome, whatever is lovely *and* brings peace, whatever is admirable *and* of good repute; if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think *continually* on these things [center your mind on them, and implant them in your heart]."

I went through many years of misery judging others, and it took me a long time to replace those negative thoughts with all the good things I had to think about. During the process, the Holy Spirit often pointed me to Romans 14:10: "But you, why do you criticize your brother? Or you again, why do you look down on your [believing] brother *or* regard him with contempt?"

You and I are God's people. As Christians, we're part of one family—God's family. He wants us to love and protect our friends and family members instead of judging them.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God, I've compared myself to others and judged them. I know that's wrong. In the powerful name of Jesus Christ, I ask You to help me defeat every evil judgmental thought that Satan throws at me. With Your help and through Your Word, I know I can have victory. Amen.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Moving Toward Healthy Relationships

Maintaining healthy relationships occasionally requires confrontation, which means sometimes saying no when someone else wants to hear yes. It means you may have to choose to do something you know the other party won't approve of, even if he happens to be a king (someone in authority) (see 2 Sam. 12:7).

If you have not been confronting and now find yourself being controlled and manipulated, making a change will not be easy. Once you develop a pattern of pleasing people out of fear, it takes a genuine step of faith to break the pattern. You may even need to explain that you now realize you have allowed them to have their way in the past, but you have been wrong. Explain that you were insecure and needed their approval, but now you have to make a change. It may be hard for you and them but it's necessary in order to develop a healthy relationship.

Spend some time praying about it before confronting. Ask God to give you courage. Ask Him to help the other person be willing to change. What is impossible with other people is possible with God (see Mark 10:27).

The important thing is to make a decision right now that with God's help you will break the cycle of approval addiction. Initially, you may feel very uncomfortable with the thought

that someone is not happy with you, but it's important to remember that your only other choice is spending your life being unhappy. Healthy confrontation is often the only way to victory.

¹⁴“Nevertheless, because by this deed you have given [a great] opportunity to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme [Him], the son that is born to you shall certainly die.”

¹⁵Then Nathan went [back] to his home.

And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's widow bore to David, and he was very sick.

¹⁶David therefore appealed to God for the child [to be healed]; and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground.

¹⁷The elders of his household stood by him [in the night] to lift him up from the ground, but he was unwilling [to get up] and would not eat food with them.

¹⁸Then it happened on the seventh day that the child died. David's servants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they said, “While the child was still alive, we spoke to him and he would not listen to our voices. How then can we tell him the child is dead, since he might harm himself [or us]?”

¹⁹But when David saw that his servants were whispering to one another, he realized that the child was dead. So David said to them, “Is the child dead?” And they said, “He is dead.”

²⁰Then David got up from the ground, washed, anointed *himself* [with olive oil], changed his clothes, and went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he came [back] to his own house, and when he asked, they set food before him and

he ate.

²¹Then his servants said to him, “What is this thing that you have done? While the child was alive you fasted and wept, but when the child died, you got up and ate food.”

²²David said, “While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I thought, ‘Who knows, the LORD may be gracious to me and the child may live.’

²³“But now he is dead; why should I [continue to] fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him [when I die], but he will not return to me.”

²⁴David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and went to her and lay with her; and she gave birth to a son, and David named him Solomon. And the LORD loved the child;

²⁵and He sent *word* through Nathan the prophet, and he named him Jedidiah (beloved of the LORD) for the sake of the LORD [who loved the child].

²⁶Now Joab fought against Rabbah of the Ammonites and captured the royal city.

²⁷Joab sent messengers to David and said, “I have fought against Rabbah; I have even taken the city of waters.

²⁸“So now, assemble the rest of the men, and camp against the city and capture it, or I will take the city myself, and it will be named after me.”

²⁹So David gathered all the men together and went to Rabbah, then fought against it and captured it.

³⁰And he took the crown of their king from his head; it weighed a talent of gold, and [set in it was] a precious stone; and it was *placed* on David’s head. And he brought the spoil out of the city in great amounts.

³¹He also brought out the people who were there, and put them to [work with] the saws and sharp iron instruments and iron axes, and made them work at the brickkiln. And he did this to all the Ammonite cities. Then David and all the men returned to Jerusalem.

13 IT HAPPENED afterwards that Absalom the son of David had a beautiful sister whose name was Tamar, and Amnon [her half brother] the son of David was in love with her.

²Amnon was so frustrated because of his [half-] sister Tamar that he made himself sick, for she was a virgin, and Amnon thought it impossible for him to do anything to her.

³But Amnon had a friend whose name was Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother; and Jonadab was a very shrewd (cunning) man.

⁴He said to Amnon, "Why are you, the king's son, so depressed morning after morning? Will you not tell me?" And Amnon said to him, "I am in love with Tamar, my [half-] brother Absalom's sister."

⁵Jonadab said to him, "Go to bed and pretend you are sick; and when your father [David] comes to see you, say to him, 'Just let my sister Tamar come and serve me food, and let her prepare it in my sight, so that I may see it and eat it from her hand.'"

⁶So Amnon lay down and pretended to be sick; and when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let my sister Tamar come and make me a couple of cakes in my sight, so that I may eat from her hand."

⁷Then David sent *word* to the house for Tamar, saying, “Go now to your brother Amnon’s house, and prepare some food for him.”

⁸So Tamar went to her brother Amnon’s house, and he was in bed. And she took dough and kneaded it, and made cakes in his sight, and baked them.

⁹She took the pan and dished them out before him, but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, “Have everyone leave me.” So everyone left him [except Tamar].

¹⁰Then Amnon said to Tamar, “Bring the food into the bedroom, so that I may eat from your hand.” So Tamar took the cakes she had made and brought them into the bedroom to her [half-] brother Amnon.

¹¹When she brought them to him to eat, he took hold of her and said, “Come, lie with me, my sister.”

¹²She replied, “No, my brother! Do not violate me, for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this disgraceful thing! [Gen 34:7]

¹³“As for me, how could I get rid of my shame *and* disgrace? And you, you will be considered one of the fools in Israel. So now, just speak to the king [about taking me as your wife], for he will not withhold me from you.”

¹⁴But he would not listen to her; and since he was stronger than she, he violated her and lay with her.

¹⁵Then Amnon became extremely hateful toward her, for his hatred toward her was greater than the love which he had for her. And Amnon said to her, “Get up and get out!”

¹⁶But she said, “No, because this wrong of sending me away is worse than the other that you have done to me!” But

he would not listen to her.

¹⁷Instead, he called his young man who was his personal servant and said, “Now throw this woman out of my *presence* and bolt the door behind her.”

¹⁸Now Tamar was wearing a [long-sleeved] robe of various colors; for that is how the virgin daughters of the king dressed themselves in robes. Then Amnon’s personal servant took her out and bolted the door behind her.

¹⁹So Tamar put dust on her head [in grief] and tore the long-sleeved robe which she had on, and she put her hand on her head and went away crying out [for help].

²⁰So her brother Absalom said to her, “Has your brother Amnon been with you? But now keep silent, my sister; he is your brother; do not take this matter to heart.” So Tamar remained secluded in her brother Absalom’s house.

²¹Now when King David heard about all these things, he was very angry [but failed to take any action].

²²But Absalom did not speak to Amnon either good or bad; for Absalom hated Amnon because he had violated his sister Tamar.

²³Now it came about after two full years that Absalom had sheepshearers at Baal-hazor near Ephraim, and Absalom invited all the king’s sons [to a party].

²⁴Absalom came to [his father] the king and said, “Behold, your servant has sheepshearers; please let the king and his servants go with your servant.”

²⁵But the king said to Absalom, “No, my son, we should not all go, for we will be a burden to you.” Although Absalom [strongly] urged David, still he would not go, but he gave him

his blessing.

²⁶Then Absalom said, “If not, then at least let my brother Amnon go with us.” And the king said to him, “Why should he go with you?”

²⁷But Absalom urged him [again], and he let Amnon and all the king’s sons go with him.

²⁸Now Absalom commanded his servants, “Notice carefully, when Amnon’s heart is joyous with wine, and when I say to you, ‘Strike Amnon,’ then kill him. Do not be afraid; have I not commanded you myself [and in doing so have I not taken full responsibility for his death]? Be courageous and brave.”

²⁹So the servants of Absalom did to Amnon just as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king’s sons got up, and every man mounted his mule and fled.

³⁰Now it happened while they were on the way [back home], that the [exaggerated] report came to David, “Absalom has killed all the king’s sons, and not one of them is left.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Dealing with Anger

In 2 Samuel 13:22, we read about Absalom, who held on to his anger for two years, allowing it to build until he ended up killing his own brother. Proverbs 16:32 illustrates the power of controlling your anger. God gave us self-control (see Gal. 5:23) to monitor our mouths, thoughts, passions, emotions, and tempers, yet many people don't know that controlling their emotions is an option. When they become angry, they let the thoughts and feelings of anger decide how long they will stay angry, and all the while it is stealing their joy from them.

You need to know that with God's help, you can get over your anger. Study what the Word says about anger and the importance of forgiving those who hurt you, and pray and ask God to give you grace and strength to forgive (see 2 Cor. 12:9).

³¹Then the king stood and tore his clothes and lay on the ground [in mourning]; and all his servants were standing by with their clothes torn.

³²But Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother, responded, "Do not let my lord assume that all the king's sons have been put to death; for only Amnon is dead. This *act of revenge* has been on Absalom's mind since the day Amnon violated his sister Tamar.

³³“So now, do not let my lord the king take the report to heart that all the king’s sons are dead; for Amnon alone is dead.”

³⁴Now Absalom fled. And the young man who kept watch looked up, and behold, many people were coming from the road behind him by the side of the mountain.

³⁵And Jonadab said to the king, “Look, the king’s sons are coming. It has turned out just as your servant said.”

³⁶And when he finished speaking, the king’s sons came, and they raised their voices and wept; and the king and all his servants also wept very bitterly.

³⁷But Absalom fled and went to [his mother’s father] Talmai the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. And David mourned for his son every day.

³⁸So Absalom fled and went to Geshur, and was there for three years.

³⁹And *the heart of* King David longed to go to Absalom; for he was comforted regarding Amnon, since he was dead.

14 NOW JOAB the son of Zeruiah knew that the king’s heart *longed* for Absalom.

²So Joab sent *word* to Tekoa and had a wise woman brought from there and told her, “Please pretend to be a mourner, and put on mourning clothes, and do not anoint yourself with oil, but act like a woman who has for many days been in mourning for the dead.

³“Then go to the king and speak to him in this way.” So Joab told her what to say.

⁴When the woman of Tekoa spoke to the king, she bowed with her face to the ground and lay herself down, and said, “Help, O king.”

⁵The king asked her, “What is the matter?” She said, “Truly I am a widow; my husband is dead.

⁶“Your maidservant had two sons, but the two of them struggled *and* fought in the field. There was no one to separate them, so one struck the other and killed him.

⁷“Now behold, the entire family has risen against your maidservant, and they say, ‘Hand over the one who killed his brother, so that we may put him to death [to pay] for the life of his brother whom he killed and destroy the heir also.’ By doing this they will extinguish my coal that is left, leaving my husband without a name or a remnant (heir) on the face of the earth.”

⁸Then David said to the woman, “Go to your home, and I will give orders concerning you.”

⁹The woman of Tekoa said to the king, “My lord, O king, the guilt is on me and on my father’s house, but the king and his throne are guiltless.”

¹⁰The king said, “If anyone speaks to you [about this matter], bring him to me [for judgment], and he will not touch you again.”

¹¹Then she said, “Please let the king remember the LORD your God, so that the avenger of blood will not continue to destroy, otherwise they will destroy my son.” And David said, “As the LORD lives, not a single hair [from the head] of your son shall fall to the ground.”

¹²Then the woman said, “Please let your maidservant speak

one more word to my lord the king.” He said, “Speak.”

¹³The woman said, “Now why have you planned such a thing against God’s people? For in speaking this word the king is like a guilty man, in that the king does not bring back his banished one.

¹⁴“For we will certainly die and are like water that is spilled on the ground and cannot be gathered up again. Yet God does not [simply] take away life, but devises plans so that the one who is banished is not driven away from Him.

¹⁵“Now I came to speak of this matter to my lord the king because the people have made me afraid. So your maidservant thought, ‘I will just speak to the king; perhaps the king will do what his maidservant requests.

¹⁶‘For the king will hear and save his maidservant from the hand of the man who would destroy me and my son together from the inheritance of God.’

¹⁷“Then your maidservant said, ‘Please let the word of my lord the king be comforting, for my lord the king is as the angel of God to discern good and evil. May the LORD your God be with you.’”

¹⁸Then the king answered and said to the woman, “Do not hide from me anything that I ask you.” And the woman said, “Let my lord the king please speak.”

¹⁹The king said, “Is the hand of Joab with you in all of this?” And the woman answered, “As your soul lives, my lord the king, no one can turn to the right or to the left from anything that my lord the king has said. Indeed, it was your servant Joab who commanded me; he put all these words in the mouth of your maidservant.

²⁰“In order to change the appearance of things [between Absalom and you, his father] your servant Joab did this thing. But my lord has wisdom like the wisdom of the angel of God, to know everything that is in the earth.”

²¹Then the king said to Joab, “Listen, I will most certainly do this thing; now go, bring back the young man Absalom.”

²²Joab bowed his face toward the ground and lay himself down and blessed the king. Then Joab said, “Today your servant knows that I have found favor in your sight, my lord, O king, in that the king has done the request of his servant.”

²³So Joab got up, went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem.

²⁴However, the king said, “Let him go to his own house, and do not let him see my face.” So Absalom went to his own house and did not see the king’s face.

²⁵Now in all Israel there was no man as handsome as Absalom, so highly praised [for that]; from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.

²⁶When he cut the hair of his head (for at the end of each year he cut it, because its weight was heavy on him) he weighed the hair of his head at 200 shekels by the king’s weight.

²⁷To Absalom were born three sons and one daughter whose name was Tamar; she was a beautiful woman.

²⁸Absalom lived two full years in Jerusalem, without seeing the king’s face.

²⁹So Absalom sent for Joab, to send him to the king, but he would not come to him; even when he sent again a second time, he [still] would not come.

³⁰Therefore Absalom said to his servants, “See, Joab’s property is near mine, and he has barley there; go and set it on fire.” So Absalom’s servants set the field on fire.

³¹Then Joab took action and went to Absalom at his house and said to him, “Why did your servants set my field on fire?”

³²Absalom answered Joab, “I sent for you, saying, ‘Come here, so that I may send you to the king to ask, “Why have I come [back] from Geshur? It would be better for me to still be there.”’ Now then, let me see the king’s face, and if there is guilt in me, let him put me to death.”

³³So Joab came to the king and told him. Then David called for Absalom, and he came to the king and bowed his face to the ground before the king; and the king kissed Absalom.

15 AFTER THIS, Absalom provided for himself a chariot and horses, and fifty men as runners before him.

²He would get up early and stand beside the road to the gate [of the city, where court was held]; and when any man who had a dispute came to the king for judgment, Absalom would call to him, “From what city are you?” And he would say, “Your servant is from one of the tribes of Israel.”

³Then Absalom would say to him, “See, your claims are good and right, but there is no man appointed as the king’s agent to listen to you.”

⁴Moreover Absalom would say, “Oh, that I were appointed judge in the land! Then every man who had a dispute could come to me and I would get justice for him.”

⁵And whenever a man approached to bow down before

him, he would put out his hand, take hold of him, and kiss him.

⁶This is how Absalom dealt with everyone in Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

⁷And after four years, Absalom said to the king, “Please let me go and pay my vow which I have made to the LORD at Hebron [my birthplace].

⁸“For your servant made a vow while I lived at Geshur in Aram (Syria), ‘If the LORD will in fact bring me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve the Lord [by offering a sacrifice of thanksgiving].’”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Let God Choose Your Friends

Absalom's treasonous plot to win the hearts of his people and overthrow his father's throne is a powerful reminder that we need to be very careful about the people we allow to influence our lives, whether they are family, friends, or leaders. For more than four years Absalom set himself up as the people's hero and "stole the hearts of the men of Israel" (2 Sam. 15:6). It is a simple biblical principle that "bad company corrupts good morals" (1 Cor. 15:33).

When I was a child, I found that my desire to be accepted by the older neighborhood children led me to be persuaded to start smoking cigarettes, to lie to my parents about things we were doing, and even to steal money. As human beings created for connectedness, we are in danger of making seriously bad decisions in order to feel we belong, but then we end up dealing with the problems that result.

Think of the young girl in college who wants to be accepted into a certain sorority but who finds out the only way they will accept her is if she compromises her moral standards. How will she feel when she is arrested for underage drinking or drug use, neither of which were problems she was even tempted with prior to the persuasions of her "new friends"?

Learn to let God be involved in choosing your friends, and you will have ones who make you a better person.

⁹And [David] the king said to him, “Go in peace.” So he arose and went to Hebron.

¹⁰But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, “As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, you shall say, ‘Absalom is king in Hebron.’”

¹¹Then two hundred men from Jerusalem who were invited [as guests to his sacrificial feast] went with Absalom. They went innocently and knew nothing [about his plan against David].

¹²And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David’s counselor, from his city Giloh, while he was offering sacrifices. And the conspiracy grew strong, for the people with Absalom increased continually.

¹³Then a messenger came to David, saying, “The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom.”

¹⁴David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, “Arise, let us flee, or none of us will escape from Absalom! Go in haste, or he will overtake us quickly and bring disaster on us and strike the city with the edge of the sword.”

¹⁵The king’s servants said to him, “Listen, your servants *are ready to do whatever my lord the king decides.*”

¹⁶So the king left, and all his household with him. But the king left behind ten women *who were* concubines to take care of the house (palace). [2 Sam 12:11; 20:3]

¹⁷The king left, and all the people with him, and they stopped at the last house.

¹⁸All of David’s servants passed on beside him, and all the Cherethites, Pelethites and the Gittites, six hundred men who had come with him from Gath, passed on before the king.

¹⁹Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, “Why should you go with us, too? Go back and stay with the king [of your own country], for you are a foreigner and an exile as well; *return* to your own place.

²⁰“You came *only* yesterday, so should I make you wander with us today while I go where I will? Return and take your brothers back with you also. May lovingkindness and faithfulness be with you.”

²¹But Ittai answered the king, “As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, most certainly wherever my lord the king may be, whether for death or life, there will your servant be also.”

²²So David said to Ittai, “Go on and cross over [the Brook Kidron].” So Ittai the Gittite crossed over with all his men and all the little ones who were with him.

²³While all the country was weeping with a loud voice, all the people crossed over. The king also crossed the Brook Kidron, and all the people went on toward the way of the wilderness [that lies between Jerusalem and the Jordan River].

²⁴Now Zadok also *came*, and all the Levites with him carrying the ark of the covenant of God. And they set down the ark of God, and Abiathar [the priest] came up [and officiated] until all the people had finished passing from the city.

²⁵Then the king told Zadok, “Take the ark of God back to [its rightful place in] the city [of Jerusalem, the capital]. If I find favor in the LORD’s sight, He will bring me back again and let me see both it and His dwelling place (habitation).

²⁶“But if He should say, ‘I have no delight in you,’ then

here I am; let Him do to me what seems good to Him.”

²⁷The king also said to Zadok the priest, “Are you not a seer? Return to the city in peace [you and Abiathar], and your two sons with you, your son Ahimaaz and Jonathan the son of Abiathar.

²⁸“See, I am going to wait at the fords [of the Jordan] in the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me.”

²⁹So Zadok and Abiathar brought the ark of God back to Jerusalem, and they stayed there.

³⁰And David went up the ascent of the *Mount of Olives*, weeping as he went, with his head covered and walking barefoot [in despair]. And all the people who were with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went.?

³¹David was told, “Ahithophel [your counselor] is among the conspirators with Absalom.” David said, “O LORD, I pray You, turn Ahithophel’s counsel into foolishness.”

³²It happened when David came to the summit [of the Mount of Olives], where he worshiped God, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his tunic torn and dust on his head [as if in mourning].

³³David said to him, “If you go on with me, you will be a burden to me.

³⁴“But if you return to the city, and say to Absalom, ‘I will be your servant, O king; as I have been your father’s servant in the past, so I will be your servant now;’ then you can thwart (make useless) the advice of Ahithophel for me.

³⁵“Are not Zadok and Abiathar the priests with you there? So it shall be that every word you hear from the king’s palace, you shall report it to them.

³⁶“Their two sons are there with them, Ahimaaz, Zadok’s son and Jonathan, Abiathar’s son; and by them you shall send to me everything that you hear.”

³⁷So Hushai, David’s friend, returned to the city, and [at about the same time] Absalom came into Jerusalem.

16 WHEN DAVID was a little past the summit [of the Mount of Olives], behold, Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, met him with a team of saddled donkeys, and on them were two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred clusters of raisins, a hundred summer fruits, and a jug of wine.

²The king said to Ziba, “Why do you have these?” Ziba said, “The donkeys are for the king’s household (family) to ride on, the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine is for anyone to drink who becomes weary in the wilderness.”

³Then the king said, “And where is your master’s son [Mephibosheth]?” Ziba said to the king, “Behold, he remains in Jerusalem, for he said, ‘Today the house of Israel will give me back the kingdom of my father.’”

⁴Then the king said to Ziba, “Behold, everything that belonged to Mephibosheth is [now] yours.” Ziba said, “I bow down [in honor and gratitude]; let me find favor in your sight, O my lord the king.”

⁵When King David came to Bahurim, a man named Shimei, the son of Gera, came out from there. He was of the family of Saul’s household and he was cursing continually as he came out.

⁶He threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David; yet all the people and all the warriors *remained* on his right and on his left.

⁷This is what Shimei said as he cursed: “Get out, get out, you man of bloodshed, you worthless *and* useless man!

⁸“The LORD has returned upon you all the bloodshed of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the LORD has given the kingdom into the hands of Absalom your son. And behold, you are *caught* in your own evil, for you are a man of bloodshed!”

⁹Then Abishai [David’s nephew], the son of Zeruiah, said to the king, “Why should this dead dog (despicable person) curse my lord the king? Let me go over and take off his head.”

¹⁰But the king said, “What business is this of yours, O sons of Zeruiah? If Shimei is cursing because the LORD said to him, ‘Curse David,’ then who should say, ‘Why have you done so?’”

¹¹Then David said to Abishai and to all his servants, “Look, my son [Absalom] who came from my own body, is seeking my life; how much more [reason] now [does] this Benjamite [have to curse me]? Let him alone and let him curse, for [it could be that] the LORD has told him [to do it].

¹²“Perhaps the LORD will look on the wrong done to me [by Shimei, if he is acting on his own]; and [in that case perhaps] the Lord will this day return good to me in place of his cursing.”

¹³So David and his men went on the road; and Shimei went along on the hillside close beside David and cursed as he went and threw stones and dust at him.

¹⁴The king and all the people who were with him arrived [at the Jordan River] weary, and he refreshed himself there.

¹⁵Then Absalom and all the people, the men of Israel, entered Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him.

¹⁶Now it happened when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, came to Absalom, Hushai said to him, "*Long live the king! Long live the king!*"

¹⁷Absalom said to Hushai, "Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?"

¹⁸Hushai said to Absalom, "No! For whomever the LORD and this people and all the men of Israel have chosen [as king], I will be his, and I will remain with him.

¹⁹"Besides, whom should I serve? *Should I not serve* in the presence of David's son? As I have served in your father's presence, so I shall serve in your presence."

²⁰Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, "Give *me* your advice. What should we do?"

²¹Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Go in to your father's concubines, whom he has left behind to take care of the house; then all Israel will hear that you have made yourself odious to your father. Then the hands of all who are with you will be strengthened [by your boldness and audacity]."

²²So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof [of the king's palace], and Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel. [2 Sam 12:11, 12]

²³The advice of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, was as if a man had consulted the word of God; that is how all Ahithophel's counsel was *regarded* by both David and Absalom.

17 THEN, AHITHOPHEL said to Absalom, “Please let me choose 12,000 men, and I will set out and pursue David tonight.

²“I will strike while he is weary and exhausted, and terrify him; and all the people with him will flee [in terror]. Then I will attack the king alone,

³and I will bring all the people [who follow David] back to you. The return of everyone depends on the [death of the] man you are seeking; then all the people will be at peace [and accept you as king].”

⁴So the plan pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel.

⁵Nevertheless, Absalom said, “Now call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear what he has to say.”

⁶When Hushai came to Absalom, Absalom said to him, “Ahithophel has advised this [plan of action]. Should we do what he says? If not, you speak [and explain why not].”

⁷So Hushai said to Absalom, “Ahithophel has not given good advice this time.”

⁸And Hushai said, “You know your father and his men, that they are brave men, and they are enraged *and* fierce, like a bear deprived of her cubs in the field. Your father is a [shrewd] man of war, and will not spend the night with the people [knowing that you seek his life].

⁹“Behold, he has hidden himself [even] now in one of the ravines or in another place; and when some of your troops fall at the first attack, whoever hears *about it* will say, ‘There has been a defeat among the people who follow Absalom.’

¹⁰“And even the one who is brave, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will completely lose heart *and* melt away; for all

Israel knows that your father is a mighty man, and that those who are with him are brave men.

¹¹“But I advise that all [the men of] Israel be summoned to you, from Dan [in the north] to Beersheba [in the south], like the sand that is by the sea in abundance, and that you personally go into battle.

¹²“So shall we come upon David in one of the places where he can be found, and we *will fall* on him as the dew falls [unseen and unheard] on the ground; and of him and of all the men who are with him, not even one will be left.

¹³“If he retreats into a city, then all Israel shall bring ropes to that city, and we will drag it into the ravine until not even a pebble [of it] is found there.”

¹⁴Then Absalom and all the men of Israel said, “The advice of Hushai the Archite is better than that of Ahithophel.” For the LORD had ordained to thwart the good advice of Ahithophel, so that the LORD could bring disaster upon Absalom.

¹⁵Then Hushai said to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, “This is the advice that Ahithophel gave to Absalom and the elders of Israel, and this is the advice that I have given.

¹⁶“Now then, send *word* quickly and tell David, ‘Do not spend the night at the fords [on the west side of the Jordan] in the wilderness, but by all means cross over [to the east side of the river], or else the king and all the people with him will be destroyed [if Ahithophel is allowed by Absalom to lead an attack].’”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Blessing Others

At one of the most difficult points in David's life, Barzillai the Gileadite, who "was a very great and wealthy man" (2 Sam. 19:32), gave an abundance of provisions to David and his people (2 Sam. 17:27–29). God blesses us so we can bless others. He wants us to be equipped to help people who are in need, but we cannot do that if all we are experiencing is lack. When we don't have enough to meet our own needs and the needs of our families, it is very difficult to help other people. This is one reason God promises to provide for us and to do so abundantly.

I encourage you to develop the mind-set of a generous giver (see 2 Cor. 9:8). Look for ways to give and for needy people to whom you can give. Study what the Bible says about God's provision, and see yourself as one who meets needs.

¹⁷Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz [the priests' sons] were staying at En-rogel, and a maidservant [appearing to go for water] would go and tell them [what was happening], and they would go [secretly] and inform King David; for they could not [allow themselves to] be seen coming into the city [of Jerusalem].

¹⁸But a boy saw them and told Absalom; so the two of them left quickly and came to the house of a man in Bahurim,

who had a well in his courtyard, and [with his permission] they went down into it.

¹⁹And the woman [of the house] took a covering and spread it over the mouth of the well and scattered grain on it; so nothing was discovered.

²⁰Then Absalom's servants came to the woman at the house and asked, "Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?" And the woman said to them, "They have crossed over the brook." When they searched and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem.

²¹After they left, Jonathan and Ahimaaz came up out of the well and went and informed King David, and said to David, "Arise and cross over the Jordan River quickly, for Ahithophel has advised [an attack] against you."

²²Then David and all the people who were with him departed and crossed over the Jordan. By daybreak, not even one was left who had not crossed the Jordan.

²³Now when Ahithophel saw that his advice had not been followed, he saddled his donkey and set out and went to his home, to his city. Then he put his household in order, and hanged himself. So he died and was buried in the tomb of his father.

²⁴Then David came to Mahanaim. And Absalom crossed over the Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him.

²⁵Absalom put Amasa in command of the army instead of Joab. Now Amasa was the son of a man named Ithra the Israelite, who had married Abigail the daughter of Nahash, [the half sister of David and] the sister of Zeruiah, Joab's mother.

²⁶So Israel and Absalom camped in the land of Gilead.

²⁷When David came to Mahanaim, Shobi the son of Nahash from Rabbah of the Ammonites, and Machir the son of Ammiel from Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim

²⁸brought beds, basins, pottery, wheat, barley, flour, roasted grain, broad beans, lentils, and [other] roasted *grain*,

²⁹honey, cream, sheep, and cheese of the herd, for David and the people who were with him, to eat; for they said, “The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness.”

18 DAVID NUMBERED the men who were with him and set over them commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds.

²Then David sent the army out, a third under the command of Joab, a third under Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab’s brother, and a third under the command of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said to the men, “I myself will certainly go out [to fight] with you.”

³But the men said, “You should not go out [to battle with us]. For if in fact we retreat, they will not care about us; even if half of us die, they will not care about us. But you are worth ten thousand of us. So now it is better that you be *ready* to help us from the city [of Mahanaim].”

⁴Then the king said to them, “I will do whatever seems best to you.” So the king stood beside the gate [of Mahanaim], and all the army went out in groups of hundreds and of thousands.

⁵The king commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, “*Deal* gently with the young man Absalom for my sake.” And all the men heard when the king gave orders to all the

commanders about Absalom.

⁶So the men went out into the field against Israel, and the battle was *fought* in the forest of Ephraim.

⁷The men of Israel [who supported Absalom] were defeated there by the men of David, and a great slaughter took place there that day, 20,000 men.

⁸For the battle there was spread out over the surface of the entire countryside, and the [hazards of the] forest devoured more men that day than did the sword.

⁹Now Absalom met the servants of David. Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a massive tree, and his head was caught in [the thick branches of] the tree; and he was left hanging [in midair] between heaven and earth, while the mule that had been under him kept going.

¹⁰A certain man saw it and informed Joab, saying, "I saw Absalom hanging in a tree."

¹¹Joab said to the man who informed him, "You saw *him*! Why then did you not strike him there to the ground? I would have given you ten *pieces* of silver and a belt."

¹²The man told Joab, "Even if I were to feel the weight of a thousand *pieces* of silver in my hands, I would not put out my hand against the king's son; for we all heard the king command you, Abishai, and Ittai, saying, 'Protect the young man Absalom, for my sake.'

¹³"Otherwise, if I had acted treacherously against his life (for nothing is hidden from the king) you yourself would have taken sides against me."

¹⁴Joab said, "I will not waste time with you." So he took

three spears in his hand and thrust them through the heart of Absalom while he was still alive [and caught] in the midst of the tree.

¹⁵And ten young men, Joab's armor bearers, surrounded and struck Absalom and killed him.

¹⁶Then Joab blew the trumpet [to signal the end of the combat], and the men returned from pursuing Israel, for Joab held them back.

¹⁷They took [down the body of] Absalom and threw him into a deep pit in the forest and set up a huge mound of stones over him. Then all Israel fled, everyone to his own tent.

¹⁸Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up for himself a memorial pillar which is in the King's Valley, for he said, "I have no son to keep my name in remembrance." He named the memorial pillar after himself, and to this day it is called Absalom's Monument.

¹⁹Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, said, "Let me run and bring the king news that the LORD has vindicated him *by rescuing him* from [the power of] his enemies."

²⁰But Joab told him, "You are not the man to carry news [to King David] today, but you shall carry news another day. On this day you shall carry no news, because the king's son is dead."

²¹Then Joab said to the Cushite (Ethiopian), "Go, tell the king what you have seen." And the Cushite bowed to Joab and ran.

²²Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said again to Joab, "But whatever happens, please let me also run after the Cushite." Joab said, "Why should you run, my son, seeing you will have

no messenger's reward for going [because you have only bad news]?"

²³"But whatever happens, Let me run." So Joab said to him, "Run." Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain [of the Jordan River] and outran the Cushite.

²⁴Now David was sitting between the two gates; and the lookout went up to the roof of the gate by the wall, and when he raised his eyes and looked, he saw a man running alone.

²⁵The lookout called *down* and told the king. The king said, "If he is alone, he has good news to tell." And he came nearer and nearer.

²⁶Then the lookout saw another man running, and he called to the gatekeeper and said, "Look, *another* man running alone." The king said, "He also is bringing good news."

²⁷The lookout said, "I think the man in front runs like Ahimaaz the son of Zadok." The king said, "He is a good man and is coming with good news."

²⁸And Ahimaaz called out and said to the king, "All is well." And he bowed before the king with his face to the ground and said, "Blessed be the LORD your God, who has handed over the men who lifted up their hands [to fight] against my lord the king."

²⁹The king asked, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Ahimaaz answered, "When Joab sent the king's servant, and your servant, I saw a great turmoil, but I do not know what *it was about*."

³⁰The king told him, "Step aside; stand here." And he stepped aside and stood still.

³¹Behold, the Cushite (Ethiopian) arrived, and said, "Let my

lord the king receive good news, for the LORD has vindicated you today *by rescuing you* from the hand (power) of all those who stood against you.”

³²The king asked the Cushite, “Is the young man Absalom [my son] safe?” The Cushite replied, “May the enemies of my lord the king, and all those who rise against you to do evil, be [dead] like that young man is.”

³³The king was deeply moved and went to the upper room over the gate and wept [in sorrow]. And this is what he said as he walked: “O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! How I wish that I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!”

19 IT WAS told to Joab, “Behold, the king is weeping and mourning for Absalom.”

²So the victory on that day was turned into mourning for all the people, for the people heard it said on that day, “The king grieves for his son.”

³The people stole into the city [of Mahanaim] that day, as people who are humiliated *and* ashamed steal away when they retreat in battle.

⁴But the king covered his face and cried out with a loud voice, “O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!”

⁵Then Joab came into the house to the king and said, “Today you have put all your servants to shame who this day have saved your life and the lives of your sons and your daughters, and the lives of your wives and concubines.

⁶“For you love those who hate you and hate those who

love you. For you have shown today that commanders and servants are nothing to you; for today I know that if Absalom had lived and all the rest of us had died today, then you would be pleased.

⁷“So now stand up, go out and speak kindly *and* encouragingly to your servants; for I swear by the LORD that if you do not go out, not a man will stay with you tonight. And this will be worse for you than all the evil that has come upon you from your youth until now.”

⁸Then the king stood and sat at the gate [of Mahanaim]. And they told all the people, “The king is sitting at the gate,” and all the people came before the king.

But Israel [Absalom’s troops] had fled, every man to his tent.

⁹All the people were quarreling throughout the tribes of Israel, saying, “The king rescued us from the hands of our enemies, and he saved us from the hands of the Philistines, but now he has fled out of the land from Absalom.

¹⁰“And Absalom, whom we anointed over us, has died in battle. So now, why are you [leaders] doing nothing about bringing back the king?”

¹¹Then King David sent *word* to Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, saying, “Say to the elders of Judah, ‘Why are you the last to bring the king back to his house [in Jerusalem], since the word of all Israel has come to the king, and to his house?’

¹²“You are my brothers (relatives, relations); you are my bone and my flesh. Why then are you the last to bring back the king?”

¹³“Say to Amasa [the commander of Absalom’s troops],

‘Are you not my bone and my flesh? May God do so to me, and more also, if you will not be commander of my army from now on in place of Joab.’”

¹⁴In this way he changed the hearts of all the men of Judah as one man, so they sent *word* to the king, “Return, you and all your servants.”

¹⁵So David returned and came to the Jordan. And [supporters from] Judah came to Gilgal to meet the king, to escort him across the Jordan.

¹⁶Then Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, hurried and came down with the men [from the tribe of] of Judah to meet King David,

¹⁷and a thousand men [from the tribe] of Benjamin with him. And Ziba, the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and twenty servants with him, rushed down to the Jordan before the king.

¹⁸Then they [repeatedly] crossed the ford to bring over the king’s household (family), and to do what pleased him. And Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king as he was about to cross the Jordan,

¹⁹and said to the king, “Let not my lord consider me guilty, nor remember what your servant did wrong on the day my lord the king left Jerusalem, so that the king would take it to heart.

²⁰“For your servant knows that I have sinned; therefore, behold, I have come today, the first of all the house of Joseph to come down to meet my lord the king.”

²¹But Abishai the son of Zeruiah said, “Should not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD’s anointed?”

²²David said, “What business is this of yours, you sons of Zeruah, that you should be an adversary to me today? Should anyone be put to death in Israel today? For do I not know that today I am king over Israel?”

²³Therefore the king said to Shimei, “You shall not be put to death.” And so the king gave him his promise. [1 Kin 2:44–46]

²⁴Then Mephibosheth the [grand]son of Saul came down to meet the king, but he had not cared for his feet, nor trimmed his mustache, nor washed his clothes from the day the king left until the day he returned in peace *and* safety.

²⁵And when he came to Jerusalem to meet the king, the king said to him, “Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?”

²⁶He said, “My lord the king, my servant [Ziba] betrayed me; for I said, ‘Saddle a donkey for me so that I may ride on it and go with the king,’ for your servant is lame [but he took the donkeys and left without me]. [2 Sam 16:1–4]

²⁷“Further, he has slandered your servant to my lord the king; but my lord the king is like the angel of God; so do what is good in your eyes.

²⁸“For were not all of my father’s household (family) nothing but dead men before my lord the king; yet you set your servant among those who ate at your own table. So what right do I still have to cry out anymore to the king [for help]?”

²⁹The king said to him, “Why speak anymore of your affairs? I have said, ‘You and Ziba shall divide the land.’”

³⁰Mephibosheth said to the king, “Let him even take it all, since my lord the king has returned to his own house in safety

and peace.”

³¹Now Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim and went on to the Jordan with the king to escort him over the Jordan.

³²Barzillai was a very old man, eighty years old; and he had provided the king with food while he stayed at Mahanaim, for he was a very great *and* wealthy man.

³³The king said to Barzillai, “Cross over with me and I will provide for you in Jerusalem with me.”

³⁴But Barzillai said to the king, “How much longer have I to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem?”

³⁵“I am this day eighty years old. Can I [be useful to advise you to] discern between good and bad? Can your servant taste what I eat or drink? Can I still hear the voices of singing men and women? Why then should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king?

³⁶“Your servant would merely cross over the Jordan with the king. Why should the king compensate me with this reward?

³⁷“Please let your servant return, so that I may die in my own city [and be buried] by the grave of my father and mother. But here is your servant Chimham [my son]; let him cross over with my lord the king, and do for him what seems good to you.” [1 Kin 2:7]

³⁸The king answered, “Chimham shall cross over with me, and I will do for him what seems good to you; and whatever you ask of me, I will do for you.”

³⁹So all the people crossed over the Jordan. When the king had crossed over, he kissed Barzillai and blessed him, and he

returned to his place.

⁴⁰Then the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him; and all the people of Judah and also half the people of Israel accompanied the king.

⁴¹And all the men of Israel came to the king and said to him, “Why have our brothers (relatives), the men [from the tribe] of Judah, stolen you away and brought the king and his household and all David’s men with him over the Jordan [instead of waiting for us to arrive]?”

⁴²Then all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, “Because the king is a close relative to us. So why then are you angry about this matter? Have we eaten at all at the king’s *expense*? Or has anything been taken for us?”

⁴³Then the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, “We have ten [tribes’] shares in the king, and we have more *claim* on David than you. Why then did you treat us with contempt *and* ignore us [by rushing ahead]? Were we not the first to speak of bringing back our king?” But the words of the men of Judah were harsher than those of the men of Israel.

20 THERE HAPPENED to be there a worthless *and* wicked man named Sheba the son of Bichri, a Benjamite. He blew a trumpet [to call Israel to revolt] and said,

“We have no portion in David
And no inheritance in the son of Jesse,
Every man to his tents, O Israel!”

²So all the men of Israel deserted David and followed Sheba

the son of Bichri; but the men of Judah stayed faithfully with their king, from the Jordan to Jerusalem.

³Then David came to his house (palace) at Jerusalem, and the king took the ten women, his concubines whom he had left to take care of the house, and placed them under guard and provided for them, but did not go in to them. So they were confined, and lived as widows until the day of their death.

⁴Now the king said to Amasa [the commander of his army], “Summon the [fighting] men of Judah to me within three days, and be present here yourself.”

⁵So Amasa went to summon [the fighting men of] Judah, but he delayed longer than the time which David had set for him.

⁶And David said to Abishai [his nephew], “Now Sheba the son of Bichri will do us more harm than Absalom did. Take your lord’s servants and pursue him, so that he does not find fortified cities for himself and escape from our sight.”

⁷So Joab’s men went after him, along with [David’s bodyguards] the Cherethites and Pelethites and all the warriors; they went out from Jerusalem to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri.

⁸When they were at the great stone in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them. Now Joab was wearing his military uniform, and over it he had a belt with a sheathed sword strapped around his hips; and as he went forward, it fell out.

⁹Joab said to Amasa, “Is it going well with you, my brother?” And with his right hand Joab took hold of Amasa by the beard [as if] to kiss him [in greeting].

¹⁰But Amasa [who had replaced Joab as David’s

commander] was off guard *and* not attentive to the sword in Joab's hand. So Joab struck Amasa in the abdomen with the sword, spilling his intestines to the ground. Without another blow Amasa died. Then Joab and Abishai his brother pursued Sheba the son of Bichri.

¹¹Now one of Joab's young men stood by him and said, "Whoever favors Joab and is for David, let him follow Joab!"

¹²But Amasa was wallowing in his blood in the middle of the highway. And when the man saw that all the people who came by stopped [to look], he moved Amasa from the highway into the field and threw a garment over him when he saw that everyone who came by Amasa stopped.

¹³When [the body of] Amasa was removed from the highway, everyone followed after Joab to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri.

¹⁴Now Joab went through all the tribes of Israel to Abel, even Beth-maacah, and all the Berites; and they assembled and also went after Sheba.

¹⁵And the army of Joab came and besieged Sheba in Abel Beth-maacah, and they built up an assault ramp against the city, and it stood against the outer rampart; and all the people who were with Joab were wreaking destruction to make the wall fall.

¹⁶Then a wise woman cried out from the city, "Hear, hear! Tell Joab, 'Come here so that I may speak to you.'"

¹⁷So when he approached her, the woman asked, "Are you Joab?" He answered, "I am." Then she said to him, "Listen to the words of your maidservant." He answered, "I am listening."

¹⁸Then she said, "In the past people used to say, 'They will

certainly ask *advice* at Abel,' and so they settled *the dispute*.

¹⁹“I am one of the peaceable and faithful in Israel. You are seeking to destroy a city, and a mother in Israel. Why would you swallow up (devour) the inheritance of the LORD?”

²⁰Joab answered, “Far be it, far be it from me that I would swallow up or destroy!

²¹“That is not true. But a man of the hill country of Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, has lifted up his hand [in rebellion] against King David. Only hand him over, and I will leave the city.” And the woman said to Joab, “Behold, his head shall be thrown to you over the wall.”

²²Then the woman in her wisdom went to all the people [to inform them of the agreement]. And they beheaded Sheba the son of Bichri and threw his head [down] to Joab. So he blew the trumpet [signaling the end of the attack], and they dispersed from the city, every man to his own tent. And Joab returned to Jerusalem to [David] the king. [Ecc1 9:13–16]

²³Now Joab was [commander] over the entire army of Israel; Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was [commander] over the Cherethites and Pelethites [the king's bodyguards];

²⁴Adoram was over the forced labor; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder;

²⁵Sheva was the scribe; and Zadok and Abiathar were priests;

²⁶also Ira the Jairite was a priest to David.

21 THERE WAS famine in the days of David for three consecutive years; and David sought the presence (face) of

the LORD [asking the reason]. The LORD replied, “It is because of Saul and his bloody house, because he put the Gibeonites to death.”

²So the king called the Gibeonites and spoke to them (now the Gibeonites were not of the sons (descendants) of Israel but of the remnant (survivors) of the Amorites. The Israelites had sworn [an oath] to [spare] them, but Saul in his zeal for the sons of Israel and Judah had sought to strike down the Gibeonites).

³So David said to the Gibeonites, “What should I do for you? How can I make it good so that you will bless the LORD’s inheritance (Israel)?”

⁴The Gibeonites said to him, “We will not accept silver or gold belonging to Saul or his household (descendants); nor is it for us to put any man to death in Israel.” David said, “I will do for you whatever you say.”

⁵So they said to the king, “The man who consumed us and planned to exterminate us from remaining in any territory of Israel,

⁶let seven men [chosen] from his sons (descendants) be given to us and we will hang them before the LORD [that is, put them on display, impaled with broken legs and arms] in Gibeah of Saul, the chosen one of the LORD.” And the king said, “I will give them.”

⁷But the king spared Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, because of the LORD’s oath that was between David and Saul’s son Jonathan.

⁸So the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bore to Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth, and

the five sons of Merab the daughter of Saul, whom she had borne to Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite.

⁹He handed them over to the Gibeonites, and they hanged them on the hill before the LORD, and the seven died together. They were put to death in the first days of the grain harvest, the beginning of the barley harvest [in the spring].

¹⁰Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and spread it out for herself on the rock, from the beginning of harvest [in the spring] until [the autumn] rain fell on them; and she allowed neither the birds of the sky to rest on their bodies by day, nor the beasts of the field [to feed on them] by night.

¹¹David was told what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done.

¹²Then David went and took the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son from the men of Jabesh-gilead, who had stolen them from the open square of Beth-shan, where the Philistines had hanged them on the day when the Philistines had killed Saul in Gilboa.

¹³He brought up the bones of Saul and of Jonathan his son from there, and they gathered the bones of those who had been hanged [with their arms and legs broken].

¹⁴They buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son in the country of Benjamin in Zela, in the tomb of Kish his father; and they did all that the king commanded. After that, God was moved by prayer for the land.

¹⁵Now the Philistines were at war again with Israel. David went down with his servants, and as they fought against the Philistines, David became weary.

¹⁶Then Ishbi-benob, who was among the descendants of

the giant, the weight of whose spear was three hundred *shekels* (six pounds) of bronze, was armed with a new *sword*, and he intended to kill David.

¹⁷But Abishai the son of Zeruiah came to David's aid, and struck and killed the Philistine. Then David's men swore to him, "You shall not go out again with us to battle, so that you do not extinguish the lamp of Israel."

¹⁸After this, there was war again with the Philistines at Gob (Gezer). At that time Sibbecai the Hushathite killed Saph (Sippai), who was among the descendants of the giant.

¹⁹There was war with the Philistines again at Gob, and Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim, a Bethlehemite, killed Goliath the Gittite, whose spear shaft was like a weaver's beam.

²⁰There was war at Gath again, where there was a man of *great* stature who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number; he also was a descendant of the giants.

²¹And when he taunted *and* defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimei, David's brother, killed him.

²²These four [warriors] were descended from the giant in Gath, and they fell by the hands of David and his servants.

22 DAVID SPOKE the words of this song to the LORD when the LORD rescued him from the hands of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.

²He said:

"The LORD is my rock and my fortress [on the mountain] and my rescuer; [1 Sam 23:14, 25, 28]

- ³My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge;
My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and
my refuge,
My Savior—You save me from violence. [Gen 15:1]
- ⁴“I call on the LORD, who is worthy to be praised,
And I am saved from my enemies.
- ⁵“For the waves of death encompassed me;
The torrents of destruction overwhelmed *and* terrified me.
- ⁶“The cords of Sheol surrounded me;
The snares of death confronted me.
- ⁷“In my distress I called upon the LORD;
I cried out to my God,
And from His temple [in the heavens] He heard my voice;
My cry for help *came* into His ears.
- ⁸“Then the earth shook and quaked,
The foundations of the heavens trembled
And were shaken, because He was angry.

Speak God's Word

*I will call upon the Lord, Who
is worthy to be praised, and I
am saved from my enemies.*

| adapted from 2 SAMUEL 22:4 |

- 9“Smoke went up out of His nostrils,
And devouring fire from His mouth;
Coals were kindled by it.
- 10“He bowed the heavens also, and came down
With thick darkness under His feet.
- 11“He rode on a cherub and flew;
He appeared upon the wings of the wind.
- 12“He made darkness canopies around Him,
A mass of waters, thick clouds of the skies.
- 13“Out of the brightness before Him
Coals of fire were set aflame.
- 14“THE LORD thundered from heaven,
And the Most High uttered His voice.
- 15“He sent out arrows and scattered them;
Lightning, and confused them.
- 16“THE channels of the sea appeared,

The foundations of the world were uncovered
At the rebuke of the LORD,
At the blast of the breath of His nostrils.

17“He sent from above, He took me;
He drew me out of great waters.

18“He rescued me from my strong enemy,
From those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me.

19“They came upon me in the day of my calamity,
But the LORD was my support.

20“He also brought me out to an open place;
He rescued me because He delighted in me.

21“*The LORD has dealt with me according to my
righteousness;
According to the cleanness of my hands He has rewarded
me.*

22“*For I have kept the ways of the LORD,
And have not acted wickedly against my God.*

23“*For all His judgments (legal decisions) were before me,
And from His statutes I did not turn aside.*

24“*I was also blameless before Him,
And kept myself from wrongdoing.*

25“*Therefore the LORD has rewarded me according to my
righteousness,
According to my cleanness in His sight.*

26“*With the loving and loyal You show Yourself loving and
loyal,
With the blameless You show Yourself blameless.*

- 27“With the pure You show Yourself pure,
With the perverted You show Yourself astute.
- 28“And You save the afflicted people;
But Your eyes are on the haughty *whom* You abase
(humiliate).
- 29“For You, O LORD, are my lamp;
The LORD illumines *and* dispels my darkness.
- 30“For by You I can run upon a troop;
By my God I can leap over a wall.
- 31“As for God, His way is blameless *and* perfect;
The word of the LORD is tested.
He is a shield to all those who take refuge *and* trust in Him.
- 32“For who is God, besides the LORD?
And who is a rock, besides our God? [1 Sam 2:2]
- 33“God is my strong fortress;
He sets the blameless in His way.
- 34“He makes my feet like the doe’s *feet* [firm and swift];
He sets me [secure and confident] on my high places.
- 35“He trains my hands for war,
So that my arms can bend (pull back) a bow of bronze.
- 36“You have also given me the shield of Your salvation,
And Your help *and* gentleness make me great.
- 37“You enlarge my steps under me,
And my feet have not slipped.
- 38“*I* pursued my enemies and destroyed them,
And I did not turn back until they were consumed
(eliminated).

- 39“*I consumed them and shattered them, so that they did not rise;
They fell under my feet.*
- 40“*For You have surrounded me with strength for the battle;
You have subdued under me those who stood against me.*
- 41“*You have also made my enemies turn their backs to me [in retreat],
And I destroyed those who hated me.*
- 42“*They looked, but there was no savior for them—
Even to the LORD [they looked], but He did not answer them.*
- 43“*Then I beat them as [small as] the dust of the earth;*

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Thank You, Lord, that You surround me with strength for every battle I face. You subdue under me those who stand against me.

I crushed and stamped them as the mire (dirt, mud) of the streets.

44“ You also have rescued me from strife with my [own] people;

You have kept me as the head of the nations.

People whom I have not known served me.

45“ Foreigners pretend obedience to me;

As soon as they hear [me], they obey me.

46“ Foreigners lose heart;

They come trembling out of their strongholds.

47“ The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock,

And exalted be my God, the rock of my salvation.

48“ It is God who executes vengeance for me,

And brings down [and disciplines] the peoples under me,

49 Who also brings me out from my enemies.

You even lift me above those who rise up against me;

You rescue me from the violent man.

50“ For this I will give thanks *and* praise You, O LORD, among the nations;

I will sing praises to Your name.

51“ He is a tower of salvation *and* great deliverance to His king,

And shows lovingkindness to His anointed,

To David and his offspring forever.”

23 NOW THESE are the last words of David.

David the son of Jesse declares,
The man who was raised on high declares,
The anointed of the God of Jacob,
And the sweet psalmist of Israel,
²“The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Rooted in the Rock

Jesus is often referred to as our Rock (see 1 Cor. 10:4), just as David called the Lord “my rock” in 2 Samuel 22:47. The apostle Paul tells us in Colossians 2:7 that we are to be rooted and grounded in Jesus. If we anchor our roots around the Rock of Jesus Christ, we will be strong and secure. But if we get them wrapped around anything or anyone else, we are headed for trouble.

Nothing and no one is going to be as solid and dependable and immovable as Jesus. I want to point people to Jesus Who alone is our living Lord. If they look to me, I will ultimately fail them in some way in my humanness.

As humans, we are always liable to failure. But Jesus Christ isn't. He never fails (see Ps. 111:3). Put your hope wholly and unchangeably in Him—not in man, not in circumstances, not in anything or anyone else.

If you don't put your hope and faith in the Rock of our salvation (see 2 Sam. 22:47), you are headed for disappointment, which leads to discouragement and devastation. We should have so much confidence in God's love for us that no matter what comes against us, we know deep inside that we are more than conquerors.

We need to come to a state of utter bankruptcy in our own ability apart from Christ. Without God, we are helpless; with

And His word was on my tongue.

³“The God of Israel,

The Rock of Israel spoke to me,

‘He who rules over men righteously,

Who rules in the fear of God,

⁴Is like the morning light *when* the sun rises,

A morning without clouds,

When the fresh grass *springs* out of the earth

Through sunshine after rain.’

⁵“Truly is not my house so [blessed] with God?

For He has made an everlasting covenant with me,

Ordered in all things, and secured.

For will He not cause to grow *and* prosper

All my salvation and my every wish?

Will He not make it grow *and* prosper?

⁶“But the wicked *and* worthless are all to be thrown away
like thorns,

Because they cannot be taken with the hand;

⁷“But the man who touches them

Must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear,

And they are utterly burned *and* consumed by fire in their
place.”

⁸These are the names of the mighty men (warriors) whom David had: Josheb-basshebeth, a Tahchemonite, chief of the captains, *also called* Adino the Eznite (spear) because of the eight hundred men killed [by him] at one time. [1 Chr 11:11]

⁹Next to him was Eleazar the son of Dodo the son of Ahohi. He was one of the three mighty men with David when they taunted *and* defied the Philistines assembled there for battle, and the men of Israel had gone.

¹⁰Eleazar stood up and struck down the Philistines until his hand was weary and clung to the sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day; the people returned after him only to take the spoil [of the slain].

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that You
have made an everlasting
covenant with me, ordered in
all things and secured, and
that You cause my salvation
to grow and prosper.*

• adapted from 2 Samuel 23:5

¹¹Next to Eleazar was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. The Philistines were gathered into an army where there was a plot of ground full of lentils, and the people [of

Israel] fled from the Philistines.

¹²But he took his stand in the center of the plot and defended it and struck down the Philistines; and the LORD brought about a great victory.

¹³Then three of the thirty chief men went down and came to David at harvest time in the cave of Adullam, while an army of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of Rephaim.

¹⁴David was then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem.

¹⁵And David had a craving and said, “Oh that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!”

¹⁶So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, and drew water from the well of Bethlehem by the gate, and carried and brought it to David. But he would not drink it, but poured it out [in worship] to the LORD.

¹⁷And he said, “Far be it from me, O LORD, that I should drink this. [Is it not the same as] the blood of the men who went at the risk of their lives?” So he would not drink it. These things the three mighty men did.

¹⁸Now Abishai the brother of Joab the son of Zeruiah was chief of the thirty. He wielded his spear against three hundred men and killed them, and gained a reputation beside the three.

¹⁹He was the most honored of the thirty, so he became their commander; however, he did not attain to the [greatness of the] three.

²⁰Then Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man of Kabzeel, who had done many notable acts, killed two [famous] warriors of Moab. He also went down and killed a lion

in the middle of a pit on a snowy day.

²¹And he killed an Egyptian, an impressive *and* handsome man. The Egyptian had a spear in his hand, but Benaiah went down to him with a club, snatched the spear out of the Egyptian's hand and killed the man with his own spear.

²²These things Benaiah the son of Jehoiada did, and gained a reputation beside the three mighty men.

²³He was honored among the thirty, but he did not attain to the [greatness of the] three. David appointed him over his guard.

²⁴Asahel the brother of Joab was one of the thirty; *then* Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem,

²⁵Shammah of Harod, Elikah of Harod,

²⁶Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikesh of Tekoa,

²⁷Abiezer of Anathoth, Mebunnai the Hushathite,

²⁸Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai of Netophah,

²⁹Heleb the son of Baanah of Netophah, Ittai the son of Ribai of Gibeah of the Benjamites,

³⁰Benaiah of Pirathon, Hiddai of the brooks of Gaash,

³¹Abi-albon the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Barhumite,

³²Eliabba of Shaalbon, the sons of Jashen, Jonathan,

³³Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam the son of Sharar the Ararite,

³⁴Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai the son of Maacah, Eliam the son of Ahithophel of Giloh,

³⁵Hezro (Hezrai) of Carmel, Paarai the Arbite,

³⁶Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite,

³⁷Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai of Beeroth, armor bearer of Joab the son of Zeruiah,

³⁸Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite,

³⁹Uriah the Hittite—thirty-seven in all.

24 NOW AGAIN the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and He incited David against them to say, “Go, count [the people of] Israel and Judah.”

²So the king said to Joab the commander of the army who was with him, “Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan [in the north] to Beersheba [in the south], and conduct a census of the people, so that I may know the number of the people.”

³But Joab said to the king, “May the LORD your God add to the people a hundred times as many as there are, and let the eyes of my lord the king see it; but why does my lord the king want to do this thing?”

⁴Nevertheless, the king’s word prevailed against Joab and the commanders of the army. So they went from the king’s presence to take a census of the people of Israel.

⁵They crossed over the Jordan and camped in Aroer, on the south side of the city which is in the middle of the river valley [of the Amon] toward Gad, and on toward Jazer.

⁶Then they came to Gilead and to the land of Tahtim-hodshi, and they came to Danjaan and around to Sidon,

⁷and they came to the stronghold of Tyre and to all the cities of the Hivites and Canaanites, and they went out to the south of Judah, to Beersheba.

⁸So when they had gone about through all the land [taking the census], they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days.

⁹And Joab gave the sum of the census of the people to the king. In Israel there were 800,000 valiant men who drew the sword, and the men of Judah were 500,000.

¹⁰But David's heart (conscience) troubled him after he had counted the people. David said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O LORD, please take away the sin of Your servant, for I have acted very foolishly."

¹¹When David got up in the morning, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying,

¹²"Go and say to David, 'Thus says the LORD, "I am giving you three *choices*; select one of them for yourself, and I will do it to you.'""

¹³So Gad came to David and told him, and said to him, "Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land? Or will you flee three months before your enemies as they pursue you? Or shall there be three days of pestilence (plague) in your land? Now consider this and decide what answer I shall return to Him who sent me."

¹⁴Then David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Let us fall into the hands of the LORD, for His mercies are great, but do not let me fall into the hands of man."

¹⁵So the LORD sent a pestilence (plague) [lasting three days] upon Israel from the morning until the appointed time, and seventy thousand men of the people from Dan to Beersheba died.

¹⁶When the [avenging] angel stretched out his hand

toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented from the disaster and said to the angel who destroyed the people, “It is enough! Now relax your hand.” And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

¹⁷When David saw the angel who was striking down the people, he spoke to the LORD and said, “Behold, I [alone] am the one who has sinned and done wrong; but these sheep (people of Israel), what have they done [to deserve this]? Please let Your hand be [only] against me and my father’s house (family).”

¹⁸Then Gad [the prophet] came to David that day and said to him, “Go up, set up an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite [where you saw the angel].”

¹⁹So David went up according to Gad’s word, as the LORD commanded.

POWERPOINT

David's "heart (conscience) troubled him" after he sinned (2 Sam. 24:10). A troubled or condemned heart steals one's confidence and is a target for the devil's condemnation. Remember: God *convicts* us of wrongdoing, helping us to repent; He does not *condemn* us, which only makes us feel bad about ourselves. When you feel condemned, recognize that it is from the enemy, repent, and shake it off.



²⁰Araunah looked down and saw the king and his servants crossing over toward him; and he went out and bowed before the king with his face toward the ground.

²¹Araunah said, "Why has my lord the king come to his servant?" And David said, "To buy the threshing floor from you, to build an altar to the LORD, so that the plague may be

held back from the people.”

²²Araunah said to David, “Let my lord the king take and offer up whatever seems good to him. Look, here are oxen for the burnt offering, and threshing sledges and the yokes of the oxen for the wood.

²³“All of this, O king, Araunah gives to the king.” And Araunah said to the king, “May the LORD your God be favorable to you.”

²⁴But the king said to Araunah, “No, but I will certainly buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God which cost me nothing.” So David purchased the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

²⁵David built an altar to the LORD there, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD was moved [to compassion] by [David’s] prayer for the land, and the plague was held back from Israel.

1 Kings

Author: | Unknown

Date: | 600 BC–550
BC

One of the key lessons we learn in 1 Kings is that relationships are powerful and they make a difference in our lives. We see this in the relationship between David and his son Solomon and in the relationship between Elisha, the young prophet, and his mentor, Elijah.

The people with whom we associate influence us in many ways. They may influence how we dress, how we eat or exercise, how we use our resources, or what we do in our free time. They also influence the way we think. As we learn about their ideas and perspectives, we may change our minds about certain things.

As you build close relationships with people, choose friends who love God, who think and speak in agreement with His Word, and who will influence you to think as God would have you think.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM 1 KINGS:

I encourage you to determine today to keep your heart and mind focused on God for the rest of your life, never turning away from Him, as Solomon did in his old age (see 1 Kings 11:4).

Elijah asks the Israelites in 1 Kings 18:21, “How long will you hesitate between two opinions?” This reminds me of James 1:8, which says a double-minded man is “unstable *and* restless in all his ways.” Both passages remind us to be single-minded and focused in our thoughts.

At times, all of us reach a point when we are very tired, as Elijah was (see 1 Kings 19:4). Those times are perfect opportunities for the enemy to take advantage of us. When you are weary, allow yourself the rest you need.

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM 1 KINGS:

Keep the charge of the LORD your God, [that is, fulfill your obligation to] walk in His ways, keep His statutes, His commandments, His precepts, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, so that you may succeed in everything that you do and wherever you turn. | 1 Kings 2:3

So give Your servant an understanding mind and a hearing heart [with which] to judge Your people, so that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge and rule this great people of Yours? | 1 Kings 3:9

Blessed be the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel, in accordance with everything that He promised. Not one word has failed of all His good promise, which He spoke through Moses His servant. | 1 Kings 8:56

THE FIRST BOOK OF THE KINGS

1 NOW KING David was old, advanced in years; they covered him with clothes, but he could not get warm.

²So his servants said to him, "Let a young virgin be found for my lord the king and let her attend him and become his nurse; let her lie against your chest, so that my lord the king may feel warm."

³So they searched for a beautiful girl throughout the territory of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king.

⁴The girl was very beautiful; and she became the king's nurse and served him, but the king was not intimate with her.

⁵Then Adonijah the son of [David's wife] Haggith exalted himself, saying, "I [the eldest living son] will be king." So [following Absalom's example] he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. [2 Sam 15:1]

⁶His father [David] had never rebuked him at any time by asking, "Why have you done this?" Adonijah was also a very handsome man, and he was born after Absalom.

⁷He had conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah [David's half sister] and with Abiathar the priest; and they followed

Adonijah and helped him.

⁸But Zadok the priest, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, Nathan the prophet, Shimei, Rei, and David's most formidable warriors did not side with Adonijah [in his desire to become king].

⁹Adonijah sacrificed sheep and oxen and fattened steers by the Stone of Zoheleth, which is beside [the well] En-rogel; and he invited all his brothers, the king's sons, and all the men of Judah, the king's servants [to this feast]. [2 Sam 15:7–12]

¹⁰But he did not invite Nathan the prophet, Benaiah, the most formidable warriors, or his brother Solomon.

¹¹Then Nathan spoke to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon, "Have you not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith has become king, and David our lord does not know about it?"

¹²"Come now, please let me advise you and save your life and the life of your son Solomon. [2 Sam 12:24, 25]

¹³"Go at once to King David and say to him, 'Did you not, my lord, O king, swear to your maidservant, saying, "Solomon your son shall certainly be king after me, and he shall sit on my throne"? Why then has Adonijah become king?'

¹⁴"Behold, while you are still there speaking with the king, I will come in after you and confirm your words."

¹⁵So Bathsheba went to the king in his bedroom. Now the king was very old *and* weak, and Abishag the Shunammite was attending the king.

¹⁶So Bathsheba bowed down and paid respect to the king. And the king said, "What do you wish?"

¹⁷She said to him, "My lord, you swore by the LORD your God to your maidservant, *saying*, 'Solomon your son shall certainly be king after me and he shall sit on my throne.'

¹⁸“But now, behold, Adonijah is [acting as] king; and now [as things stand], my lord the king, you do not know it.

¹⁹“He has sacrificed oxen and fattened steers and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the king’s sons and Abiathar the priest and Joab the commander of the army [to a feast], but he did not invite your servant Solomon.

²⁰“Now as for you, my lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are on you [waiting for you] to tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him.

²¹“Otherwise it will come about when my lord the king lies down [in death] with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon will be considered political enemies.”

²²While she was still speaking with the king, Nathan the prophet came in.

²³The king was told, “Here is Nathan the prophet.” And when he came before the king, he bowed before the king with his face to the ground.

²⁴Then Nathan said, “My lord the king, have you said, ‘Adonijah shall be king after me, and he shall sit on my throne’?

²⁵“Because he has gone down today [to En-Rogel] and has sacrificed oxen and fattened steers and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the king’s sons, the commanders of the army and Abiathar the priest [to this feast]; and [right now] they are eating and drinking in his presence; and they say, ‘*Long live King Adonijah!*’

²⁶“But he has not invited me, your servant, nor Zadok the priest, nor Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, nor your servant Solomon.

27“If this thing has been done by my lord the king, why have you not shown your servants who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?”

28King David answered, “Call Bathsheba to me.” And she came into the king’s presence and stood before him.

29Then the king swore an oath and said, “As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my soul from all distress,

30even as I swore to you by the LORD, the God of Israel, saying, ‘Solomon your son shall certainly be king after me, and he shall sit on my throne in my place’; I will indeed do so this very day.”

31Bathsheba bowed down with her face to the ground, and laid herself face down before the king and said, “May my lord King David live forever!”

32Then King David said, “Call Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada to me.” And they came before the king.

33The king told them, “Take the servants of your lord with you and have Solomon my son ride on my own mule, and bring him down to [the spring at] Gihon [in the Kidron Valley].

34“Let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there as king over Israel. Then blow the trumpet and say, ‘*Long live King Solomon!*’

35“Then you shall come up [to Jerusalem] after him, and he shall come and sit on my throne and he shall reign *as king* in my place; for I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and Judah.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Expect Joy

When Solomon was anointed to be king over Israel with David's blessing, the people played on flutes and rejoiced "with great joy, so that the earth shook and seemed to burst open with their [joyful] sound" (1 Kin. 1:40). They expected great things to come.

Joy is closely connected to our expectations (what we think and believe). In other words, the more you expect good things to happen to you, the more joy you will have. What are you expecting right now? If you're expecting good, happy things, you will probably get them.

Don't look to the world to form your hopes, dreams, and expectations, because even if you get them, they won't be fulfilling. Look to God, who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above and beyond anything you could possibly imagine (see Eph. 3:20). Expect Him to do great things in your life, not because you deserve it, but because He is good!

³⁶Benaiah [the overseer of the king's bodyguards], the son of Jehoiada answered the king and said, "Amen! (So be it!) May the LORD, the God of my lord the king, say so too.

³⁷"Just as the LORD has been with my lord the king, so may He be with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David!"

³⁸So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the Cherethites, and the Pelethites [the king's bodyguards] went down [from Jerusalem] and had Solomon ride on King David's mule, and brought him to [the spring at] Gihon.

³⁹Zadok the priest took a horn of [olive] oil from the [sacred] tent and anointed Solomon. They blew the trumpet, and all the people said, "*Long live King Solomon!*"

⁴⁰All the people went up after him, and they were playing on flutes and rejoicing with great joy, so that the earth shook *and* seemed to burst open with their [joyful] sound.

⁴¹Now Adonijah and all the guests who were with him heard it as they finished eating. When Joab heard the trumpet sound, he said, "Why is the city in such an uproar?"

⁴²While he was still speaking, behold, Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest arrived. And Adonijah said, "Come in, for you are a valiant *and* trustworthy man and you bring good news." [2 Sam 17:17–21]

⁴³But Jonathan replied to Adonijah, "No, *on the contrary*, our lord King David has made Solomon king!

⁴⁴"The king has sent him with Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the Cherethites, and the Pelethites; and they have had him ride on the king's [own royal] mule.

⁴⁵"Also, Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king in Gihon, and they have come up from there celebrating, so the city is in an uproar. This is the noise which you have heard.

⁴⁶"Besides, Solomon has taken his seat on the throne of

the kingdom.

⁴⁷“Moreover, the king’s servants came to bless (congratulate) our lord King David, saying, ‘May your God make the name of Solomon better (more famous) than your name and make his throne greater than your throne.’ And the king bowed himself [before God] upon the bed.

⁴⁸“The king has also said this: ‘Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who has granted one [of my descendants] to sit on my throne today and *allowed* my eyes to see it.’”

⁴⁹Then all Adonijah’s guests were terrified [of being branded as traitors] and stood up *and* left the feast, and each one went on his way.

⁵⁰And Adonijah feared Solomon, and he got up and went [to the tabernacle on Mt. Zion] and took hold of the horns of the altar [seeking asylum].

⁵¹Now Solomon was told, “Behold, Adonijah is afraid of King Solomon, and behold, he has grasped the horns of the altar [seeking God’s protection], saying, ‘King Solomon must swear to me today that he will not kill his servant with the sword.’”

⁵²Solomon said, “If he [proves he] is a worthy man, not *even* one of his hairs shall fall to the ground; but if wickedness is found in him, he shall die.”

⁵³So King Solomon sent [soldiers], and they brought Adonijah down from the altar [that was in front of the tabernacle]. And he came and bowed down to King Solomon, and Solomon said to him, “Go to your house.”

2 WHEN DAVID'S time to die approached, he gave instructions to Solomon his son, saying,

²“I am going the way of all the earth [as dust to dust]. Be strong and prove yourself a man.

³Keep the charge of the LORD your God, [that is, fulfill your obligation to] walk in His ways, keep His statutes, His commandments, His precepts, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, so that you may succeed in everything that you do and wherever you turn,

⁴so that the LORD may fulfill His promise concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons are careful regarding their way [of life], to walk before Me in truth with all their heart *and* mind and with all their soul, you shall not fail to have a man (descendant) on the throne of Israel.’

⁵“Now you also know what Joab the son of Zeruiah [my sister] did to me, and what he did to the two commanders of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner and to Amasa the son of Jether, [both of] whom he murdered; avenging the blood of war in [a time of] peace. And he put the [innocent] blood of war [of Abner and Amasa] on his belt that was around his waist, and on his sandals on his feet.

⁶“So act in accordance with your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to Sheol (the place of the dead) in peace.

⁷“But be gracious *and* kind to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who [have the honor to] eat at your table; for they met me [with kindness] when I fled from your brother Absalom. [2 Sam 17:27–29]

⁸“And look, you have with you Shimei the son of Gera, the

Benjamite of Bahurim; he is the one who cursed me with a sinister curse the day I went to Mahanaim. But he came down to meet me at the Jordan [on my return], and I swore to him by the LORD, saying, ‘I will not put you to death with the sword.’

⁹“But now do not let him go unpunished, for you are a wise man; and you will know what to do to him, and you will bring his gray head down to Sheol [covered] with blood.”

¹⁰So David lay down with his fathers [in death] and was buried in the City of David.

¹¹The time that David reigned over Israel was forty years: he reigned seven years in Hebron and thirty-three years in Jerusalem.

¹²Then Solomon sat on the throne of David his father, and his kingdom was firmly established.

¹³Now Adonijah the son of [David and] Haggith came to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon. She said, “Do you come in peace?” And he said, “In peace.”

¹⁴Then he said, “I have something *to say* to you.” And she said, “Speak.”

¹⁵So he said, “You know that the kingdom belonged to me [as the eldest living son] and all Israel looked to me *and* expected me to be king. However, the kingdom has passed [from me] and became my brother’s, for it was his from the LORD.

¹⁶“So now I am making one request of you; do not refuse me.” And she said to him, “Speak.”

¹⁷He said, “Please speak to King Solomon, for he will not refuse you; *ask* that he may give me Abishag the Shunammite as a wife.” [1 Kin 1:1–4]

¹⁸Bathsheba replied, “Very well; I will speak to the king for you.”

¹⁹So Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak to him for Adonijah. And the king rose to meet her, bowed before her, and sat down on his throne; then he had a throne set for her, the king’s mother, and she sat on his right.

²⁰Then she said, “I am making one small request of you; do not refuse me.” And the king said to her, “Ask, my mother, for I will not refuse you.”

²¹So she said, “Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to your brother Adonijah as a wife.”

²²King Solomon answered and said to his mother, “And why are you asking for Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask the kingdom for him also—since he is my older brother—[ask it] for him and for Abiathar the priest and Joab the son of Zeruiah [his supporters]!”

²³Then King Solomon swore by the LORD, saying, “May God do the same to me, and more also, if Adonijah has not requested this [deplorable] thing against his own life.

²⁴“So now, as the LORD lives, who has established me and set me on the throne of David my father, and who has made me a house as He promised, Adonijah shall indeed be put to death today.”

²⁵So King Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and he struck Adonijah and he died.

²⁶Then the king said to Abiathar the priest, “Go to Anathoth to your own fields, for you certainly deserve to die; but I will not put you to death this day, because you carried the ark of the Lord GOD before my father David, and you suffered

everything that my father endured.”

²⁷So Solomon dismissed Abiathar [a descendant of Eli] from being priest to the LORD, fulfilling the word of the LORD, which He had spoken concerning the house (descendants) of Eli in Shiloh. [1 Sam 2:27–36]

²⁸Now the news reached Joab, for Joab had supported *and* followed Adonijah, although he had not followed Absalom. So Joab fled to the [sacred] tent of the LORD and took hold of the horns of the altar [to seek asylum].

²⁹King Solomon was told that Joab had fled to the tent of the LORD and was at that moment beside the altar. Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, “Go, strike him down.”

³⁰So Benaiah came to the tent of the LORD and told Joab, “This is what the king commands, ‘Come out *of there*.’” But Joab said, “No, for I will die here.” Then Benaiah brought word to the king again, saying, “This is what Joab said, and this is how he answered me.”

³¹The king said to him, “Do as he has said. Strike him down and bury him, so that you may remove from me and from my father’s house the innocent blood which Joab shed.

³²“The LORD will return his bloody deeds upon his own head, because he struck down two men more righteous and honorable than he and killed them with the sword, without my father David knowing: Abner the son of Ner, commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, commander of the army of Judah.

³³“So shall their blood return on the head of Joab and the heads of his descendants forever. But for David, his

descendants, his house, and his throne, may there be peace from the LORD forever.”

³⁴So Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up [to the tabernacle] and struck and killed Joab, and he was buried at his own house in the wilderness [of Judah].

³⁵The king appointed Benaiah the son of Jehoiada over the army in Joab’s place, and appointed Zadok the priest in place of Abiathar.

³⁶Now the king sent *word* and called for Shimei and said to him, “Build yourself a house in Jerusalem and live there. Do not go from there to any other place.

³⁷“For on the day you leave and cross over the Brook Kidron, know for certain that you shall surely die; your blood shall be on your own head.”

³⁸Shimei said to the king, “The word (ruling) is good. As my lord the king has said, so will your servant do.” So Shimei lived in Jerusalem for many days.

³⁹But it happened after three years, that two of Shimei’s servants ran away to Achish the son of Maacah, the king of Gath. And Shimei was told, “Behold, your [runaway] servants are in Gath.”

⁴⁰So Shimei arose, saddled his donkey, and went to Gath to [King] Achish to look for his servants. And Shimei went and brought them *back* from Gath.

⁴¹Now Solomon was told that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath, and had returned.

⁴²So the king sent *word* and called for Shimei and said to him, “Did I not make you swear by the LORD and solemnly warn you, saying, ‘Know for certain that on the day you leave

[Jerusalem] and go anywhere, you shall surely die’? And you said to me, ‘The word (ruling) I have heard is good.’

⁴³“Why then have you not kept the oath of the LORD, and the command which I gave you?”

⁴⁴The king also said to Shimei, “You are aware in your own heart of all the evil you did to my father David; so the LORD shall return your evil on your own head.

⁴⁵“But King Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the LORD forever.”

⁴⁶So the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and he went out and struck down Shimei, and he died.

So the kingdom was established in the hands of Solomon.

3 NOW SOLOMON became a son-in-law to Pharaoh king of Egypt [and formed an alliance] by taking Pharaoh’s daughter [in marriage]. He brought her to the City of David [where she remained temporarily] until he had finished building his own house (palace) and the house of the LORD and the wall around Jerusalem.

²But [in the meantime] the people were still sacrificing [to God] on the high places (hilltops) [as the pagans did to their idols], for there was no [permanent] house yet built for the Name of the LORD.

³Now Solomon loved the LORD, walking [at first] in the statutes of David his father, except [for the fact that] he sacrificed and burned incense in the high places [ignoring the law that required all sacrifices to be offered at the tabernacle]. [Lev 17:3, 4]

⁴The king went to Gibeon [near Jerusalem, where the tabernacle and the bronze altar stood] to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place. Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.

⁵In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night; and God said, “Ask [Me] what I shall give you.”

⁶Then Solomon said, “You have shown Your servant David my father great lovingkindness, because he walked before You in faithfulness and righteousness and with uprightness of heart toward You; and You have kept for him this great lovingkindness, in that You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is today.

⁷“So now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king in place of David my father; and as for me, I am but a little boy [in wisdom and experience]; I do not know how to go out or come in [that is, how to conduct business as a king].

⁸“Your servant is among Your people whom You have chosen, a great people who are too many to be numbered or counted.

⁹“So give Your servant an understanding mind *and* a hearing heart [with which] to judge Your people, so that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge *and* rule this great people of Yours?” [James 1:5]

¹⁰Now it pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing.

¹¹God said to him, “Because you have asked this and have not asked for yourself a long life nor for wealth, nor for the lives of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to recognize justice,

¹²behold, I have done as you asked. I have given you a wise and discerning heart (mind), so that no one before you was your equal, nor shall anyone equal to you arise after you.

¹³“I have also given you what you have not asked, both wealth and honor, so that there will not be anyone equal to you among the kings, for all your days.

¹⁴“If you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and My commandments, as your father David did, then I will lengthen your days.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Seek Understanding

When the Lord said to Solomon in a dream, “Ask [Me] what I shall give you” (1 Kin. 3:5), Solomon asked for understanding (1 Kin. 3:9). We also need to seek understanding—to understand God’s Word and will, to understand ourselves, and to understand other people (see 1 Kin. 3:5). Understanding helps us grow spiritually and is one of the most positive characteristics we can possess (see Prov. 2:1–5).

One way we gain compassion and learn to understand what people are going through is by going through the same situation, or something similar, ourselves. It is amazing how caring and compassionate we are when we have experienced a few problems of our own, and how flippant and judgmental we can be if we have not encountered challenges or difficulties. We gain understanding by seeking God, by receiving His words, and by what the Bible calls sanctified experiences (see Ps. 119:7 AMP Classic).

A “sanctified experience” would be something we go through that God uses for our benefit and/or spiritual growth. We may not enjoy the process while we are going through it, but later on we realize that God worked good out of it, and the thing we thought was hurting us, actually ended up helping us.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*I pray, Lord, that You would
give me an understanding
mind and a hearing heart
that I may discern between
good and evil.*

• adapted from 1 Kings 3:9

¹⁵Then Solomon awoke, and he realized that it was a dream. He came [back] to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; he offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and he prepared a feast for all his servants. [2 Sam 6:17]

¹⁶Then two women who were prostitutes came to the king and stood before him.

¹⁷And the one woman said, “O my lord, this woman and I live in the same house; and I gave birth to a child while she was in the house.

¹⁸“And on the third day after I gave birth, this woman also gave birth. And we were [alone] together; no one else was with us in the house, just we two.

¹⁹“Now this woman’s son died during the night, because she lay on him [and smothered him].

²⁰“So she got up in the middle of the night and took my son from [his place] beside me while your maidservant was asleep, and laid him on her bosom, and laid her dead son on my bosom.

²¹“When I got up in the morning to nurse my son, behold, he was dead. But when I examined him carefully in the morning, behold, it was not my son, *the one* whom I had borne.”

²²Then the other woman said, “No! For my son is the one who is living, and your son is the dead one.” But the first woman said, “No! For your son is the dead one, and my son is the living one.” [This is how] they were speaking before the king.

²³Then the king said, “This woman says, ‘This is my son, the one who is alive, and your son is the dead one’; and the other woman says, ‘No! For your son is the dead one, and my son is the one who is alive.’”

²⁴Then the king said, “Bring me a sword.” So they brought a sword before the king.

²⁵Then the king said, “Cut the living child in two, and give half to the one [woman] and half to the other.”

²⁶Then the woman whose child was the living one spoke to the king, for she was deeply moved over her son, “O my lord, give her the living child, and by no means kill him.” But the other said, “He shall be neither mine nor yours; cut *him!*”

²⁷Then the king said, “Give the first woman [who is pleading for his life] the living child, and by no means kill him. She is his mother.”

²⁸When all [the people of] Israel heard about the judgment which the king had made, they [were in awe and reverently] feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was within him to administer justice.

4 KING SOLOMON was king over all [the people of] Israel.

²These were his [chief] officials: Azariah the son of Zadok was the *high* priest;

³Elihoreph and Ahijah the sons of Shisha, were scribes; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was the recorder [of important events];

⁴Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was in command of the army; Zadok and Abiathar were priests;

⁵Azariah the son of Nathan was in charge of the deputies; Zabud the son of Nathan was priest and was the king's friend [and trusted advisor];

⁶Ahishar was in charge of the household (palace); and Adoniram the son of Abda was in charge of the forced labor.

⁷Solomon had twelve deputies over all Israel, who secured provisions for the king and his household; each man had to provide for a month in the year.

⁸These were their names: Ben-hur, in the hill country of [the tribe of] Ephraim;

⁹Ben-deker in Makaz and Shaalbim and Beth-shemesh and Elon-beth-hanan;

¹⁰Ben-hesed, in Arubboth (to him belonged Socoh and all the land of Hepher);

¹¹Ben-abinadab, in all the hills of Dor (Taphath, Solomon's daughter, was his wife);

¹²Baana the son of Ahilud, in Taanach, Megiddo, and all Beth-shean which is beside Zarethan below Jezreel, from Beth-shean to Abel-meholah as far as beyond Jokmeam;

¹³Ben-geber, in Ramoth-gilead (the villages of Jair the son of Manasseh, which are in Gilead belonged to him, also the region of Argob, which is in Bashan, sixty great cities with walls and bronze bars);

¹⁴Ahinadab the son of Iddo, in Mahanaim;

¹⁵Ahimaaz, in [the tribe of] Naphtali (he also married Basemath, Solomon's daughter);

¹⁶Baana the son of Hushai, in [the tribe of] Asher and Bealoth;

¹⁷Jehoshaphat the son of Paruah, in [the tribe of] Issachar;

¹⁸Shimei the son of Ela, in [the tribe of] Benjamin;

¹⁹Geber the son of Uri, in the land of Gilead, the country of Sihon king of the Amorites and of Og king of Bashan; and *he was* the only officer who was in the land.

²⁰[The people of] Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand that is in abundance by the sea; they were eating and drinking and rejoicing.

²¹Now Solomon reigned over all the kingdoms from the [Euphrates] River to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt; they brought tribute (money) and served Solomon all the days of his life.

²²Solomon's food [for the royal household] for one day was thirty kors of finely milled flour, sixty kors of wheat flour,

²³ten fat oxen, twenty pasture-fed oxen, a hundred sheep not counting fallow deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fattened fowl.

²⁴For he was ruling over everything west of the [Euphrates] River, from Tiphseh to Gaza, over all the kings west of the [Euphrates] River; and he had peace on all sides around him.

²⁵Judah and Israel lived in security, every man under his vine and fig tree [in peace and prosperity], from Dan [in the north] to Beersheba [in the south], during all the days of Solomon. [Mic 4:3, 4]

²⁶Solomon also had 40,000 stalls of horses for his chariots, and 12,000 horsemen.

²⁷Those deputies provided food for King Solomon and for all [the staff] who came to King Solomon's table, each in his month; they let nothing be lacking.

²⁸They also brought the barley and straw for the horses and swift steeds (warhorses, chargers) to the place where it was needed, each man according to his assignment.

²⁹Now God gave Solomon [exceptional] wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand of the seashore.

³⁰Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt.

POWERPOINT

One of the gifts God gave to Solomon was “very great discernment” (1 Kin. 4:29). Some people think they have discernment when they may really just be suspicious. There is a true gift of the Spirit called the discerning of spirits (see 1 Cor. 12:10). This gift enables a believer to discern between good and evil. Suspicion comes out of the unrenewed mind; discernment comes out of the renewed spirit. True spiritual discernment will provoke prayer, not gossip that only spreads and compounds the problem. Let me encourage you to ask God to give you great discernment. If we pay attention to discernment, it will help us to avoid problems the enemy has planned for us.



³¹For he was wiser than all [other] men, [wiser] than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol. His fame was *known* in all the surrounding nations.

³²He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005.

³³He spoke of trees, from the cedar which is in Lebanon to the hyssop [vine] that grows on the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and fish.

³⁴People came from all the peoples (nations) to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.

5 HIRAM KING of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon when he heard that they had anointed him king in place of his father, for Hiram had always been a friend of David.

²Then Solomon sent *word* to Hiram, saying,

³“You know that David my father could not build a house (temple) for the Name (Presence) of the LORD his God because of the wars which surrounded him, until the LORD put his enemies under his feet. [2 Sam 7:4ff; 1 Chr 22:8]

⁴“But now that the LORD my God has given me rest [from war] on every side, there is neither adversary nor misfortune [confronting me].

⁵“Behold, I intend to build a house (temple) to the Name of the LORD my God, just as the LORD said to my father David: ‘Your son whom I will put on your throne in your place shall build the house for My Name *and* Presence.’

⁶“So now, command that they cut cedar trees from Lebanon for me, and my servants will join your servants, and I will give you whatever wages you set for your servants. For you know that there is no one among us who knows how to cut timber like the men of Sidon.”

⁷When Hiram heard the words of Solomon, he rejoiced greatly and said, “Blessed be the LORD this day, who has given David a wise son [to be king] over this great people.”

⁸So Hiram sent *word* to Solomon, saying, “I have heard *the message* which you sent to me; I will do everything you wish concerning the cedar and cypress timber.

⁹“My servants will bring the logs down from Lebanon to the [Mediterranean] sea, and I will have them made into rafts *to go* by sea to the place (port) that you direct me; then I will have them broken up there, and you shall carry *them* away. Then you shall return the favor by providing food for my household.”

¹⁰So Hiram gave Solomon all the cedar and cypress timber he desired,

¹¹and Solomon gave Hiram 20,000 kors of wheat as food for his household, and 20 kors of pure [olive] oil. Solomon gave all these to Hiram each year.

¹²The LORD gave Solomon wisdom, just as He promised him; and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a treaty.

¹³King Solomon levied forced laborers from all Israel; and the forced laborers numbered 30,000 men.

¹⁴He sent them to Lebanon, 10,000 a month in shifts; one month they were in Lebanon and two months at home.

Adoniram was in charge of the forced laborers.

POWERPOINT

Solomon asked God for wisdom, and God gave it to him. It is hard to succeed at anything if we are not wise.

Every person has gifts, but many people don't operate in wisdom or develop good character because they do not allow God to do the things He needs to do in their lives. As believers in Jesus Christ, His wisdom is in us, and we need to receive it and allow Him to work in our lives in ways that will help us develop and learn how to use it.



¹⁵Solomon had 70,000 burden bearers (transporters) and 80,000 stonemasons in the hill country [of Judah],

¹⁶besides Solomon's 3,300 chief deputies who were in charge of the project and who were in charge of the people

doing the work.

¹⁷The king gave orders, and they quarried great stones, valuable stones, to lay the foundation of the house (temple) with cut stones.

¹⁸So Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders and the men of Gebal cut *and* chiseled *the stones*, and prepared the timber and the stones to build the house (temple).

6 NOW IT came about in the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv (April-May) which is the second month, that he began to build the Lord's house (temple).

²The length of the house which King Solomon built for the LORD was sixty cubits (90 ft.), its width twenty (30 ft.), and its height thirty cubits (45 ft.).

³The porch in front of the main room of the house (temple) was twenty cubits long, corresponding to the width of the house, and its depth in front of the house was ten cubits.

⁴He also made framed (artistic) window openings for the house.

⁵Against the wall of the house he built extensions around the walls of the house, around both the main room (Holy Place) and the Holy of Holies; and he made side chambers all around.

⁶The lowest story was five cubits wide, the middle was six cubits wide, and the third was seven cubits wide; for he made offsets (niches) *in the walls* all around on the outside of the house so that *the supporting beams* would not be inserted into

the walls of the house.

⁷While it was being built, the house was built of stone prepared *and* finished (precut) at the quarry, and no hammer, axe, or iron tool of any kind was heard in the house while it was under construction.

⁸The entrance to the lowest side chamber was on the right [or south] side of the house; and they would go up winding stairs to the middle [level], and from the middle to the third.

⁹So Solomon built the house (temple) and finished it, and roofed the house with beams and boards of cedar.

¹⁰Then he built the extensions [of rooms] against the entire house, each [story] five cubits high; and they were attached to the house with timbers of cedar.

¹¹Now the word of the LORD came to Solomon, saying,

¹²“*Concerning* this house which you are building, if you will walk in My statutes and execute My precepts and keep all My commandments by walking in them, then I will carry out My word (promises) with you which I made to David your father.

¹³“I will dwell among the sons (descendants) of Israel, and will not abandon My people Israel.”

¹⁴So Solomon built the house (temple) and finished it.

¹⁵He built the walls of the interior of the house [that is, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies] with boards of cedar, from the floor of the house to the rafters of the ceiling. He overlaid the interior with wood, and he overlaid the floor of the house with boards of cypress.

¹⁶He built twenty cubits on the rear of the house with boards of cedar from the floor to the ceiling; he built its interior

as the [inner] sanctuary, the Holy of Holies.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Getting Off the Emotional Roller Coaster

The Lord told Solomon that if he walked in His statutes, not his feelings, “I will carry out My word (promises) with you” (1 Kin. 6:12). Feelings can change from hour to hour, and even from moment to moment. Not only do they change, they can deceive. For example, you may feel you are not unappreciated or are being mistreated, but that doesn’t mean those things are true. If you are having a “touchy” day, in reality people may not be treating you any differently than they always do.

Instead of riding the emotional roller coaster, which only exhausts us, we need to become stable, solid, steadfast, persevering, determined people. Renewing your mind to think and believe that you can be emotionally stable and content with God’s help will help you get started. We will not enjoy God’s promises until we believe them for ourselves. In the world, we see and then we believe, but in God’s kingdom, we believe and then we see (see 2 Cor. 5:7).

¹⁷The [rest of the] house, that is, the temple in front of *the Holy of Holies*, was forty cubits long.

¹⁸The cedar on the house within had wood carvings *in the shape* of gourds and open flowers. Everything was cedar; no stone was visible.

¹⁹Then he prepared the Holy of Holies within the house in

order to put the ark of the covenant of the LORD there.

²⁰The Holy of Holies was twenty cubits in length, twenty cubits in width, and twenty cubits in height (a cube), and he overlaid it with pure gold. He also overlaid the cedar altar [with gold].

²¹Solomon overlaid the interior of the house with pure gold, and he drew chains of gold across the front of the Holy of Holies (inner sanctuary), and he overlaid it with gold.

²²Then he overlaid the entire house with gold, until the whole house was finished. He also overlaid the entire [incense] altar which was by the Holy of Holies with gold.

²³Within the Holy of Holies he made two cherubim (sculptured figures) of olive wood, each ten cubits high.

²⁴One wing of the cherub was five cubits long, and the other wing was *also* five cubits long; it was ten cubits from the tip of one wing to the tip of the other.

²⁵The [wingspan of the] other cherub was also ten cubits. The measurements and cut (shape) of the two cherubim were the same;

²⁶the height of the one cherub was ten cubits, as was the other.

²⁷He put the cherubim [above the ark] inside the innermost room of the house, and their wings were spread out so that the wing of the one touched one wall, and the wing of the other cherub was touching the other wall; and their inner wings were touching each other in the middle of the house.

²⁸Solomon also overlaid the cherubim with gold.

²⁹He carved all the walls of the house all around with carved engravings of cherubim, palm-shaped decorations, and

open flowers, [both] the inner and the outer *sanctuaries*.

³⁰He overlaid the floor of the house with gold, [both] the inner and outer *sanctuaries*.

³¹For the entrance of the Holy of Holies he made two [folding] doors of olive wood, the lintel (header above the door) and five-sided doorposts (frames).

³²So *he made* two doors of olive wood, and he carved on them carvings of cherubim, palm-shaped decorations, and open flowers; and overlaid them with gold; and he hammered out overlays of gold on the cherubim and palm decorations.

³³Also he made for the entrance of the [outer] sanctuary (the Holy Place) four-sided doorposts (frames) of olive wood

³⁴and two doors of cypress wood; the two leaves of the one door turned on pivots *and* were folding, and the two leaves of the other door also turned on pivots.

³⁵He carved cherubim, palm-shaped decorations, and open flowers *on the doors*, and overlaid them with gold evenly applied on the carved work.

³⁶He built the inner courtyard with three rows of cut stone and a row of cedar beams.

³⁷In the fourth year [of King Solomon's reign] the foundation of the LORD's house was laid, in the [second] month, Ziv (April-May).

³⁸In the eleventh year [of King Solomon's reign] in the month of Bul (October-November), that is, the eighth month, the house was finished throughout all its parts and in accordance with all its specifications. So he built it in seven years.

1 NOW SOLOMON built his own house (palace) in thirteen years, and he finished all of his house [in that time].

²He also built the House of the Forest of Lebanon; its length was a hundred cubits (150 ft.), its width fifty cubits (75 ft.), and its height thirty cubits (45 ft.), upon four rows of cedar pillars, with cedar beams upon the pillars.

³And it was covered with cedar [as a roof] on the supporting beams that were upon the forty-five pillars, fifteen in each row.

⁴*There were artistic window frames* in three rows, and window was opposite window in three tiers.

⁵All the doorways and doorposts [and windows] had squared [artistic] frames, and window was opposite window in three tiers.

⁶He also made the Hall of Pillars; its length was fifty cubits (75 ft.) and its width thirty cubits (45 ft.). There was a porch in front, and pillars and a threshold in front of them.

⁷He made the hall for the throne where he was to judge, the Hall of Judgment; it was paneled with cedar from [one] floor to [another] floor.

⁸His house where he was to live, the other courtyard behind the hall, was of similar workmanship. Solomon also made a house like this hall for Pharaoh's daughter, whom he had married.

⁹All these were of expensive stones, of stone cut according to measure, sawed with saws, inside and outside; even from the foundation to the coping, and from the outside to the great courtyard.

¹⁰The foundation was of expensive stones, large stones, stones of ten cubits and stones of eight cubits.

¹¹And above [the foundation] were expensive stones, stones cut according to measure, and cedar.

¹²So the great courtyard all around had three rows of cut stone and a row of cedar beams like the inner courtyard of the house of the LORD, and the porch of the house.

¹³Now King Solomon sent *word* and brought Hiram [a skilled craftsman] from Tyre.

¹⁴He was the son of a widow from the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a craftsman in bronze. Hiram was filled with wisdom, understanding, and skill for doing any [kind of] work in bronze. So he came to King Solomon and did all his [bronze] work.

¹⁵He cast the two pillars of bronze; the one pillar was eighteen cubits high, and a [measuring] line of twelve cubits measured the circumference of both.

¹⁶He also made two capitals (crowns) of cast bronze to put on the tops of the pillars; the height of one capital was five cubits, and the height of the other capital was five cubits.

¹⁷*There were* nets of network (lattice-work) and twisted threads (wreaths) of chainwork for the capitals which were on the tops of the pillars, seven for one capital and seven for the other.

¹⁸So Hiram made the pillars [in this manner], and two rows around on the one network to cover the capitals which were on the top of the pomegranates; and he did the same for the other capital.

¹⁹The capitals which were upon the top of the pillars in the

porch were of lily work (design), four cubits.

²⁰The capitals were on the two pillars and also above and close to the rounded projection which was beside the network. There were two hundred pomegranates in rows around both capitals.

²¹Hiram set up the pillars at the porch of the temple; he set up the right pillar and named it Jachin (may he establish), and he set up the left pillar and named it Boaz (in it is strength).

²²On the tops of the pillars was lily work (design). So the work of the pillars was finished.

²³Now he made the Sea (basin) of cast *metal*, ten cubits from brim to brim, circular in form, five cubits high and thirty cubits in circumference. [Ex 30:17–21; 2 Chr 4:6]

²⁴Under its brim were gourds encircling it ten to a cubit, completely surrounding the Sea; the gourds were in two rows, cast in one piece with it.

²⁵It stood on twelve oxen, three facing north, three west, three south, and three east; the Sea *was set* on top of them, and all their rear parts *pointed* inward.

²⁶It was a hand width thick, and its brim was made like the brim of a cup, like a lily blossom. It held two thousand baths.

²⁷Then Hiram made ten bronze stands [for smaller basins]; the length of each stand was four cubits, its width was four cubits and its height was three cubits.

²⁸This was the design of the stands: they had borders between the frames.

²⁹On the borders between the frames were lions, oxen, and cherubim; and on the frames there was a pedestal above. Beneath the lions and oxen were borders of hanging work.

³⁰Now each stand had four bronze wheels with bronze axles, and its four feet had supports [for a basin]. Beneath the basin were cast supports with borders at each side.

³¹Its opening inside the crown at the top *measured* a cubit, and its opening was round like the design of a pedestal, a cubit and a half. Also on its opening were carvings, and their borders were square, not round.

³²Underneath the borders were four wheels, and the axles of the wheels were on the stand. And the height of a wheel was a cubit and a half.

³³The wheels were made like a chariot wheel: their axles, their rims, their spokes, and their hubs were all cast.

³⁴Now there were four supports at the four corners of each stand; the supports were part of the stand itself.

³⁵On the top of the stand there was a circular piece half a cubit high, and on the top of the stand its supports and borders were part of it.

³⁶And on the surface of its supports and its borders Hiram engraved cherubim, lions, and palm-shaped decorations, according to the [available] space for each, with borders all around.

³⁷He made the ten stands like this: they all had one casting, one measure, and one form.

³⁸Then he made ten basins of bronze; each basin held forty baths and was four cubits, and there was one basin on each of the ten stands.

³⁹Then he placed the bases, five on the right [or south] side of the house and five on the left [or north] side; and he set the Sea [of cast metal] on the right side of the house toward the

southeast.

⁴⁰Now Hiram made the basins and the shovels and the bowls. So Hiram finished all the work which he did for King Solomon on the house of the LORD:

⁴¹the two pillars and the [two] bowls of the capitals which were on the top of the two pillars, and the two networks to cover the two bowls of the capitals which were on top of the pillars;

⁴²and the four hundred pomegranates for the two networks, two rows of pomegranates for each network to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the tops of the pillars;

⁴³the ten stands and the ten basins on the stands;

⁴⁴one Sea (basin), and the twelve oxen under the Sea;

⁴⁵the pails, the shovels, and the bowls; all these utensils which Hiram made for King Solomon in the house of the LORD were of polished bronze.

⁴⁶In the plain of the Jordan [River] the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarethan.

⁴⁷Solomon left all the utensils *unweighed*, because there were so many; the weight of the bronze could not be determined.

⁴⁸Solomon made all the [other] furniture which was in the house of the LORD: the [incense] altar of gold; the table of gold on which was the bread of the Presence;

⁴⁹the lampstands of pure gold, five on the right side and five on the left, in front of the Holy of Holies (inner sanctuary); with the flowers, the lamps, and the tongs of gold;

⁵⁰the cups, snuffers, bowls, spoons, firepans—of pure gold; and the hinges of gold [both] for the doors of the inner house, the Holy of Holies, and for the doors of the house, the main room [the Holy Place].

⁵¹So all the work that King Solomon did on the house of the LORD was completed. Solomon brought in the things which David his father had dedicated—the silver, the gold, and the utensils—and he put them in the treasuries of the LORD's house.

8 THEN SOLOMON assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the fathers' *households* of the sons of Israel, to King Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord from the City of David, which is Zion.

²All the men of Israel assembled before King Solomon at the feast in the month of Ethanim (September-October), that is, the seventh month.

³All the elders of Israel came, and the priests carried the ark.

⁴They brought up the ark of the LORD and the Tent of Meeting and all the holy utensils that were in the tent; the priests and the Levites brought them up.

⁵King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel, who had assembled before him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen, so many that they could not be counted or numbered.

⁶Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the

LORD to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the house, into the Holy of Holies, under the wings of the cherubim.

⁷For the cherubim spread their two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim covered the ark and its [carrying] poles from above.

⁸The poles were so long that the ends of the poles were visible from the Holy Place that was in front of the Holy of Holies, but they were not visible from the outside; they are there to this day (the date of this writing).

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, there is no God like You
in heaven or on earth. Thank
You for keeping Your
covenant and showing
lovingkindness to Your
servants who walk before You
with all our hearts.*

• adapted from 1 Kings 8:23

⁹There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb (Sinai), where the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites when they came out of the land of Egypt. [Deut 10:2–5]

¹⁰Now it happened that when the priests had come out of the Holy Place, the cloud filled the LORD's house,

¹¹so the priests could not stand [in their positions] to minister because of the cloud, for the glory *and* brilliance of the LORD had filled the LORD's house (temple).

¹²Then Solomon said,

“The LORD has said that He would dwell in the thick darkness [of the cloud].

¹³“I have certainly built You a lofty house,
A place for You to dwell in forever.”

¹⁴Then the king turned around and blessed all the assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel was standing.

¹⁵He said, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who spoke with His mouth to my father David and has fulfilled it with His hand, saying,

¹⁶“Since the day that I brought My people Israel out of Egypt, I did not choose a [particular] city out of all the tribes of Israel *in which* to build a house so that My Name (Presence) would be in it, but I chose David to be over My people Israel.’

¹⁷“Now it was [determined] in the heart of my father David to build a house (temple) for the Name of the LORD, the God of Israel.

¹⁸“But the LORD said to my father David, ‘Because it was in your heart to build a house for My Name, you did well, in that it was in your heart.

¹⁹‘Nevertheless, you shall not build the house, but your son, who shall be born to you, it is he who shall build it for My Name [and My Presence].’

²⁰“Now the LORD has fulfilled His word which He spoke; I have risen in the place of my father David and have taken my seat on the throne of Israel, just as the LORD promised, and have built the house (temple) for the Name of the LORD, the God of Israel.

²¹“There I have made a place [in the Holy of Holies] for the ark, in which is the covenant (solemn agreement) of the LORD, which He made with our fathers when He brought them out of the land of Egypt.” [Ex 34:28]

²²Then Solomon stood [in the courtyard] before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven.

²³He said, “O LORD, the God of Israel, there is no God like You in heaven above or on earth below, who keeps the covenant and shows lovingkindness to Your servants who walk before You with all their heart;

²⁴You who have kept what You promised to Your servant my father David. You have spoken with Your mouth and have fulfilled Your word with Your hand, as it is this day.

²⁵“Now therefore, O LORD, the God of Israel, keep for Your servant my father David that which You promised him when You said, ‘You shall not be without a man (descendant) to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your sons take heed to their way

[of life] to walk before Me [according to my laws] as you have done.’

²⁶“Now, O God of Israel, please let Your word which You have spoken to Your servant David my father be confirmed.

²⁷“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You; how much less this house which I have built!

²⁸“Yet graciously consider the prayer of Your servant and his supplication, O LORD my God, to listen to the [loud] cry and to the prayer which Your servant prays before You today;

²⁹that Your eyes may be open toward this house night and day, toward the place of which You have said, ‘My Name (Presence) shall be there,’ that You may listen to the prayer which Your servant shall pray toward this place.

³⁰“Listen to the prayer of Your servant and of Your people Israel which they pray toward this place. Hear in heaven, Your dwelling place; hear and forgive.

³¹“If a man sins against his neighbor and is made to take an oath [of innocence] and he comes to take the oath before Your altar in this house (temple),

³²then hear from heaven and act and judge Your servants, condemning the wicked by bringing his guilt on his own head, and justifying the righteous by rewarding him in accordance with his righteousness.

³³“When Your people Israel are defeated before an enemy because they have sinned against You, and *then* they turn to You again and praise Your Name and pray and ask for Your favor *and* compassion in this house (temple),

³⁴then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your people

Israel, and bring them back to the land which You gave their fathers.

³⁵“When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against You, and they pray toward this place and praise Your name and turn from their sin when You afflict them,

³⁶then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of Your servants and of Your people Israel; indeed, teach them the good way in which they should walk (live). And send rain on Your land which You have given to Your people as an inheritance.

³⁷“If there is famine in the land, or if there is pestilence (plague), blight, mildew, migratory locusts, or grasshoppers, if their enemy besieges them in the land of their cities, whatever affliction *or* plague, whatever sickness [there is],

³⁸whatever prayer or pleading is made by any individual, or by Your people Israel, each knowing the affliction of his own heart, and spreading his hands out toward this house;

³⁹then hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and forgive and act and give to each according to his ways, whose heart (mind) You know, for You and You alone know the hearts of all the children of men,

⁴⁰so that they may fear You [with reverence and awe] all the days that they live in the land which You have given to our fathers.

⁴¹“Moreover, concerning a foreigner who is not of Your people Israel, but comes from a far (distant) country for the sake of Your name [to plead with You]

⁴²(for they will hear of Your great name, Your strong hand [of power], and outstretched arm); when he comes and prays

toward this house (temple),

⁴³hear in heaven, Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls upon (prays to) You, so that all peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You [with reverence and awe], as *do* Your people Israel, and that they may know [without any doubt] that this house which I have built is called by Your name.

⁴⁴“When Your people go out to battle against their enemy, by whatever way You send them, and they pray to the LORD toward the city which You have chosen and the house that I have built for Your Name *and* Presence,

⁴⁵then hear in heaven their prayer and their pleading, and maintain their right *and* defend their cause.

⁴⁶“When they sin against You (for there is no man who does not sin) and You are angry with them and hand them over to the enemy, so that they are carried away captive to the enemy’s land, [whether] far away or near;

⁴⁷if they take it to heart in the land where they have been taken captive, and they repent and pray to You in the land of their captors, saying, ‘We have sinned and done wrong and we have acted wickedly;’

⁴⁸if they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies who have taken them captive, and they pray to You toward their land [of Israel] which You gave to their fathers, the city [of Jerusalem] which You have chosen, and the house which I have built for Your Name *and* Presence;

⁴⁹then hear their prayer and their supplication in heaven Your dwelling place, and maintain their right *and* defend their

cause,

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Thank You, Lord, that not one word has failed of all Your good promises. I pray that You will be with me and not leave me or abandon me to my enemies, that You will guide my heart to Yourself, that I may walk in all Your ways.

• *adapted from 1 Kings 8:56–58*

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God's Promises Never Fail

Some people fear not having their needs met because their families have hurt them or let them down; others feel that way because of personal experiences in which they suffered loss. All these circumstances and others cause people to fear they may be abandoned in their time of need. But God doesn't want us to live in fear of losing what we have or being without what we need.

Solomon declared to God's people, "Not one word has failed of all His good promise, which He spoke through Moses His servant" (1 Kin. 8:56). Let us trust God to always meet all our needs and to never abandon us. We should compliment Him by believing He is goodet our needs according to the promises in His Word.

⁵⁰and forgive Your people who have sinned against You and all the transgressions which they have committed against You, and make them *objects of* compassion before their captors, that they will be merciful to them

⁵¹(for they are Your people and Your heritage, whom You brought out of Egypt, from the midst of the iron furnace [of slavery and oppression]),

⁵²that Your eyes may be open to the supplication of Your servant and to the supplication of Your people Israel, to listen

to them *and* be attentive to them whenever they call to You.

⁵³“For You singled them out from all the peoples of the earth as Your heritage, just as You declared through Moses Your servant, when You brought our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord GOD.”

⁵⁴When Solomon finished offering this entire prayer and supplication to the LORD, he arose from before the LORD’s altar, where he had knelt down with his hands stretched toward heaven.

⁵⁵And he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice, saying,

⁵⁶“Blessed be the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel, in accordance with everything that He promised. Not one word has failed of all His good promise, which He spoke through Moses His servant.

⁵⁷“May the LORD our God be with us as He was with our fathers; may He not leave us nor abandon us [to our enemies],

⁵⁸that He may guide our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways [following Him] and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His precepts which He commanded our fathers.

⁵⁹“Let these words of mine, with which I have made supplication before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and night, so that He will maintain the cause *and* right of His servant and of His people Israel as each day requires,

⁶⁰so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no one else.

⁶¹“Therefore, your hearts are to be wholly devoted to the LORD our God, to walk in His statutes and to keep His commandments, as [you are doing] today.”

⁶²Then the king and all [the people of] Israel with him [repeatedly] offered sacrifice before the LORD.

⁶³Solomon offered as peace offerings to the LORD: 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. So the king and all the Israelites dedicated the house (temple) of the LORD.

⁶⁴On that same day the king consecrated the middle of the courtyard that was in front of the house (temple) of the LORD; for he offered there the burnt offerings, the grain offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings, because the bronze altar that was before the LORD was too small to hold [all] the burnt offerings, the grain offerings and the fat of the peace offerings.

⁶⁵So at that time Solomon held the feast, and all Israel with him, a great assembly, from the entrance of Hamath [on the northern border of Israel] to the Brook of Egypt [at Israel's southern border], before the LORD our God, for seven days and seven *more* days [beyond the prescribed period for the Feast of Booths], fourteen days in all.

⁶⁶On the eighth (fifteenth) day he sent the people away and they blessed the king. Then they went to their tents joyful and in good spirits because of all the goodness which the LORD had shown to David His servant and Israel His people.

9 NOW IT happened when Solomon had finished building the house (temple) of the LORD and the king's house (palace), and all else which he was pleased to do,

²that the LORD appeared to Solomon a second time, just as He had appeared to him at Gibeon.

³The LORD told him, “I have heard your prayer and supplication which you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built by putting My Name *and* My Presence there forever. My eyes and My heart shall be there perpetually.

⁴“As for you, if you walk (live your life) before Me, as David your father walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, acting in accordance with everything that I have commanded you, and will keep My statutes and My precepts,

⁵then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, just as I promised your father David, saying, ‘You shall not be without a man (descendant) on the throne of Israel.’

Speak God's Word

*I will walk in integrity of
heart and in uprightness,
acting in accordance with
everything God has
commanded me.*

| adapted from 1 KINGS 9:4 |

⁶“But if you or your sons turn away from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them,

⁷then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them, and I will cast out of My sight the house which I have consecrated for My Name *and* Presence. Then Israel will become a proverb (a saying) and a byword (object of ridicule) among all the peoples.

⁸“This house (temple) will become a heap of ruins; everyone who passes by will be appalled and sneer and say, ‘Why has the LORD done such a thing to this land and to this house?’

⁹“And they [who know] will say, ‘Because they abandoned the LORD their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and they have chosen other gods and have worshiped

and served them; that is the reason the LORD has brought on them all this adversity.”

¹⁰Now at the end of twenty years, in which Solomon had built the two houses, the temple of the LORD and the palace of the king

¹¹(Hiram king of Tyre had supplied Solomon with as much cedar and cypress timber [from Lebanon] and gold as he desired), at that time King Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee (northern Israel).

¹²So Hiram came from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given him, and they did not please him.

¹³He said, “What are these cities [good for] which you have given me, my brother?” So they have been called the land of Cabul (like nothing, unproductive) to this day.

¹⁴And Hiram sent to the king 120 talents of gold.

¹⁵Now this is the account of the forced labor which King Solomon conscripted to build the house of the LORD, his own house, the Millo (fortification), the wall of Jerusalem, [and the fortress cities of] Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer.

¹⁶For Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up and taken Gezer, burned it with fire and killed the Canaanites who lived in the city, and he had given it as a dowry to his daughter, Solomon’s wife.

¹⁷So Solomon rebuilt [and fortified] Gezer and Lower Beth-horon,

¹⁸Baalath and Tamar in the wilderness, in the land of *Judah*,

¹⁹and all the storage cities [for surplus provisions] which Solomon had, and the cities for his chariots and cities for his horsemen, and whatever it pleased Solomon to build in

Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land under his rule.

²⁰*As for* all the people who were left of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, who were not of the sons (descendants) of Israel,

²¹their children who were left after them in the land, whom the Israelites were unable to completely destroy, from them Solomon levied (conscripted) forced laborers, even to this day (the date of this writing).

²²But Solomon did not make slaves of the sons of Israel; for they were men of war (soldiers), his servants, his officers, his captains, his chariot commanders, and his horsemen.

²³These were the chief officers who were over Solomon's work, five hundred and fifty, who ruled over the people doing the work.

²⁴As soon as Pharaoh's daughter came up from the City of David to her house which Solomon had built for her, then he built the Millo (fortification).

²⁵Three times a year [during the major annual festivals] Solomon offered burnt offerings and peace offerings on the altar he had built to the LORD, and he burned incense with them before the LORD. So he finished the house [of the LORD].

²⁶King Solomon built a fleet of ships in Ezion-geber, which is near Eloth on the shore of the Red Sea (Sea of Reeds), in the land of Edom.

²⁷And Hiram [king of Tyre] sent his servants with the fleet, sailors who knew the sea, along with the servants of Solomon.

²⁸They came to Ophir and took four hundred and twenty talents of gold from there, and brought it to King Solomon.

10 NOW WHEN the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to test him with riddles.

²So she came to Jerusalem with a very large caravan (entourage), with camels carrying spices, a great quantity of gold, and precious stones. When she came to Solomon, she spoke with him about everything that was on her mind [to discover the extent of his wisdom].

³Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing hidden from the king which he did not explain to her.

⁴When the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, and the house (palace) which he had built,

⁵the food on his table, the seating of his servants (court officials), the attendance of his waiters and their attire, his cupbearers, his stairway by which he went up to the house (temple) of the LORD, she was breathless *and* awed [by the wonder of it all].

⁶Then she told the king, “The report which I heard in my own land about your words and wisdom is true!

⁷“I did not believe the report until I came and saw it with my own eyes. Behold, the half of it was not told to me. You exceed in wisdom and prosperity the report which I heard.

⁸“How blessed (fortunate, happy) are your men! How blessed are these your servants who stand continually before you, hearing your wisdom!

⁹“Blessed be the LORD your God who delighted in you to set you on the throne of Israel! Because the LORD loved Israel forever, He made you king to execute justice and

righteousness.”

¹⁰She gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold and a very great *quantity* of spices and precious stones. Never again did such an abundance of spices come in [to Israel] as that which the queen of Sheba gave King Solomon.

¹¹Also the ships of Hiram, which brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir a great *quantity* of almug wood (sandalwood) and precious stones.

¹²From the almug wood (sandalwood) the king made pillars for the house of the LORD and for the king’s palace, and also lyres and harps for the singers. Such almug wood did not come in [to Israel] *again*, nor has it been seen to this day.

¹³King Solomon [in turn] gave to the queen of Sheba everything that she wanted, whatever she asked, besides what he gave to her from his royal bounty. So she returned to her own country, she and her servants.

¹⁴Now the weight of the gold that came to Solomon in one [particular] year was six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold,

¹⁵besides *the taxes* from the traders and from the wares of the merchants, and [the tribute money] from all the kings of the Arabs (Bedouins) and the governors of the country.

¹⁶King Solomon made two hundred large shields of beaten (hammered) gold; six hundred *shekels of* gold went into each shield.

¹⁷*He made* three hundred *smaller* shields of beaten gold; three minas of gold went into each shield. The king put them in the House of the Forest of Lebanon [the king’s armory].

¹⁸Also the king made a great throne of ivory and overlaid it with the finest gold.

¹⁹The throne had six steps, and a round top *was attached* to the throne from the back. On either side of the seat were armrests, and two lions stood beside the armrests.

²⁰Twelve lions stood there, one on either end of each of the six steps; there was nothing like it made for any other kingdom.

²¹All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold. None were of silver; it was not considered valuable in the days of Solomon.

²²For the king had at sea the [large cargo] ships of Tarshish with the ships of Hiram. Once every three years the ships of Tarshish came bringing gold, silver, ivory, monkeys, and peacocks.

²³So King Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth in wealth and in wisdom.

²⁴All the earth was seeking the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his mind.

²⁵Every man brought a gift [of tribute]: articles of silver and gold, garments, weapons, spices, horses, and mules, so much year by year.

²⁶Now Solomon collected chariots and horsemen; he had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, which he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem.

²⁷The king made silver *as common* in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars as plentiful as the sycamore trees that are in the lowland.

²⁸Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and from Kue, and the king's merchants acquired them from Kue, for a price. [Deut 17:15, 16]

²⁹A chariot could be imported from Egypt for six hundred *shekels* of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty; and in the same way they exported them, by the king's merchants, to all the kings of the Hittites and to the kings of Aram (Syria).

11 NOW KING Solomon [defiantly] loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women,

²from the very nations of whom the LORD said to the Israelites, "You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, for the result will be that they will turn away your hearts to follow their gods." Yet Solomon clung to these in love. [Deut 17:17]

³He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away [from God].

⁴For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not completely devoted to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David.

⁵For Solomon went after Ashtoreth, the [fertility] goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the horror (detestable idol) of the Ammonites. [1 Kin 9:6-9]

⁶Solomon did evil [things] in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as his father David *had done*.

⁷Then Solomon built a high place for [worshiping] Chemosh the horror (detestable idol) of Moab, on the hill which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the horror

(detestable idol) of the sons of Ammon.

⁸And he did the same for all of his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

⁹So the LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice,

¹⁰and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not follow other gods; but he did not observe (remember, obey) what the LORD had commanded.

¹¹Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, “Because you have done this and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Let God Develop Your Potential

Before the days of digital cameras, film used in older cameras had to be taken to a processor or a darkroom for development. Having only an undeveloped roll of film didn't do anyone any good; the photographs had been captured on the film, but no one could look at them. Once the process of development took place, beautiful pictures were available to see.

It's the same with you. God placed potential inside you, but just having potential is not enough. Solomon had amazing potential and every advantage, but his heart was turned away after other gods (see 1 Kin. 11:4).

The development of potential in a person is like the development of film. It's in you, but certain things have to take place to bring it out. I hope you will be willing to let God work daily to bring you to spiritual maturity in Him (see Phil. 1:6). It takes time and a desire to let God work in your life to develop your potential, but I guarantee that it can happen and you can make a difference in the world and enjoy an amazing life as you learn to be led by the Holy Spirit.

¹²“However, I will not do it in your lifetime, for the sake of your father David, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son (Rehoboam).

¹³“However, I will not tear away all the kingdom; I will give one tribe (Judah) to your son for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.”

¹⁴Then the LORD stirred up an adversary against Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he was of royal descent in Edom.

¹⁵For it came about, when David was in Edom, and Joab the commander of the army had gone up to bury those killed [in battle] and had struck down every male in Edom

¹⁶(for Joab and all [the army of] Israel stayed there six months, until he had killed every male in Edom),

¹⁷that Hadad escaped to Egypt, he and some Edomites from his father’s servants with him, while Hadad was [still] a little boy.

¹⁸They set out from Midian [south of Edom] and came to Paran, and took men with them from Paran and came to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave [young] Hadad a house and ordered food *and* provisions for him and gave him land.

¹⁹Hadad found great favor with Pharaoh, so that he gave Hadad in marriage the sister of his own wife, the sister of Tahpenes the queen.

²⁰The sister of Tahpenes gave birth to Genubath, Hadad’s son, whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh’s house; and Genubath was in Pharaoh’s household among the sons of Pharaoh.

²¹But when Hadad heard in Egypt that David had died and that Joab the commander of the army was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, “Let me leave, so that I may go to my own country.”

²²Then Pharaoh said to him, “But what have you lacked with me that now you ask to go to your own country?” He

replied, “Nothing; nevertheless you must let me go.”

²³God also stirred up *another* adversary for Solomon, Rezon the son of Eliada, who had fled from his master, Hadadezer king of Zobah.

²⁴Rezon gathered men to himself and became leader of a marauding band, after David killed those *in Zobah*. They went to Damascus and stayed there and they reigned in Damascus. [2 Sam 10:8, 18]

²⁵So Rezon was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, along with the evil that Hadad *inflicted*. Rezon hated Israel and reigned over Aram (Syria).

²⁶Jeroboam, Solomon’s servant, the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite of Zeredah whose mother’s name was Zeruah, a widow, also rebelled against the king.

²⁷Now this is the reason why he rebelled against the king: Solomon built the Millo (fortification) and he repaired *and* closed the breach of the city of his father David.

²⁸The man Jeroboam was a brave warrior and when Solomon saw that the young man was industrious, he put him in charge of all the forced labor of the house of Joseph.

²⁹It came about at that time, when Jeroboam left Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite met him on the road. Now Ahijah had covered himself with a new cloak; and the two of them were alone in the field.

³⁰Then Ahijah took hold of the new cloak which he was wearing and tore it into twelve pieces.

³¹He said to Jeroboam, “Take ten pieces for yourself; for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Behold, I am going to tear the kingdom from the hand of Solomon and give you ten

tribes—

³²but he [and his descendants] shall have one tribe (Benjamin was annexed to Judah), for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel—

³³because they have abandoned Me and have worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the sons of Ammon; and they have not walked in My ways *and* followed My commandments, doing what is right in My sight and *keeping* My statutes and My ordinances as did his father David.

³⁴‘However, I will not take the entire kingdom out of his hand; but I will make him ruler all the days of his life for the sake of My servant David, whom I chose because he kept My commandments and My statutes.

³⁵‘But I will take the kingdom out of his son’s hand and give it to you: ten tribes.

³⁶‘Yet to his son I will give one tribe, so that My servant David may have a lamp always before Me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen to put My Name *and* Presence.

³⁷‘I will take you [Jeroboam], and you shall reign over whatever your soul desires; and you shall be king over Israel (the ten northern tribes).

³⁸‘Then it shall be, that if you listen to all that I command you and walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight, keeping *and* observing My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build you an enduring house, as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you.

³⁹“And in this way I will afflict the descendants of David for this (their sin), but not forever.””

⁴⁰So Solomon attempted to kill Jeroboam; but Jeroboam set out and escaped to Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, and stayed in Egypt until Solomon died.

⁴¹The rest of the acts of Solomon—and all that he did, and his wisdom—are they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon?

⁴²The time Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years.

⁴³And Solomon slept [in death] with his fathers and was buried in the city of his father David. Rehoboam his son reigned in his place.

12 REHOBOAM WENT to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king.

²Now when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard about it, he was living in Egypt (for he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon).

³So they sent *word* and called for him, and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying,

⁴“Your father made our yoke (burden) heavy; so now lighten the hard labor and the heavy yoke your father imposed on us, and we will serve you.”

⁵Rehoboam replied to them, “Leave for three days, then come back to me [for my decision].” So the people left.

⁶King Rehoboam consulted with the elders who had served

and advised his father Solomon while he was still alive and said, “How do you advise me to answer this people?”

⁷They spoke to him, saying, “If you will be a servant to this people today, and will serve them and grant their request, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever.”

⁸But he ignored the advice which the elders gave him and consulted the young men who grew up with him and served him.

⁹He said to them, “What do you advise that we answer this people who have said to me, ‘Lighten the yoke (burden) which your father put on us’?”

¹⁰The young men who had grown up with him answered, “This is what you should say to this people who told you, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, but as for you, make our yoke lighter’—say this to them: ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s loins [and my reign will be even more severe].

¹¹‘And now, whereas my father loaded you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.’”

¹²Jeroboam and all the people came back to Rehoboam on the third day, just as the king had instructed, saying, “Return to me on the third day.”

¹³The king answered the people harshly and ignored the advice which the elders had given him,

¹⁴and spoke to them in accordance with the advice of the young men, saying, “My father made your yoke heavy, but as for me, I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.”

¹⁵So the king did not listen to the people; for the situation was from the LORD, so that He might fulfill His word which He spoke through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat. [1 Kin 11:29–33]

¹⁶So when all [the ten northern tribes of] Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people replied to the king, saying,

“What portion do we have in David?

We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse;

To your tents, O Israel!

Look now after your own house, David!”

Then Israel went back to their tents.

¹⁷But as for the sons (descendants) of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah [including Benjamin], Rehoboam reigned over them.

¹⁸Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was in charge of the forced labor [to represent him], and all Israel stoned him to death. And King Rehoboam quickly mounted his chariot to escape to Jerusalem.

¹⁹So Israel (the ten northern tribes) has rebelled against the house (royal line) of David to this day (the date of this writing).

²⁰It came about when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, that they sent *word* and called him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel. None followed the house of David except the tribe of Judah [including Benjamin].

²¹Now when Rehoboam arrived in Jerusalem, he assembled all the [fighting men from the] house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, 180,000 chosen warriors, to fight against the house

of Israel to bring the kingdom back to Rehoboam the son of Solomon.

²²But the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying,

²³“Tell Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and all the house (fighting men) of Judah and Benjamin and the rest of the people,

²⁴“Thus says the LORD, “You shall not go up and fight against your brothers, the sons of Israel. Let every man return to his house, for this thing has come about from Me.”” So they listened to the word of the LORD and returned to go home, in accordance with the word of the LORD.

²⁵Then Jeroboam built Shechem [as his royal city] in the hill country of Ephraim and lived there. He went out from there and rebuilt Penuel [as a stronghold].

²⁶Jeroboam [doubted God’s promise to him and] said in his heart, “Now the kingdom will return to the house of David. [1 Kin 11:38]

²⁷“If these people go up to the house of the LORD in Jerusalem to offer sacrifices, then their heart will turn to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah.”

²⁸So the king took counsel [and followed bad advice] and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, “It is too much for you to go [all the way] up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.”

²⁹He set the one [golden calf] in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.

³⁰Now this thing became a sin [for Israel]; because the

people went *to worship* before the one [or the other of them] as far as Dan.

³¹And Jeroboam also made houses on high places, and he made priests from all people who were not of the sons (descendants) of Levi.

³²Jeroboam held a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the feast which is *kept* in Judah, and he went up to the altar; he did this in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves which he had made. And he stationed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. [Lev 23:34]

³³So he went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, in the month which he had devised in his own heart [in defiance of God's commandments]; and he held a feast for the Israelites and he went up to the altar to burn incense [in defiance of God's law.]

13 NOW BEHOLD, there came a man of God from Judah to Bethel by the word (command) of the LORD, while Jeroboam was standing by the altar [which he had built] to burn incense.

²The man cried out against the [idolatrous] altar by the word of the LORD, "O altar, altar, thus says the Lord: 'Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name; and on you shall he sacrifice [the bodies of] the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.'"

³And he gave a sign the same day, saying, "This is the sign which the LORD has spoken: 'Behold, the altar shall be split apart and the ashes that are on it shall be poured out.'" [2 Kin

23:15, 16]

⁴When the king heard the words which the man of God cried out against the altar in Bethel, Jeroboam put out his hand from the altar, saying, "Seize him!" And his hand which he had put out against him withered, so that he was unable to pull it back to himself.

⁵The altar also was split apart and the ashes were poured out from the altar in accordance with the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD.

⁶The king answered and said to the man of God, "Please entreat [the favor of] the LORD your God and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me." So the man of God entreated the LORD, and the king's hand was restored to him and became as it was before.

⁷And the king said to the man of God, "Come home with me and refresh yourself, and I will give you a reward."

⁸But the man of God said to the king, "*Even* if you were to give me half your house (wealth), I would not go with you, nor would I eat bread or drink water in this place.

⁹"For I was commanded by the word of the LORD, 'You shall not eat bread or drink water, nor shall you return by the way you came.'"

¹⁰So he went another way and did not return by the way that he came to Bethel.

¹¹Now there was an old prophet living in Bethel; and his sons came and told him everything that the man of God had done that day in Bethel; they also told their father the words which he had spoken to the king.

¹²Their father asked them, "Which way did he go?" For his

sons had seen which way the man of God who came from Judah had gone.

¹³He said to his sons, "Saddle the donkey for me." So they saddled the donkey for him and he rode away on it,

¹⁴and he went after the man of God. And he found him sitting under an oak (terebinth) tree, and he said to him, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?" And he said, "I am."

¹⁵Then he said to him, "Come home with me and eat bread."

¹⁶He said, "I cannot return with you nor go in with you, nor will I eat bread or drink water with you in this place.

¹⁷"For I was told by the word of the LORD, 'You shall not eat bread nor drink water there, nor shall you return by going the way that you came.'"

¹⁸He answered him, "I too am a prophet, as you are; and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'Bring him back with you to your house, so that he may eat bread and drink water.'" *But* he lied to him.

¹⁹So the man of God went back with him, and ate bread in his house and drank water.

²⁰Now it happened as they were sitting at the table, that the word of the LORD came to the prophet who had brought him back.

²¹And he cried out to the man of God who had come from Judah, "Thus says the LORD, 'Because you have disobeyed the word of the LORD and have not kept the commandment which the LORD your God commanded you,

²²but have come back and have eaten bread and drunk water in the place of which the LORD said to you, “You shall not eat bread nor drink water”; your body shall not come to the tomb of your fathers (ancestors).”

²³After the prophet of the house had eaten bread and after he had drunk, he saddled the donkey for the prophet whom he had brought back.

²⁴Now when he had gone, a lion met him by the road and killed him, and his body was thrown in the road, with the donkey standing beside it; the lion was also standing beside the body.

²⁵And there were men passing by, and they saw the body thrown in the road, and the lion standing beside the body. So they came and told about it in the city [of Bethel] where the old prophet lived.

²⁶When the prophet who had brought him back from the road heard about it, he said, “It is the man of God who was disobedient to the word of the LORD; therefore the LORD has given him to the lion, which has torn him and killed him, in accordance with the word of the LORD which He spoke to him.”

²⁷And he said to his sons, “Saddle the donkey for me.” And they saddled it.

²⁸And he went and found the body thrown on the road, and the donkey and the lion standing beside the body; the lion [miraculously] had not eaten the body or attacked the donkey.

²⁹Then the prophet picked up the body of the man of God and laid it on the donkey and brought it back, and he came into the city (Bethel) of the old prophet to mourn and to bury him.

³⁰And he laid the body in his own grave, and they

mourned over him, saying, “Alas, my brother!”

³¹Then after he had buried him, he said to his sons, “When I am dead, bury me in the grave in which the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones.

³²“For the words which he cried out by the word of the LORD against the altar in Bethel and against all the houses of the high places which are in the cities of Samaria shall certainly come to pass.”

³³After this event, Jeroboam [still] did not turn from his evil way, but again made priests for the high places from among all the people. He ordained anyone who was willing, so that there would be priests for the high places.

³⁴And this thing (idol worship) became the sin of the house of Jeroboam to blot it out and eliminate it from the face of the earth.

14 AT THAT time Abijah the son [and crown prince, heir] of Jeroboam became sick.

²Jeroboam said to his wife, “Please get up and disguise yourself, so that people will not know that you are Jeroboam’s wife, and go to Shiloh. Ahijah the prophet is there, the one who told me that *I would be* king over this people.

³“Take with you ten loaves of bread, *some* cakes, and a bottle of honey, and go to him. He will tell you what will happen to the boy.”

⁴Jeroboam’s wife did so. She got up and went [twenty miles] to Shiloh, and came to the house of Ahijah. Now Ahijah could not see, because his eyes were dim from old age.

⁵And the LORD said to Ahijah, “Behold, the wife of Jeroboam is coming to inquire of you about her son, because he is sick. You shall say such and such to her, for when she arrives, she will pretend to be another woman.”

⁶So when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet as she came in the doorway, he said, “Come in, wife of Jeroboam. Why do you pretend to be another woman? For I have been sent to you [by God] with a harsh *message*.

⁷“Go, tell Jeroboam, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: “Because I exalted you from among the people and made you leader over My people Israel,

⁸and tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you—but you have not been like My servant David, who kept My commandments and followed Me with all his heart, to do only what was right in My eyes,

⁹but have done more evil than all [the kings] who were before you; for you have gone and made for yourself other gods and molten images to provoke Me to anger, and have cast Me behind your back—

¹⁰therefore behold, I am bringing evil on the house (royal line) of Jeroboam, and I will cut off (destroy) from Jeroboam every male, both bond and free, in Israel, and will *utterly* sweep away the house of Jeroboam as one sweeps away dung until it is all gone.

¹¹“The dogs will eat [the carcass of] anyone belonging to Jeroboam who dies in the city, and the birds of the sky will eat [the carcass of] anyone who dies in the field, for the LORD has spoken it.” ’ [Deut 28:26]

¹²“Now as for you (Jeroboam’s wife), arise, go to your own

house. When your feet enter the city, the child [Abijah] will die.

¹³“All Israel shall mourn for him and bury him, for he alone of Jeroboam’s *family* will come to [be placed in] the grave, because in him there was found something good *and* pleasing toward the LORD, the God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam.

¹⁴“Moreover, the LORD will raise up for Himself a king over Israel who will cut off the house (royal line) of Jeroboam this day and from now on.

¹⁵“The LORD will strike Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water; and He will uproot Israel from this good land which He gave to their fathers, and He will scatter them beyond the [Euphrates] River, because they have made their Asherim, provoking the LORD to anger.

¹⁶“He will give up Israel because of the sins of Jeroboam which he has committed, and with which he has made Israel sin [by leading them into idolatry].”

¹⁷So Jeroboam’s wife arose and left and came to Tirzah [the king’s residence]. As she was entering the threshold of the house, the child [Abijah] died.

¹⁸And all Israel buried him and mourned for him, in accordance with the word of the LORD which He spoke through His servant Ahijah the prophet.

¹⁹Now as for the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he made war and how he reigned, behold, they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

²⁰The time that Jeroboam reigned was twenty-two years, and he slept with his fathers [in death]; and Nadab his son reigned in his place.

²¹Now Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah.

Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city the LORD had chosen from all the tribes of Israel in which to put His Name (Presence). His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess.

²²And [the people of] Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD. They provoked Him to jealousy more than all that their fathers had done, with their sins which they had committed.

²³For they also built for themselves high places [to worship idols] and *sacred* pillars and Asherim [for the goddess Asherah]. *These were* on every high hill and under every luxuriant tree.

²⁴There were also male cult prostitutes in the land. They committed all the repulsive acts of the nations which the LORD dispossessed before the Israelites.

²⁵Now in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt [Jeroboam's brother-in-law] came up against Jerusalem.

²⁶He took away the treasures of the house (temple) of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house; he took away everything, he even took all the shields of gold which Solomon had made.

²⁷So King Rehoboam made bronze shields to replace them and handed them over to the captains of the palace guard who guarded the doorway of the king's house.

²⁸And as often as the king went into the house of the LORD, the guards would carry them and bring them back into the guardroom.

²⁹Now as for the rest of the acts of Rehoboam, and everything that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

³⁰There was also war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually.

³¹And Rehoboam slept with his fathers [in death] and was buried with his fathers in the City of David. His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess. Abijam (Abijah) his son became king in his place.

15 IN THE eighteenth year of King Jeroboam the son of Nebat, Abijam became king over Judah.

²He reigned three years in Jerusalem. His mother was Maacah [grand]daughter of Abishalom (Absalom).

³He walked in all the sins [of idol worship] that his father [Rehoboam] committed before him; and his heart was not entirely devoted to the LORD his God, like the heart of his father (forefather) David.

⁴Nevertheless, for David's sake the LORD his God gave him a lamp (descendant on the throne) in Jerusalem, setting up his son after him and establishing Jerusalem,

⁵because David did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of [the betrayal of] Uriah the Hittite.

⁶There was war between Rehoboam [Abijam's father] and Jeroboam all the days of Rehoboam's life.

⁷Now as for the rest of the acts of Abijam and everything that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? And there was war between Abijam and Jeroboam.

⁸Abijam slept with his fathers [in death] and they buried him in the City of David. Asa his son became king in his place.

⁹So in the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Asa began to reign as king over Judah.

¹⁰He reigned forty-one years in Jerusalem. His [great-grand]mother was Maacah the daughter of Abishalom (Absalom). [1 Kin 15:2]

¹¹Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did his father (forefather) David.

¹²He expelled the male cult prostitutes (sodomites) from the land and removed all the idols that his fathers [Solomon, Rehoboam, and Abijam] had made. [1 Kin 11:5–11; 14:22]

¹³He also deposed his [great-grand]mother Maacah from *being* queen mother, because she had made a horrid (obscene, vulgar) image for [the goddess] Asherah. Asa cut down her horrid image, and burned it by the Brook Kidron.

¹⁴But the high places [of idol worship] were not removed. Nevertheless, Asa's heart was entirely devoted to the LORD all his days.

¹⁵He brought the things which his father had dedicated and the things which he had dedicated into the house of the LORD—silver, gold, and utensils *and* accessories.

¹⁶Now there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days.

¹⁷Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah and fortified Ramah [north of Jerusalem], in order to prevent *anyone* from going out or coming in to Asa king of Judah.

¹⁸Then Asa took all the silver and gold left in the treasuries

of the house of the LORD and the treasuries of the palace of the king and handed them over to his servants. And King Asa sent them to Ben-hadad the son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion, king of Aram (Syria), who lived in Damascus, saying,

¹⁹“*Let there be a treaty between me and you, as there was between my father and your father. Behold, I have sent you a gift of silver and gold; go, break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel, so that he will withdraw from me.*”

²⁰So Ben-hadad listened to king Asa and sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel, and conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel-beth-maacah, and all Chinneroth [the region of the Sea of Galilee], along with all the land of Naphtali.

²¹When Baasha heard about it, he stopped fortifying Ramah and stayed in Tirzah.

²²Then King Asa made a proclamation to all Judah—none was exempt—and they carried away the stones of Ramah and its timber with which Baasha had built [the fortifications]. And King Asa built with them [border fortresses at] Geba of Benjamin and Mizpah.

²³Now as for the rest of all the acts of Asa, all his might, everything that he did, and the cities which he built, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? But during the time of his old age he had a foot disease.

²⁴Asa slept with his fathers [in death] and was buried with his fathers in the city of his father David. Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place.

²⁵Now Nadab the son of Jeroboam began to reign over Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah, and he reigned

over Israel for two years.

²⁶He did evil in the sight of the LORD and walked in the way of his father [Jeroboam] and in his sin [of idolatry], with which he made Israel sin.

²⁷Baasha the son of Ahijah of the house (tribe) of Issachar conspired against Nadab, and Baasha struck him down at Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines, while Nadab and all Israel were laying siege to Gibbethon.

²⁸So Baasha killed Nadab in the third year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his place.

²⁹As soon as he was king, Baasha struck down all the household of Jeroboam. He did not leave for Jeroboam anyone alive, but he destroyed them in accordance with the word of the LORD which He had spoken through His servant Ahijah the Shilonite—[1 Kin 14:9–16]

³⁰because of the sins committed by Jeroboam and which he made Israel commit, and because he provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger.

³¹Now as for the rest of Nadab's acts and everything that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

³²There was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days.

³³In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha the son of Ahijah became king over all Israel in Tirzah [the capital city], and reigned twenty-four years.

³⁴He did evil in the sight of the LORD and walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin [of idolatry] with which he made Israel sin.

16 NOW THE word of the LORD came to Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha, saying,

²“Because I exalted you [Baasha] from the dust and made you leader over My people Israel, and you walked in the way of Jeroboam and made My people Israel sin, provoking Me to anger with their sins [of idol worship],

³behold, I am going to sweep away Baasha and his household (family), and I will make your house (royal line) like that of Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

⁴“The dogs will eat anyone belonging to Baasha who dies in the city, and the birds of the sky will eat anyone belonging to him who dies in the field.”

⁵Now as for the rest of the acts of Baasha, what he did and his might, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

⁶Baasha slept with his fathers [in death] and was buried in Tirzah. Elah his son became king in his place.

⁷Moreover, the word of the LORD came against Baasha and his household through the prophet Jehu the son of Hanani, both for all the evil that Baasha did in the sight of the LORD in provoking Him to anger with the work of his hands (idolatry), in being like the house of Jeroboam, and because he [willingly] destroyed it (the family of Jeroboam).

⁸In the twenty-sixth year of Asa king of Judah, Elah the son of Baasha became king over Israel in Tirzah, *and reigned* two years.

⁹His servant Zimri, commander of half his chariots, conspired against Elah. Now Elah was in Tirzah, getting drunk

in the house of Arza, who was in charge of the [king's] household in Tirzah.

¹⁰Then Zimri came in and struck and killed Elah in the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and became king in his place.

¹¹When he became king, as soon as he sat on his throne, he killed the entire household of Baasha; he did not leave a single male [alive], either of his relatives or his friends.

¹²Thus Zimri destroyed the entire household of Baasha, in accordance with the word of the LORD which He spoke against Baasha through Jehu the prophet, [1 Kin 16:3]

¹³for all the sins of Baasha and the sins of Elah his son, which they committed, and made Israel commit, provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their idols.

¹⁴Now as for the rest of the acts of Elah and everything that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

¹⁵In the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, Zimri reigned [over Israel] for seven days at Tirzah. Now the troops were camped against Gibbethon, [a city] which belonged to the Philistines,

¹⁶and the people who were camped heard it said, "Zimri has conspired and has also struck down the king." So all Israel made Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel that day in the camp.

¹⁷Then Omri went up from Gibbethon, and all Israel with him, and they besieged Tirzah.

¹⁸When Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went into the fortress of the king's palace; and *while inside*, he set fire to the

king's palace and died,

¹⁹because of the sins he had committed, doing evil in the sight of the LORD, by walking in the way of Jeroboam, and because of his sin he caused Israel to sin.

²⁰Now as for the rest of the acts of Zimri, and his [treasonous] conspiracy which he committed, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

²¹Then the people of Israel were divided in half. Half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king, and the *other* half followed Omri.

²²But the people who followed Omri prevailed over the people who followed Tibni the son of Ginath. So Tibni died and Omri became king.

²³In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king over Israel *and reigned* for twelve years. He reigned six years at Tirzah.

²⁴Omri bought the hill Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver, and he built *a city* on the hill [and fortified it], and named the city which he built Samaria, after the owner of the hill, Shemer.

²⁵But Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, and acted more wickedly than all who *came* before him.

²⁶He walked in all the ways of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and in his sin, which he made Israel commit, provoking the LORD God of Israel, [to anger] with their idols.

²⁷Now as for the rest of the acts of Omri which he did, and his might which he showed, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

²⁸So Omri slept with his fathers [in death] and was buried

in Samaria. Ahab his son became king in his place.

²⁹Ahab the son of Omri became king over Israel in the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria for twenty-two years.

³⁰Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all [the kings] who were before him.

³¹It came about, as if it had been a trivial thing for Ahab to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him.

³²So he erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he built in Samaria.

³³Ahab also made the Asherah. Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him.

³⁴In his days, Hiel the Bethelite rebuilt Jericho. He laid its foundations with the *loss of* Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates with the *loss of* his youngest son Segub, in accordance with the word of the LORD, which He spoke through Joshua the son of Nun. [Josh 6:26]

17 NOW ELIJAH the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by My word.” [Deut 11:16, 17]

²And the word of the LORD came to him, saying,

³“Go from here and turn eastward and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan [River].

⁴“You shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to sustain you there [with food].”

⁵So he went and did in accordance with the word of the LORD; he went and lived by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan.

⁶And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he would drink from the brook.

⁷It happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

⁸Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying,

⁹“Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you.”

¹⁰So he set out and went to Zarephath, and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks [for firewood]. He called out to her and said, “Please bring me a little water in a jar, so that I may drink.”

¹¹As she was going to get it, he called to her and said, “Please bring me a piece of bread in your hand.”

¹²But she said, “As the LORD your God lives, I have no bread, only a handful of flour in the bowl and a little oil in the jar. See, I am gathering a few sticks so that I may go in and bake it for me and my son, that we may eat it [as our last meal] and die.”

¹³Elijah said to her, “Do not fear; go and do as you have said. Just make me a little bread from it first and bring it out to me, and afterward you may make one for yourself and for your son.

¹⁴“For this is what the LORD God of Israel says: ‘The bowl of flour shall not be exhausted nor shall the jar of oil be empty until the day that the LORD sends rain [again] on the face of the earth.’”

¹⁵She went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for *many* days.

¹⁶The bowl of flour was not exhausted nor did the jar of oil become empty, in accordance the word of the LORD which He spoke through Elijah.

¹⁷It happened after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became sick; and his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him.

¹⁸So she said to Elijah, “What [problem] is there between you and me, O man of God? Have you come to me to bring my sin to mind and to put my son to death?”

¹⁹He said to her, “Give me your son.” Then he took him from her arms and carried him up to the upper room where he was living, and laid him on his own bed.

²⁰He called to the LORD and said, “O LORD my God, have You brought further tragedy to the widow with whom I am staying, by causing her son to die?”

²¹Then he stretched himself out upon the child three times, and called to the LORD and said, “O LORD my God, please let this child’s life return to him.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

You Can Pray Powerful Prayers

The King James Version of James 5:16 tells us that the effective fervent prayer of a “righteous” man is powerful. This means a person who is not living under condemnation—a believer who has confidence in God and in the power of prayer. This does not mean he is without imperfections in his life, but he has learned to receive His right standing with God through faith in Christ.

Elijah was a man of God who did not always behave perfectly, but he did not allow his imperfections to steal his confidence in God. Elijah had faith, but at times he also struggled with fear. He was usually obedient to God, but at times he was also disobedient. He loved God and wanted to fulfill His will and calling upon his life. There were also times when he gave in to human weaknesses and tried to avoid the consequences of that will and calling.

In 1 Kings 18, we see Elijah moving in tremendous power, calling down fire from heaven and slaying 450 prophets of Baal. Then right after that we see him fearfully running from Jezebel, becoming negative and depressed, and even wanting to die (see 1 Kin. 19).

Like many of us, Elijah let his emotions get the upper hand. He was a human being like us, and yet he prayed powerful prayers. His example should give us enough “scriptural

power” to defeat condemnation when it rises up to tell us we cannot pray powerfully because of our weaknesses and faults.

Never underestimate the power of effective, fervent prayer!

²²The LORD heard the voice of Elijah, and the life of the child returned to him and he revived.

²³Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the [lower part of the] house and gave him to his mother; and Elijah said, “See, your son is alive.”

²⁴Then the woman said to Elijah, “Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth.”

18 NOW IT happened after many days that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, “Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth.”

²So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. Now the famine was severe in Samaria.

³Ahab called Obadiah who was the governor of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly;

⁴for when Jezebel destroyed the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water.)

⁵Then Ahab said to Obadiah, “Go into the land to all the sources of water and to all the streams; perhaps we may find grass and keep the horses and mules alive, and not have to kill some of the cattle.”

⁶So they divided the land between them to survey it. Ahab went one way by himself and Obadiah went another way by himself.

⁷As Obadiah was on the way, behold, Elijah met him. He recognized him and fell face downward [out of respect] and said, “Is it you, my lord Elijah?”

⁸He answered him, “It is I. Go tell your master, ‘Elijah is here.’”

⁹But he said, “What sin have I committed, that you would hand over your servant to Ahab to put me to death?”

¹⁰“As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent *messengers* to seek you; and when they said, ‘He is not here,’ Ahab made the kingdom or nation swear that they had not found you.

¹¹“And now you are saying, ‘Go, tell your master, “Behold, Elijah [is here].” ’

¹²“And as soon as I leave you, the Spirit of the LORD will carry you to a place I do not know; so when I come to tell Ahab and he does not find you, he will kill me. Yet your servant has [reverently] feared the LORD from my youth.

¹³“Has it not been told to my lord [Elijah] what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, how I hid a hundred of the LORD’s prophets by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water?”

¹⁴“And now you are saying, ‘Go, tell your master, “Elijah is here” ’; and he will kill me.”

¹⁵Elijah said, “As the LORD of hosts (armies) lives, before whom I stand, I will certainly show myself to Ahab today.”

¹⁶So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

¹⁷When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, “Are you the one who is bringing disaster on Israel?”

¹⁸Elijah said, “I have not brought disaster on Israel, but you and your father’s household *have*, by abandoning (rejecting) the commandments of the LORD and by following the Baals.

¹⁹“Now then, send *word* and gather to me all Israel at Mount Carmel, together with the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of [the goddess] Asherah, who eat at [Queen] Jezebel’s table.”

²⁰So Ahab sent *word* to all the Israelites and assembled the [pagan] prophets together at Mount Carmel.

²¹Elijah approached all the people and said, “How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” But the people [of Israel] did not answer him [so much as] a word.

²²Then Elijah said to the people, “I alone remain a prophet of the LORD, while Baal’s prophets are 450 men.

²³“Now let them give us two oxen, and let them choose one ox for themselves and cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire *under it*. I will prepare the other ox and lay it on the wood, and I will not put a fire *under it*.

²⁴“Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the god who answers by fire, He is God.” And all the people answered, “It is well spoken.”

²⁵Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one bull for yourselves and prepare it first, since there are many of you;

and call on the name of your god, but put no fire *under it*.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

You Can Make the Right Decisions

Many people struggle with indecision and double-mindedness (constantly changing their minds, as is seen in 1 Kin. 18:21) because of fear or a lack of confidence. However, you can make a decision and stick with it because you have discipline and a calm, well-balanced mind (see 2 Tim. 1:7).

You can easily feel overwhelmed by all the decisions you need to make each day unless you have confidence in your ability to make the right ones. Don't ever say again, "I have a hard time making decisions," because when you think and speak like that you are setting yourself up for confusion. Instead, you can believe that the next time you need to make a decision you will be led by the Holy Spirit and know what to do. This is a new day for you, and you are in charge of your thinking—it is no longer in charge of you!

²⁶So they took the bull that was given to them and prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, "O Baal, hear *and* answer us." But there was no voice and no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they had made.

²⁷At noon Elijah mocked them, saying, "Cry out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied, or he is out [at the moment], or he is on a journey. Perhaps he is asleep and must

be awakened!”

²⁸So they cried out with a loud voice [to get Baal’s attention] and cut themselves with swords and lances in accordance with their custom, until the blood flowed out on them.

²⁹As midday passed, they played the part of prophets *and* raved dramatically until the time for offering the *evening* sacrifice; but there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention.

³⁰Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come near to me.” So all the people approached him. And he repaired *and* rebuilt the [old] altar of the LORD that had been torn down [by Jezebel]. [1 Kin 18:13; 19:10]

³¹Then Elijah took twelve stones in accordance with the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, “Israel shall be your name.” [Gen 32:28]

³²So with the stones Elijah built an altar in the name of the LORD. He made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two measures of seed.

³³Then he laid out the wood and cut the ox in pieces and laid it on the wood.

³⁴And he said, “Fill four pitchers with water and pour it on the burnt offering and the wood.” And he said, “Do it the second time.” And they did it the second time. And he said, “Do it the third time.” And they did it a third time.

³⁵The water flowed around the altar, and he also filled the trench with water.

³⁶At the time of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, Elijah

the prophet approached [the altar] and said, “O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel (Jacob), let it be known today that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and that I have done all these things at Your word.

³⁷“Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so that this people may know that You, O LORD, are God, and that You have turned their hearts back [to You].”

³⁸Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood, and *even* the stones and the dust; it also licked up the water in the trench.

³⁹When all the people saw it, they fell face downward; and they said, “The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!”

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Choose True Faith

I once assumed that doubt and unbelief were the same, but I've learned that there is a difference. Neither one honors God, but they function in different ways.

The story of the prophet Elijah is an excellent picture of doubt at work. Because of King Ahab's wickedness, Elijah declared that no rain would fall until he, the prophet, said so. For the next three-and-a-half years, drought scourged the land.

That was pretty convincing. Who would question God or His prophet? But as time went on, the people had questions. So, "Elijah approached all the people and said, 'How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him'" (1 Kin. 18:21).

Why were they caught between two possible answers? That's what doubt really is. Doubt isn't simply unbelief—it's more of an attitude that says, "I believe, but..." or, "I want to believe, but..."

Doubt often comes to reside where faith once lived. Doubt is active opposition to faith, and it tries to push faith aside. The

people had believed the prophet, but as time passed uncertainty crept in. They began to question what they once believed, and it opened the door for the enemy to bring doubt into their minds.

Doubt never comes from God—it is always in opposition to His will. God gives each of us a measure of faith (see Rom. 12:3). When we cling to that faith, we push away doubts. But when we allow questions or uncertainties to take our minds away from God’s wonderful work in our lives—that’s doubt. It’s also a subtle entry point for our enemy. He plants doubt in our minds, hoping it will cause us to oppose God. Doubt is the first step of opposition to what God declares. We all experience doubt at times, but if we know God’s Word, we can recognize when the devil is lying to us and tempting us to question God.

Elijah urged the people to make a decision and stick with it. He wanted them to “set their minds and keep them set” (see Col. 3:2) in the right direction. He made the options clear: believe in the true God or believe in an idol.

Don’t fall into the trap of being double-minded. Choose true faith and say, “Lord, I believe. I may not always understand, but I trust You.”

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God, at times I've been weak, allowing Satan to make me question You, Your love, and Your plans for my life. I ask You to teach me Your Word and strengthen me so that Satan cannot trick me again. Thank You for hearing my prayer. Amen.

⁴⁰Then Elijah said to them, “Seize the prophets of Baal; do not let one of them escape.” They seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and [as God’s law required] killed them there. [Deut 13:5, 12–15; 18:20]

⁴¹Now Elijah said to Ahab, “Go up, eat and drink, for there is the sound of the roar *of an abundance* of rain.”

⁴²So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he crouched down to the earth and put his face between his knees,

⁴³and he said to his servant, “Go up, look toward the sea.” So he went up and looked and said, “There is nothing.” Elijah said, “Go back” seven times.

⁴⁴And at the seventh *time* the servant said, “A cloud as small as a man’s hand is coming up from the sea.” And Elijah said, “Go up, say to Ahab, ‘Prepare *your chariot* and go down, so that the rain shower does not stop you.’”

⁴⁵In a little while the sky grew dark with clouds and wind, and there were heavy showers. And Ahab mounted *and* rode [his chariot] and went [inland] to Jezreel.

⁴⁶Then the hand of the LORD came upon Elijah [giving him supernatural strength]. He girded up his loins and outran Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel [nearly twenty miles].

19 NOW AHAB told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets [of Baal] with the sword.

²Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So may

the gods do to me, and even more, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like the life of one of them.”

³And Elijah was afraid and arose and ran for his life, and he came to Beersheba which belongs to Judah, and he left his servant there.

⁴But he himself traveled a day’s journey into the wilderness, and he came and sat down under a juniper tree and asked [God] that he might die. He said, “It is enough; now, O LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers.”

⁵He lay down and slept under the juniper tree, and behold, an angel touched him and said to him, “Get up and eat.”

⁶He looked, and by his head there was a bread cake baked on hot coal, and a pitcher of water. So he ate and drank and lay down again.

⁷Then the angel of the LORD came again a second time and touched him and said, “Get up, and eat, for the journey is too long for you [without adequate sustenance].”

⁸So he got up and ate and drank, and with the strength of that food he traveled forty days and nights to Horeb (Sinai), the mountain of God.

⁹There he came to a cave and spent the night in it; and behold, the word of the LORD *came* to him, and He said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

¹⁰He said, “I have been very zealous (impassioned) for the LORD God of hosts (armies) [proclaiming what is rightfully and uniquely His]; for the sons of Israel have abandoned (broken) Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I, only I, am left; and they seek to take away my life.”

¹¹So He said, “Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD.” And behold, the LORD was passing by, and a great and powerful wind was tearing out the mountains and breaking the rocks in pieces before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind, [there was] an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake.

¹²After the earthquake, [there was] a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire, [there was] the sound of a gentle blowing.

¹³When Elijah heard *the sound*, he wrapped his face in his mantle (cloak) and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold, a voice came to him and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

¹⁴He said, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts (armies), because the sons of Israel have abandoned (broken) Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I, only I, am left; and they seek to take away my life.”

¹⁵The LORD said to him, “Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram (Syria);

¹⁶and you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel; and anoint Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Listening for the Still Small Voice

The Holy Spirit dwells in us, and He knows the mind of God (see 1 Cor. 2:11). The Holy Spirit is our Teacher, and one of His purposes is to reveal to us God's wisdom and revelation.

While the Holy Spirit wants to enlighten our minds, all too often we miss what the Spirit is attempting to reveal because our human thoughts are shouting too loud. Our minds should not be filled with reasoning, worry, anxiety, fear, and the like. They should be calm, quiet, and serene.

The ways of the Holy Spirit are gentle; most of the time He speaks to us in "the sound of gentle blowing," or as the King James Version says, a "still small voice" (1 Kin. 19:12). So it is vital that we learn to keep ourselves in a condition conducive to hearing God's divine revelation.

¹⁷"It shall come about that Jehu shall put to death whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, and Elisha shall put to death whoever escapes the sword of Jehu.

¹⁸"Yet I will leave 7,000 [survivors] in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed down to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him."

¹⁹So Elijah departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, while he was plowing with twelve pairs of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth. Elijah went over to him and threw

his mantle (coat) on him.

²⁰He left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, “Please let me kiss my father and mother [goodbye], then I will follow you.” And he said to him, “Go on back; for what have I done to [stop] you?”

²¹So Elisha left him and went back. Then he took a pair of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their meat with the implements of the oxen [as fuel], and gave *the meat* to the people, and they ate. Then he stood and followed Elijah, and served him. [2 Kin 3:11]

20 BEN-HADAD KING of Aram (Syria) gathered all his army together; thirty-two kings were [allied] with him, with horses and chariots. And he went up and besieged Samaria [Israel’s capital], and fought against it.

²Then he sent messengers to the city to Ahab king of Israel; and he said to him, “Thus says Ben-hadad:

³“Your silver and your gold are mine; your wives and your children, even the fairest, also are mine [as conditions of peace].”

⁴The king of Israel [conceded his defeat and] answered, “By your word, my lord, O king, I am yours, and all that I have.”

⁵The messengers returned and said, “Thus says Ben-hadad: ‘I indeed sent *word* to you, saying, “You shall give me your silver, your gold, your wives, and your children,”

⁶but about this time tomorrow I will send my servants to you, and they will search your house and the houses of your

servants; and they will take with their hands (confiscate) whatever is desirable in your eyes and carry it away.”

⁷Then the king of Israel summoned all the elders of the land and said, “Please observe and see how this man is seeking our destruction. For he sent *messengers* to me for my wives, my children, my silver, and my gold, and I did not refuse him.”

⁸All the elders and all the people said to him, “Do not listen or consent [to this additional demand].”

⁹So he said to Ben-hadad’s messengers, “Tell my lord the king, ‘Every *demand* you first sent to your servant I will do, but I cannot do this [additional] thing [as a condition of peace].’” And the messengers left; then they brought him word again.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

God Speaks Softly

Imagine two people in a room together. One is trying to whisper a secret to the other. If the room is filled with a loud noise, even though the message is being communicated, the one waiting for the secret information will miss it simply because the room is so noisy he can't hear. He may not even realize that he is being spoken to.

For years I did not realize I had been missing much of what the Holy Spirit wanted to reveal to me simply because my mind was so busy. The ways of the Holy Spirit are gentle; most of the time He speaks to us as He did to the prophet Elijah in “the sound of gentle blowing,” or “a still small voice” as in other translations (1 Kin. 19:12). It is therefore vital that we learn to keep ourselves in a condition conducive to hearing. We won't hear if we are not listening!

After a powerful victory over 450 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, Elijah fled, apparently in terror, when Queen Jezebel threatened to kill him. He must have been worn out by the intense events. He then suddenly found himself alone in a

cave, with no crowds and no one to talk to. When God asked him what he was doing there, he spoke of his zeal for God and being the only prophet left (v. 10).

Elijah experienced great and powerful winds, breaking rocks in pieces, an earthquake, and fire (vv. 11–12). I think that was the way Elijah expected God to appear—in a loud and explosive way. But the writer tells us God wasn't speaking through those things.

The devil likes noise and an uproar, but God likes to speak in the still small voice—the voice not everyone will hear—the voice only the committed will listen for.

As long as Elijah sought the dramatic, he wouldn't hear God. But when he pulled back and listened for the inner voice, the gentle voice of the Holy Spirit, Elijah could hear the direction he needed from God.

What kind of voice from God are you listening for? Do you take time to be quiet and just listen? If not, there is no better time to begin than right now.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Father, I long to hear Your voice and follow Your direction for my life. Help me learn to truly listen and to recognize when You are speaking to me. Amen.

¹⁰Ben-hadad sent *word* to him and said, “May the gods do so to me, and more also, if there is enough dust left of Samaria for handfuls for all the [armed] people who follow me.”

¹¹The king of Israel answered, “Tell him, ‘A man who puts on [his armor to go to battle] should not boast like the man who takes it off [after the battle has been won].’”

¹²When Ben-hadad heard this message, as he and the kings were drinking in the temporary shelters, he said to his servants, “Station *yourselves*.” So they stationed *themselves* against the city [of Samaria].

¹³Then a prophet approached Ahab king of Israel and said, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Have you seen all this great army? Behold, I will hand them over to you, and you shall know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD.’”

¹⁴Ahab said, “By whom?” And he said, “Thus says the LORD: ‘By the young men [the attendants or bodyguards] of the governors of the districts.’” Then Ahab said, “Who shall begin the battle?” And he answered, “You.”

¹⁵Then Ahab assembled *and* counted the young men of the governors of the districts, and there were 232. After them he assembled *and* counted all the people, all the sons of Israel, 7,000. [1 Kin 19:18]

¹⁶They went out at noon, while Ben-hadad was getting drunk in the temporary shelters, he and the thirty-two kings who were helping him.

¹⁷The young men of the governors of the districts went out first; and Ben-hadad sent *men* out and they told him, saying, “Men have come out of Samaria.”

¹⁸And he said, “Whether they have come out for peace or for war, take them alive.”

¹⁹So these young men of the governors of the districts went out of the city, and the army followed them.

²⁰And each one killed his man; and the Arameans (Syrians) fled and Israel pursued them. Ben-hadad king of Aram escaped on a horse with horsemen.

²¹The king of Israel went out and struck [the riders of] the horses and chariots, and killed the Arameans in a great slaughter.

²²Then the prophet approached the king of Israel and said to him, “Go, strengthen yourself and observe and see what you have to do; for at the first of next year the king of Aram (Syria) will come up against you.”

²³Now the servants of the king of Aram said to him, “Israel’s god is a god of the hills; that is why they were stronger than we. But let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we will be stronger than they.

²⁴“Do this: remove the [thirty-two allied] kings, each from his place, and put captains in their place,

²⁵and assemble an army like the army that you have lost *in battle*, horse for horse and chariot for chariot. Then we will fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they.” And he listened to their words and did so.

²⁶At the first of the year [in spring], Ben-hadad assembled *and* counted the Arameans (Syrians) and went up to Aphek [east of the Sea of Galilee] to fight against Israel.

²⁷The sons of Israel were counted and given provisions, and they went to meet them. The Israelites camped before the

enemy like two little flocks of goats [with everything against them, except God], and the Arameans filled the country.

²⁸A man of God approached and said to the king of Israel, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Because the Arameans have said, “The LORD is a god of the hills, but He is not a god of the valleys,” I will give this great army into your hand, and you shall know [by experience] that I am the LORD.’” [Phil 4:13]

²⁹So they camped opposite each other for seven days. Then on the seventh day the battle began, and the sons of Israel killed 100,000 of the Aramean foot soldiers in a single day.

³⁰But the rest ran to the city of Aphek, and the [city] wall fell on 27,000 of the men who were left. Ben-hadad escaped and came into the city, going into an inner chamber [to hide].

³¹But his servants said to him, “We have heard that the kings of the house (royal line) of Israel are merciful kings. Please let us put sackcloth around our loins and ropes on our necks [as symbols of submission], and go out to the king of Israel; perhaps he will spare your life.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Anger Leads to Danger

The word anger is one letter removed from the word danger. God's Word tells us not to let the sun go down on our anger (see Eph. 4:26). When we stay angry, we give the enemy a foothold in our lives; we open a door for him to work. Such was the case when King Ahab "went to his house resentful and sullen" after being angered by the word of the prophet (see 1 Kin. 20:43; 21:4).

God promises His children a blessed and abundant life if we obey His commandments. Staying angry and harboring unkind feelings toward others is disobedience. God instructs us to forgive as freely as He has forgiven us. In this life, we need to be very generous with forgiveness. It is one thing we can learn to give away every day. If you are angry with anyone for any reason, even if your anger seems justified, choose to forgive, and you will be obeying God and doing yourself a favor.

³²So they put sackcloth around their loins and ropes on their necks, and came to the king of Israel and said, "Your servant Ben-hadad says, 'Please let me live.'" And Ahab asked, "Is he still alive? He is my brother."

³³Now the men took it as a good omen, and quickly understanding his meaning said, "Yes, your brother Ben-hadad

lives.” Then the king said, “Go, bring him.” Then Ben-hadad came out to him, and Ahab had him come up into the chariot.

³⁴Ben-hadad [tempting him] said to him, “I will restore the cities which my father took from your father; and you may set up bazaars (shops) of your own in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria.” Then, *Ahab replied*, “I will let you go with this covenant (treaty).” So he made a covenant with him and let him go.

³⁵Now a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to another by the word of the LORD, “Please strike me.” But the man refused to strike him.

³⁶Then the prophet said to him, “Because you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, behold, as soon as you leave me, a lion will kill you.” And as soon as he left him, a lion found him and killed him.

³⁷Then the prophet found another man and said, “Please strike me.” So the man struck him hard, wounding him.

³⁸So the prophet left and waited for King Ahab by the road, and disguised himself [as a wounded soldier] with a bandage over his eyes.

³⁹As the king passed by, the prophet called out to the king and said, “Your servant went out into the middle of the battle, and behold, a man turned aside and brought a man to me and said, ‘Guard this man; if for any reason he is missing, then your life shall be *required* for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.’

⁴⁰“But while your servant was busy here and there, he [escaped and] was gone.” And the king of Israel said to him, “Such is your own judgment (verdict); you have determined

it.”

⁴¹Then the prophet quickly removed the bandage from his eyes, and [Ahab] the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets.

⁴²He said to the king, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Because you have released from your hand the man [Ben-hadad] whom I had devoted to destruction, your life shall be *required* for his life, and your people for his people.’”

⁴³So the king of Israel went to his house resentful and sullen, and came to Samaria. [1 Kin 22:34–36]

21 NOW IT came about after these things that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel, close beside the [winter] palace of Ahab king of Samaria;

²Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, “Give me your vineyard, so that I may have it for a garden of vegetables *and* herbs, because it is near my house. I will give you a better vineyard for it, or, if you prefer, I will give you what it is worth in money.”

³But Naboth said to Ahab, “The LORD forbid me that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you.”

⁴So Ahab [already upset by the Lord’s message] came into his house [feeling more] resentful and sullen because of what Naboth the Jezreelite had said to him; for he had said, “I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.” And he lay down on his bed and turned away his face, and would not eat any food.

⁵Then Jezebel his wife came to him and asked him, “Why is your spirit so troubled that you have not eaten?”

⁶And he said to her, “Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, ‘Give me your vineyard for money; or if you prefer, I will give you *another* vineyard for it.’ But he answered, ‘I will not give you my vineyard.’”

⁷Jezebel his wife said to him, “Do you now reign over Israel? Get up, eat food, and let your heart rejoice; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.”

⁸So she wrote letters in Ahab’s name and sealed them with his seal, and sent them to the elders and nobles who lived with Naboth in his city.

⁹Now in the letters she wrote, “Proclaim a fast and seat Naboth at the head of the people;

¹⁰and seat two worthless *and* unprincipled men opposite him, and have them testify against him, saying, ‘You cursed God and the king.’ Then take him out and stone him to death.”

¹¹So the men of his city, the elders and the nobles who lived there, did as Jezebel had sent *word* to them, just as it was written in the letters which she had sent to them.

¹²They proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth at the head of the people.

¹³Two worthless *and* unprincipled men came in and sat down opposite him; and they testified against Naboth before the people, saying, “Naboth cursed *and* renounced God and the king.” Then they brought him outside the city and stoned him to death.

¹⁴Then they sent *word* to Jezebel, saying, “Naboth has been stoned to death.”

¹⁵When Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, she said to Ahab, “Arise, take possession of the

vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite which he refused to sell you, because Naboth is no longer alive, but dead.”

¹⁶When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he arose to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

¹⁷Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

¹⁸“Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is in Samaria. Behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone to take possession of it.

¹⁹“You shall speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: “Have you murdered and also taken possession [of the victim’s property]?’” ’ And you shall speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord: “In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, dogs will lick up your blood as well.”’”

²⁰Ahab said to Elijah, “Have you found me, O my enemy?” And he answered, “I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the LORD.

²¹“Behold [says the LORD], I am bringing evil (catastrophe) on you, and will utterly sweep you away, and will cut off from Ahab every male, both bond and free in Israel;

²²and I will make your house (descendants) like that of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for provoking Me to anger and making Israel sin.

²³“The LORD also spoke in regard to Jezebel, saying, ‘The dogs will eat [the body of] Jezebel in the district of Jezreel.’

²⁴“The dogs will eat anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city, and the birds of the air will eat anyone who dies in

the field.” [1 Kin 14:11; 16:4]

²⁵There certainly was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife incited him.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Mind, Mouth, Moods, and Attitudes

Would you like to be in a good mood today—and every day? You are probably thinking, *Yes, of course I would. Who wouldn't?*

I spent a lot of years being controlled by a variety of moods and believing I had no choice in how I felt. I envied all the “happy people” who wake up singing every day. They are *always* happy and don't even have to make an effort to be this way. *Why them and not me?* I used to wonder. Some people are born with a temperament that makes it easy for them to look on the bright side, but even they have to make choices about their thoughts and attitudes toward life. Any person, no matter how naturally inclined they are toward good moods, can have sour, negative thoughts if they don't choose the right thoughts.

Your mind, mouth, moods, and attitudes are all intricately connected. First you think, and then your thoughts turn into words that you speak, and the two of them together affect you

emotionally and turn into moods and attitudes. This is demonstrated powerfully in the case of King Ahab in 1 Kings 21. First, Ahab had already become resentful and sullen by what the Lord had said to him after the battle with the Arameans (see 1 Kin. 20:43). Next, he desired to purchase the vineyard of a man named Naboth, who refused his offer. Then it says, “So Ahab... came into his house [feeling more] resentful and sullen because of what Naboth the Jezreelite had said to him... And he lay down on his bed and turned away his face, and would not eat any food” (1 Kin. 21:4). The thought of Naboth’s refusal sent him into a depressed state of mind to the point that he could only lie in bed and he refused to eat.

If you truly want to be in a good mood on a regular basis, you can start by choosing to think about things that will generate good emotions instead of bad ones. If you desire greater emotional stability and the ability to maintain a consistently good attitude no matter what your circumstances, make it a goal and don’t give up until you have reached it.

As you walk with God, you can always begin again. It is never too late for a fresh start. Your history does not have to be your destiny!

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord God of heaven, I thank You that I don't have to be controlled by my emotions. Help me to use my thoughts and the words I speak to generate good emotions and the attitudes that will bring You glory. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

²⁶He acted very repulsively in following idols, in accordance with everything the Amorites had done, whom the LORD expelled [from the land] before the sons of Israel.

²⁷Now when Ahab heard these words [of Elijah], he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and fasted, and he lay in sackcloth and went about dejectedly (mourning).

²⁸Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

²⁹“Do you see how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the evil (catastrophe) in his lifetime, but in his son’s days I will bring evil upon his house.”

22 ARAM (SYRIA) and Israel continued without war for three years.

²In the third year Jehoshaphat king of Judah came down to the king of Israel.

³Now the king of Israel said to his servants, “Do you know that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, yet we are still doing nothing to take it from the hand of the king of Aram?”

⁴And Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, “Will you go with me to battle at Ramoth-gilead?” Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, “I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses.”

⁵But Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, “Please inquire first for the word of the LORD.”

⁶Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said to them, “Shall I go to battle against Ramoth-gilead, or should I not?” And they said, “Go up, for the LORD has handed it over to the king.”

⁷But Jehoshaphat [doubted and] said, “Is there not another prophet of the LORD here whom we may ask?”

⁸The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “There is one more man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the LORD, but I hate him, because he never prophesies good *news* for me, but *only* evil.” But Jehoshaphat said, “May the king not say that [Micaiah only tells bad news].”

⁹Then the king of Israel summoned an officer and said, “Bring quickly Micaiah the son of Imlah.”

¹⁰Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were each sitting on his throne, dressed in *their* [royal] robes, [in an open place] at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them.

¹¹Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made for himself horns of iron and said, “Thus says the LORD: ‘With these you will gore the Arameans (Syrians) until they are destroyed.’”

¹²All the prophets were prophesying in the same way [to please Ahab], saying, “Go up to Ramoth-gilead and be successful, for the LORD will hand it over to the king.”

¹³Then the messenger who went to summon Micaiah said to him, “Listen carefully, the words of the prophets are unanimously favorable to the king. Please let your words be like the word of one of them, and speak favorably.”

¹⁴But Micaiah said, “As the LORD lives, I will speak what

the LORD says to me.”

¹⁵So when he came to the king, the king said to him, “Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth-gilead in battle, or shall we not?” And he answered him, “Go up and be successful, for the LORD will hand it over to the king.”

¹⁶But the king [doubted him and] said to him, “How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?”

¹⁷And he said,

“I saw all Israel
Scattered upon the mountains,
Like sheep that have no shepherd.
And the LORD said,
‘These have no master.
Let each of them return to his house in peace.’”

¹⁸Then the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?”

¹⁹Micaiah said, “Therefore, hear the word of the LORD. I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host (army) of heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left.

²⁰“The LORD said, ‘Who will entice Ahab to go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?’ And one said this, while another said that.

²¹“Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD and said, ‘I will entice him.’

²²“The LORD said to him, ‘How?’ And he said, ‘I will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ Then the LORD said, ‘You are to entice him and also succeed. Go and

do so.’

²³“Now then, behold, the LORD has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all these prophets; and the LORD has proclaimed disaster against you.”

²⁴But Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah approached and struck Micaiah on the cheek and said, “How did the Spirit of the LORD pass from me to speak to you?”

²⁵Micaiah said, “Behold, you shall see on that day [of the king’s defeat] when you enter an inner room [looking for a place] to hide yourself.”

²⁶Then the king of Israel said, “Take Micaiah and return him to Amon, the governor of the city, and to Joash, the king’s son,

²⁷and say, ‘Thus says the king, “Put this man in prison, and feed him sparingly with the bread and water until I return safely.”’”

²⁸Micaiah said, “If you indeed return safely, the LORD has not spoken by me.” Then he said, “Listen, all you people.”

²⁹So [Ahab] the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead.

³⁰The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “I will disguise myself and enter the battle, but you put on your [royal] clothing.” So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into the battle.

³¹Now the king of Aram (Syria) had commanded the thirty-two captains of his chariots, saying, “Do not fight with [anyone, either] small or great, but with [Ahab] the king of Israel alone.”

³²When the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they

said, “Surely it is the king of Israel.” They turned to fight against him, and Jehoshaphat shouted out [in fear].

³³When the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him.

³⁴But one man drew a bow at random and struck the king of Israel in a joint of the armor. So he said to the driver of his chariot, “Turn around and take me out of the fight, because I have been seriously wounded.”

³⁵The battle raged that day, and [Ahab] the king was propped up in his chariot facing the Arameans (Syrians). And in the evening he died, and the blood from his wound ran down into the bottom of the chariot.

! REMEMBER, don't wait
until the battle is finished to
declare your victory. Thank
God in advance!

³⁶Then about sundown a resounding cry passed throughout the army, saying, “Every man to his city and every man to his own country!”

³⁷So the king died and was brought to Samaria, and they buried the king in Samaria.

³⁸They washed the chariot by the pool [on the outskirts] of Samaria, where the prostitutes bathed, and the dogs licked up his blood, in accordance with the word of the LORD which He had spoken. [1 Kin 21:19]

³⁹Now the rest of Ahab's acts, and everything that he did,

the ivory palace which he built and all the cities which he built, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

⁴⁰So Ahab slept with his fathers [in death], and Ahaziah his son became king in his place.

⁴¹Now Jehoshaphat the son of Asa became king over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel.

⁴²Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi.

⁴³He walked in all the ways of Asa his father, without turning from them, doing right in the sight of the LORD. However, the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places.

⁴⁴Jehoshaphat also made peace with the king of Israel.

⁴⁵Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, his might which he displayed and how he made war, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

⁴⁶And the remnant of the sodomites (male cult prostitutes) who remained in the days of his father Asa, Jehoshaphat expelled from the land.

⁴⁷Now there was no king in Edom; a deputy (governor) was [serving as] king.

⁴⁸Jehoshaphat had [large cargo] ships of Tarshish constructed to go to Ophir for gold, but they did not go, because the ships were wrecked at Ezion-geber.

⁴⁹Then Ahaziah the son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "Let my servants go with your servants in the ships," But Jehoshaphat was unwilling *and* refused.

⁵⁰Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers [in death] and was buried with his fathers in the city of his father David, and Jehoram his son became king in his place.

⁵¹Ahaziah the son of Ahab became king over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel for two years.

⁵²He did evil in the sight of the LORD and walked in the [idolatrous] way of his father [Ahab] and of his mother [Jezebel], and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin.

⁵³He served Baal and worshiped him, and he provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger, in accordance with everything that his father [Ahab] had done.

2 Kings

Author: | Unknown

Date: | 600 BC–550
BC

Second Kings continues the story begun in 1 Kings, focusing on the leaders of the divided kingdom. Some of these kings honored God and thought and acted wisely; therefore, they benefitted the people living under their rule. Others disobeyed God, and both they and their subjects suffered because they were not loyal to Him and did not demonstrate godly wisdom in their leadership.

One of the lessons we learn from reading about good kings and bad kings is that one person's thoughts, decisions, and actions can affect many others. If we turn from God and make choices that go against His Word, we end up with trouble that often impacts the people who care about us. Thankfully, the reverse is also true. When we honor God and think and act in accordance with His Word, we are blessed and often the people around us are blessed as well.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM 2 KINGS:

Gehazi sought material gain at the expense of his integrity (see 2 Kings 5:20–27). Always remember that your integrity is more important than any possession you could ever acquire.

No matter how the enemy comes against you or what he uses to attack you, as long as you are in Christ, those who are with you are more than those who are with your enemies (see 2 Kings 6:16).

You can always trust in and rely confidently on the Lord. There is no one like Him (see 2 Kings 18:5–6)!

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM 2 KINGS:

Elisha answered, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." | 2 Kings 6:16

But the LORD your God you shall fear [and worship]; then He will rescue you from the hands of all your enemies. | 2 Kings 17:39

THE SECOND BOOK OF THE KINGS

1 NOW MOAB rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab.

²Ahaziah [the king of Israel] fell through the lattice (grid) in his upper chamber which was in Samaria, and became sick [from the injury]. So he sent messengers, saying to them, “Go, inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, if I will recover from this sickness.”

³But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, “Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them, ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?’”

⁴“Therefore this is what the LORD says: ‘You [Ahaziah] will not leave the bed on which you lie, but you will certainly die.’” So Elijah departed.

⁵When the messengers returned to Ahaziah, he said to them, “Why have you returned [so soon]?”

⁶They replied, “A man came up to meet us and said to us, ‘Go, return to the king who sent you and tell him, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you send to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will

not leave the bed on which you lie, but you will certainly die.””””

⁷The king asked them, “What was the appearance of the man who came up to meet you and said these things to you?”

⁸They answered him, “*He was a hairy man with a [wide] leather band bound around his loins.*” And Ahaziah said, “It is Elijah the Tishbite.”

⁹Then the king sent to Elijah a captain of fifty with his fifty [fighting men to seize the prophet]. And he went up to him, and behold, he was sitting on the top of a hill. And the captain said to him, “Man of God, the king says, ‘Come down.’”

¹⁰Elijah replied to the captain of fifty, “So if I am a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty [fighting men].” Then fire fell from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

¹¹So King Ahaziah again sent to him another captain of fifty with his fifty [fighting men]. And he said to him, “Man of God, thus says the king, ‘Come down quickly.’”

¹²Elijah answered them, “If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty [fighting men].” And the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

¹³So Ahaziah again sent a captain of a third fifty with his fifty [fighting men]. And the third captain of fifty went up and came bowed down on his knees before Elijah, and begged him [for compassion] and said to him, “O man of God, please let my life and the lives of your servants, these fifty, be precious in your sight.

¹⁴“Behold, fire came down from heaven and consumed the

first two captains of fifty with their fifties; but now let my life be precious in your sight.”

¹⁵The angel of the LORD said to Elijah, “Go down with him; do not be afraid of him.” So he stood and went down with him to the king.

¹⁶Then Elijah said to Ahaziah, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Since you have sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub, god of Ekron—is it because there is no God in Israel to inquire of His word?—therefore you will not leave the bed on which you lie, but will certainly die.’”

¹⁷So Ahaziah [the son of King Ahab] died in accordance with the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken. And because he had no son, Jehoram [his younger brother] became king [of Israel, the northern kingdom] in his place in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah [the southern kingdom].

¹⁸Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah which he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

2 WHEN THE LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were traveling from Gilgal.

²And Elijah said to Elisha, “Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to Bethel.” But Elisha replied, “As the LORD lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you.” So they went down to Bethel.

³Now the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, “Do you know that the LORD will

take your master away from you today?" He said, "Yes, I know it; be quiet [about it]."

⁴Elijah said to him, "Elisha, please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the LORD lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho.

⁵The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho approached Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take your master away from you today?" And he answered, "Yes, I know it; be quiet [about it]."

⁶Elijah said to him, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the LORD lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on.

⁷Fifty men of the sons of the prophets also went and stood opposite them [to watch] at a distance; and the two of them stood by the Jordan.

⁸And Elijah took his mantle (coat) and rolled it up and struck the waters, and they were divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

⁹And when they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me."

¹⁰He said, "You have asked for a difficult thing. *However*, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so."

¹¹As they continued along and talked, behold, a chariot of fire with horses of fire [appeared suddenly and] separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.

¹²Elisha saw it and cried out, "My father, my father, the

chariot of Israel and its horsemen!” And he no longer saw Elijah. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces [in grief].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

A Simple, Yet Powerful, Spiritual Law

When Elijah was taken up to heaven, Elisha asked that a double portion of Elijah's spirit would be upon him (see 2 Kin. 2:9). Not only was it immediately evident that the Spirit of the Lord was upon Elisha, but the Bible records that Elisha's ministry included double the number of miracles Elijah performed. Elisha had spent many years sowing faithfully into Elijah's life by serving him, and now it was time for him to reap his investment. Elisha had done what God wanted him to do.

When we live to please the Spirit, or "sow to the Spirit," we should expect good results (see Gal. 6:8). Reaping according to what we sow is a spiritual law that we can easily see working in our daily lives if we are observant. When we are obedient to God, we should expect blessings. When we are friendly, we will have friends. When we are generous, we will experience generosity returned. This is true in every area of our lives, including health, finances, relationships, and everything else pertaining to our well-being. This is one of the simplest spiritual laws to understand and one that produces great power in our lives.

¹³He picked up the mantle of Elijah that fell off him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan.

¹⁴He took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and struck the waters and said, “Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?” And when he too had struck the waters, they divided this way and that, and Elisha crossed over.

¹⁵When the sons of the prophets who were [watching] opposite at Jericho saw him, they said, “The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.” And they came to meet him and bowed down to the ground before him [in respect].

¹⁶Then they said to Elisha, “Behold now, there are among your servants fifty strong men; please let them go and search for your master. It may be that the Spirit of the LORD has taken him up and cast him on some mountain or into some valley.” And he said, “You shall not send *anyone*.”

¹⁷But when they urged him until he was embarrassed [to refuse them], he said, “Send *them*.” So they sent fifty men, and they searched for three days but did not find Elijah.

¹⁸They returned to Elisha while he was staying at Jericho; and he said to them, “Did I not tell you, ‘Do not go’?”

¹⁹Then the men of the city said to Elisha, “Look, this city is in a pleasant place, as my lord [Elisha] sees; but the water is bad and the land is barren.”

²⁰He said, “Bring me a new jar, and put salt in it.” So they brought it to him.

²¹Then Elisha went to the spring of water and threw the salt in it and said, “Thus says the LORD: ‘I [not the salt] have purified *and* healed these waters; there shall no longer be death or barrenness because of it.’”

²²So the waters have been purified to this day, in accordance with the word spoken by Elisha.

²³Then Elisha went up from Jericho to Bethel. On the way, young boys came out of the city and mocked him and said to him, “Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!”

²⁴When he turned around and looked at them, he cursed them in the name of the LORD. Then two female bears came out of the woods and tore to pieces forty-two of the boys.

²⁵Elisha went from there to Mount Carmel, and from there he returned to Samaria.

3 JEHORAM THE son of Ahab became king over Israel in Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years.

²He did evil in the sight of the LORD, but not like his father and mother; for he put away the *sacred* pillar of Baal that his father had made.

³Nevertheless, he continued in the [idolatrous] sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin; he did not depart from them.

⁴Mesha the king of Moab was a sheep breeder, and he used to pay [an annual tribute] to the king of Israel 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams.

⁵But when Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.

⁶So King Jehoram left Samaria at that time and assembled all [the fighting men of] Israel.

⁷Then he went and sent *word* to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, saying, “The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will

you go with me to fight against Moab?” And he replied, “I will go; I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses.”

⁸Jehoram said, “Which way shall we go up?” Jehoshaphat answered, “The way through the Wilderness of Edom.”

⁹So the king of Israel went with the king of Judah and the king of Edom. They made a circuit of seven days’ journey, but there was no water for the army or for the cattle that followed them.

¹⁰Then the king of Israel said, “We are doomed, for the LORD has called these three kings to be handed over to Moab.”

¹¹But Jehoshaphat said, “Is there no prophet of the LORD here from whom we may inquire of the LORD?” One of the servants of the king of Israel answered, “Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who used to pour water over Elijah’s hands.”

¹²Jehoshaphat said, “The word of the LORD is with him.” So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to Elisha.

¹³Now Elisha said to the king of Israel, “What *business* do you have with me? Go to the prophets of your [wicked] father [Ahab] and to the prophets of your [pagan] mother [Jezebel].” But the king of Israel said to him, “No, for the LORD has called these three kings *together* to be handed over to Moab.”

¹⁴Elisha said, “As the LORD of hosts (armies) lives, before whom I stand, were it not that I have regard for Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would not look at you nor see you [king of Israel].

¹⁵“But now bring me a musician.” And it came about while the musician played, that the hand (power) of the LORD came

upon Elisha.

¹⁶He said, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Make this valley (the Arabah) full of trenches.’

¹⁷“For thus says the LORD, ‘You will not see wind or rain, yet that valley will be filled with water, so you and your cattle and your *other* animals may drink.

¹⁸‘This is but a simple thing in the sight of the LORD; He will also hand over the Moabites to you.

¹⁹‘You shall strike every fortified city and every choice (principal) city, and cut down every good tree and stop up all sources of water, and ruin every good piece of land with stones.’”

²⁰It happened in the morning, when the sacrifice was offered, that suddenly water came [miraculously] from the area of Edom, and the country was filled with water.

²¹Now all the Moabites heard that the [three] kings had come up to fight against them, and all who were able to put on armor, as well as those who were older, were summoned and stood [together in battle formation] at the border.

²²When they got up early the *next* morning, the sun shone on the water, and the Moabites saw the water across from *them* as red as blood.

²³And they said, “This is blood! Clearly the kings have fought together, and have killed one another. Now then, Moab, to the spoil [and the plunder of the dead soldiers]!”

²⁴But when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and struck the Moabites, so that they fled before them; and they went forward into the land, killing the Moabites [as they went].

²⁵They destroyed the [walls of the] cities, and each man threw a stone on every piece of good land, covering it [with stones]. And they stopped up all the springs of water and cut down all the good trees, until they left *nothing* in Kir-hareseth [Moab's capital city] but its stones. Then the [stone] slingers surrounded the city and destroyed it.

²⁶When the king of Moab saw that the battle was too fierce for him, he took with him seven hundred swordsmen to break through to the king of Edom; but they could not.

²⁷Then the king of Moab took his eldest son, who was to reign in his place, and offered him [publicly] as a burnt offering [to Chemosh] on the [city] wall [horrifying everyone]. And there was great wrath against Israel, and Israel's allies [Judah and Edom] withdrew from King Jehoram and returned to their own land.

4 NOW ONE of the wives *of a man* of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha [for help], saying “Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant [reverently] feared the LORD; but the creditor is coming to take my two sons to be his slaves [in payment for a loan].”

²Elisha said to her, “What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have [of value] in the house?” She said, “Your maidservant has nothing in the house except a [small] jar of [olive] oil.”

³Then he said, “Go, borrow containers from all your neighbors, empty containers—and not *just* a few.

⁴“Then you shall go in and shut the door behind you and

your sons, and pour out [the oil you have] into all these containers, and you shall set aside each one when it is full.”

⁵So she left him and shut the door behind her and her sons; they were bringing her *the containers* as she poured [the oil].

⁶When the containers were all full, she said to her son, “Bring me another container.” And he said to her, “There is not a one left.” Then the oil stopped [multiplying].

⁷Then she came and told the man of God. He said, “Go, sell the oil and pay your debt, and you and your sons can live on the rest.”

⁸Now there came a day when Elisha went over to Shunem, where there was a prominent *and* influential woman, and she persuaded him to eat a meal. Afterward, whenever he passed by, he stopped there for a meal.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Be Willing To Work

It is hard to imagine a more difficult scenario than that of the widow who turned to Elisha for help when the creditor was coming to take her two sons (see 2 Kin. 4:1–7). Insufficient funds can pressure the best of us, but if we keep our minds on God's promises and obey His principles, our needs will be met. In the widow's case, God used what she had and multiplied it to become more than what was needed to pay off her debt.

When you are struggling with financial difficulties, be encouraged. Things can change. When you have lost your job, you can aggressively look for another job, expecting it to be better than the last one. You can also be willing to work at anything until you are able to do what you truly desire to do. When we resist laziness and apathy, God gets on board and makes amazing things happen. Do what you can do and God will do what you cannot do.

My daughter and her husband met a man who had high-level skills in a specific field, but for seven years had been unable to find employment in that field. He determined to work

at anything—mowing lawns, minor home repairs—with a thankful heart. He had such a good attitude that they felt led by God to bless him financially in a substantial way. Had he been bitter and complaining, I believe he would have missed this blessing and provision. How often does God merely wait to see how we respond to difficulty before He moves to help us?

I know how frightening it can be when the month is longer than the money. There were many times when Dave and I had to do without things we wanted. One time we moved to a smaller and more economical apartment. Another time we cut up our credit cards and lived very lean for more than a year in order to pay them off. God watches for our faithfulness in being good managers of what we do have, and He will meet our needs if we keep our minds and hearts set on Him.

When money is tight for you, think of ways you can save on expenses instead of thinking about all you may have to do without. Think of all the possibilities in front of you instead of what is behind you. Think of ways you can bless someone else, because what we do for others comes back to us multiplied many times over (see Luke 6:38). Instead of living in fear because of the economy, live by faith in God and be assured that He is well able to help you.

APRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord God Almighty, You are the God of more than enough, and You are my Father in heaven. I trust You to help me through whatever financial challenges life brings my way. Help me to be faithful to manage well all that I have. Amen.

⁹She said to her husband, “Behold, I sense that this is a holy man of God who frequently passes our way.

¹⁰“Please, let us make a small, fully-walled upper room [on the housetop] and put a bed there for him, with a table, a chair, and a lampstand. Then whenever he comes to *visit* us, he can turn in there.”

¹¹One day he came there and turned in to the upper room and lay down to rest.

¹²And he said to Gehazi his servant, “Call this Shunammite.” So he called her and she stood before him.

¹³Now he said to Gehazi, “Say to her now, ‘You have gone to all this trouble for us; what can I do for you? Would you *like* to be mentioned to the king or to the captain of the army?’” She answered, “I live among my own people [in peace and security and need no special favors].”

¹⁴Later Elisha said, “What then is to be done for her?” Gehazi answered, “Well, she has no son and her husband is old.”

¹⁵He said, “Call her.” So Gehazi called her, and she [came and] stood in the doorway.

¹⁶Elisha said, “At this season next year, you will embrace a son.” She said, “No, my lord. O man of God, do not lie to your maidservant.”

¹⁷But the woman conceived and gave birth to a son at that season the next year, just as Elisha had said to her.

¹⁸When the child was grown, the day came that he went out to his father, to the reapers.

¹⁹But he said to his father, “My head, my head.” The man said to his servant, “Carry him to his mother.”

²⁰When he had carried and brought him to his mother, he sat on her lap until noon, and *then* he died.

²¹She went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut *the door* [of the small upper room] behind him and left.

²²Then she called to her husband and said, “Please send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys, so that I may run to the man of God and return.”

²³He said, “Why are you going to him today? It is neither the New Moon nor the Sabbath.” And she said, “*It will be* all right.”

²⁴Then she saddled the donkey and said to her servant, “Drive [the animal] fast; do not slow down the pace for me unless I tell you.”

²⁵So she set out and came to the man of God at Mount Carmel.

When the man of God saw her at a distance, he said to Gehazi his servant, “Look, there is the Shunammite *woman*.”

²⁶“Please run now to meet her and ask her, ‘Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?’” And she answered, “It is well.”

²⁷When she came to the mountain to the man of God, she took hold of his feet. Gehazi approached to push her away; but the man of God said, “Let her alone, for her soul is desperate *and* troubled within her; and the LORD has hidden *the reason* from me and has not told me.”

²⁸Then she said, “Did I ask for a son from my lord? Did I

not say, ‘Do not give me false hope?’”

²⁹Then he said to Gehazi, “Gird up your loins (prepare now!) and take my staff in your hand, and go [to the woman’s house]; if you meet any man [along the way], do not greet him and if a man greets you, do not [stop to] answer him; and lay my staff on the face of the boy [as soon as you reach the house].”

³⁰The mother of the child said, “As the LORD lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you.” So Elisha arose and followed her.

³¹Gehazi went on ahead of them and laid the staff on the boy’s face, but there was no sound or response [from the boy]. So he turned back to meet Elisha and told him, “The boy has not awakened (revived).”

³²When Elisha came into the house, the child was dead and lying on his bed.

³³So he went in, shut the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the LORD.

³⁴Then he went up and lay on the child and put his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands. And as he stretched himself out on him *and* held him, the boy’s skin became warm. [1 Kin 17:21]

³⁵Then he returned and walked in the house once back and forth, and went up [again] and stretched himself out on him; and the boy sneezed seven times and he opened his eyes.

³⁶Then Elisha called Gehazi and said, “Call this Shunammite.” So he called her. And when she came to him, he said, “Pick up your son.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Be Bold in Christ

When Elijah and Gehazi came into the house of the Shunammite woman, her son had been dead for quite a while. Yet the text simply says that Elijah “went in, shut the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the LORD” (2 Kin. 4:33), fully expecting that the boy would revive.

People who know who they are in Christ and believe in the power the Bible says they have will exude an attitude of confidence. When you develop a healthy consciousness of the power you have in Christ, you can approach God’s throne boldly (see Heb. 4:16). You can be spiritually daring in your prayers, confidently praying for things you know you don’t deserve, and stepping out in faith, believing in God’s mercy and goodness, believing He will bless you not because you are good, but because He is good.

³⁷She came and fell at his feet, bowing herself to the ground [in respect and gratitude]. Then she picked up her son and left.

³⁸Elisha came back to Gilgal during a famine in the land. The sons of the prophets were sitting before him, and he said to his servant, “Put on the large pot and cook stew for the sons of the prophets.”

³⁹Then one [of them] went into the field to gather herbs,

and found a wild vine and gathered from it a lapful of wild gourds, and came and cut them up into the pot of stew, although they did not know *what they were*.

⁴⁰So they served it for the men to eat. But as they ate the stew, they cried out, “O man of God, there is death in the pot.” And they could not eat it.

⁴¹But he said, “Bring flour.” And he threw it into the pot and said, “Serve it for the people so that they may eat.” Then there was nothing harmful in the pot.

⁴²Now [at another time] a man from Baal-shalisha came and brought the man of God bread of the first fruits, twenty loaves of barley bread, and fresh ears of grain [in the husk] in his sack. And Elisha said, “Give it to the people [affected by the famine] so that they may eat.”

⁴³His servant said, “How am I to set [only] this before a hundred [hungry] men?” He said, “Give it to the people so that they may eat, for thus says the LORD, ‘They shall eat and have *some* left.’”

⁴⁴So he set it before them, and they ate and left *some*, in accordance with the word of the LORD.

5 NOW NAAMAN, commander of the army of the king of Aram (Syria), was *considered* a great man by his king, and was highly respected because through Naaman the LORD had given victory to Aram (Syria). He was also a man of courage, *but he was a leper*.

²The Arameans (Syrians) had gone out in bands [as raiders] and had taken captive a little girl from the land of

Israel; and she waited on Naaman's wife [as a servant].

³She said to her mistress, "I wish that my master [Naaman] were with the prophet who is in Samaria! Then he would heal him of his leprosy."

⁴Naaman went in and told his master [the king], "The girl who is from the land of Israel said such and such."

⁵Then the king of Aram (Syria) said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel (Jehoram the son of Ahab)." So he left and took with him ten talents of silver and 6,000 *shekels* of gold, and ten changes of clothing.

POWERPOINT

Reasoning caused Naaman's mind to revolve around and around what he thought was a ridiculous directive from the prophet (see 2 Kin. 5:10). We are reasoning when we dissect a statement or teaching to see if it is logical, and disregard it if it is not. Satan frequently keeps us from following God's will for us due to reason, as almost happened to Naaman. The Lord may direct us to do a certain thing, but if it does not make sense to us, we may be tempted to disregard it. I encourage you to resist excessive reasoning and allow yourself to be led by the Spirit, trusting God even when what He seems to be leading you to do does not make sense to your natural mind.



⁶And he brought the letter to the king of Israel. It said, “And now when this letter comes to you, I will have sent my servant Naaman to you, so that you may heal him of his leprosy.”

⁷When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes [in shock and outrage at the request] and said, “Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends to me [a request] to heal a man of his leprosy? Just consider [what he is asking] and see how he is seeking an opportunity [for a battle] with me.”

⁸Now when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent *word* to the king, asking, “Why have you torn your clothes? Just let Naaman come to me, and he shall know that there is a [true] prophet in Israel.”

⁹So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stopped at the entrance of Elisha’s house.

¹⁰Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored to you and *you will be clean*.”

¹¹But Naaman was furious and went away and said, “Indeed! I thought ‘He would at least come out to [see] me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place [of leprosy] and heal the leper.’

¹²“Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus [in Aram], better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?” So he turned and went away in a rage.

¹³Then his servants approached and said to him, “My father, if the prophet had told you *to do some* great thing,

would you not have done it? How much more then, when he has said to you, ‘Wash, and be clean?’”

¹⁴So he went down and plunged himself into the Jordan seven times, just as the man of God had said; and his flesh was restored like that of a little child and he was clean.

¹⁵Then Naaman returned to the man of God, he and all the people in his group, and stood before him. He said, “Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel; so now accept a blessing *and* gift from your servant.”

¹⁶But Elisha said, “As the LORD lives, before whom I stand, I will accept nothing.” He urged him to take it, but Elisha refused.

¹⁷Naaman said, “If not, then please, let your servant be given a load of earth for a team of mules; for [from this day on] your servant will no longer offer a burnt offering nor a sacrifice to other gods, but only to the LORD, [the God of Israel].

¹⁸“In this matter may the LORD pardon your servant: when my master [the king] goes into the house of [his god] Rimmon to worship there, and he leans on my hand and I bow in the house of Rimmon, when I bow down in the house of Rimmon, may the LORD pardon your servant in this matter [of attending the king when he worships].”

¹⁹Elisha said to him, “Go in peace.” So Naaman departed and was a good distance away from him,

²⁰when Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, “My master has spared this Naaman the Aramean (Syrian), by not accepting from him what he brought. As the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something from him.”

²¹So Gehazi pursued Naaman. When Naaman saw someone

running after him, he got down from the chariot to meet him and said, “Is all well?”

²²And he said, “All is well. My master has sent me to say, ‘Just now two young men of the sons of the prophets have come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothes.’”

²³Naaman said, “Please take two talents.” And he urged him [to accept], and tied up two talents of silver in two bags with two changes of clothes and gave them to two of his servants; and they carried them in front of Gehazi.

²⁴When he came to the hill, he took them from their hand and put them in the house [for safekeeping]; and he sent the men away, and they left.

²⁵Then he went in and stood before his master. Elisha asked him, “Where have you been, Gehazi?” He said, “Your servant went nowhere.”

²⁶Elisha said to him, “Did my heart not go *with you*, when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? Is it a [proper] time to accept money and clothing and olive orchards and vineyards and sheep and oxen and male and female servants?

²⁷“Therefore, the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever.” So Gehazi departed from his presence, a leper *as white* as snow. [Ex 4:6; Num 12:10]

6 NOW THE sons of the prophets said to Elisha, “Look now, the place where we live near you is too small for us.

²“Please let us go to the Jordan [River] and let each man take from there a beam [for the building]; and let us make a

place there for ourselves where we may live.” And he answered, “Go.”

³Then one said, “Please be willing to go with your servants.” So he answered, “I shall go.”

⁴So he went with them; and when they came to the Jordan, they cut down [some of] the trees.

⁵But it happened that as one was cutting down a beam, the axe head fell into the water; and he cried out and said, “Oh no, my master! It was borrowed!”

⁶The man of God said, “Where did it fall?” When he showed him the place, Elisha cut off a stick and threw it in there, and made the iron [axe head] float.

⁷He said, “Pick it up for yourself.” So he reached out with his hand and took it.

⁸Now the king of Aram (Syria) was making war against Israel, and he consulted with his servants, saying, “My camp shall be in such and such a place.”

⁹The man of God sent *word* to the king of Israel saying, “Be careful not to pass by this place, because the Arameans are pulling back to there.”

¹⁰Then the king of Israel sent *word* to the place about which Elisha had warned him; so he guarded himself there repeatedly.

¹¹Now the heart of the king of Aram (Syria) was enraged over this thing. He called his servants and said to them, “Will you not tell me which of us is helping the king of Israel?”

¹²One of his servants said, “None [of us is helping him], my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom.”

¹³So he said, “Go and see where he is, so that I may send [men] and seize him.” And he was told, “He is in Dothan.”

¹⁴So he sent horses and chariots and a powerful army there. They came by night and surrounded the city.

¹⁵The servant of the man of God got up early and went out, and behold, there was an army with horses and chariots encircling the city. Elisha’s servant said to him, “Oh no, my master! What are we to do?”

¹⁶Elisha answered, “Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”

¹⁷Then Elisha prayed and said, “LORD, please, open his eyes that he may see.” And the LORD opened the servant’s eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire surrounding Elisha.

¹⁸When the Arameans came down to him, Elisha prayed to the LORD and said, ‘Please strike this people (nation) with blindness.’ And God struck them with blindness, in accordance with Elisha’s request.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Focus on Jesus

One reason prayer is not answered is that people have doubt and unbelief in their hearts. Doubt brings confusion and often depression. It quenches our faith and causes us to make negative confessions.

In Luke 18, Jesus told His disciples “a parable to make the point that at all times they ought to pray and not give up and lose heart.” He spoke of the widow who continued to plead her case before the unjust judge until he acted on her behalf. Jesus is saying that if an unjust judge can be moved by persistence, how much more our just and loving heavenly Father will be moved if we don’t give up and if we persist by faith.

We need to learn to live by faith, instead of relying on what we see in the natural. We need to have our eyes opened as Elisha’s servant’s eyes were opened to see the hills full of horses and chariots of fire (see 2 Kin. 6:17). Learn to stay in contact with God and His Word, always walking in His presence. If you begin to listen to the devil’s lies, doubt and unbelief will soon come roaring back. Those fiery darts will wage war with your mind. Remember that both doubt and unbelief are a product of a mind that is wrongly focused. “[Looking away from all that will distract us and] focusing our eyes on Jesus, who is the Author and Perfecter of faith [the first incentive for our belief and the One who brings our

faith to maturity] ” (Heb. 12:2) will stop doubt and unbelief.

¹⁹Then Elisha said to the Arameans, “This is not the way, nor is this the city. Follow me and I will lead you to the man whom you are seeking.” And he led them to Samaria.

²⁰When they had come into Samaria, Elisha said, “LORD, open the eyes of these *men*, so that they may see.” And the LORD opened their eyes and they saw. Behold, they were in the midst of Samaria.

²¹When the king of Israel (Jehoram) saw them, he said to Elisha, “My father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?”

²²Elisha answered, “You shall not kill them. Would you kill those you have taken captive with your sword and bow? Serve them bread and water, so that they may eat and drink, and go back to their master [King Ben-hadad].”

²³So the king prepared a great feast for them; and when they had eaten and drunk he sent them away, and they went to their master. And the marauding bands of Aram did not come into the land of Israel again.

²⁴But it came about after this, that Ben-hadad king of Aram (Syria) gathered his whole army together and went up and besieged Samaria.

²⁵Now there was a great famine in Samaria; and they besieged it until a donkey’s head was sold for eighty *shekels* of silver, and a fourth of a kab of dove’s dung for five *shekels* of silver.

²⁶As the king of Israel (Jehoram) was passing by on the [city] wall a woman cried out to him, “Help, my lord, O king!”

²⁷He said, “If the LORD does not help you, from where shall I get you help? From the threshing floor, or from the wine press?”

²⁸And the king said to her, “What is the matter with you?” She answered, “This woman said to me, ‘Give your son so we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow.’”

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Open Your Spiritual Eyes

Elisha's servant was in great fear because he was looking at the battle with his natural eyes only rather than looking at it from a spiritual point of view. God promises to take care of us, but we need to believe His promises or they do us no good at all.

Elisha saw in the spiritual realm that God's angels were with them, and that kept him from being fearful. He prayed for God to open his servant's eyes and allow him to see also. I firmly believe that the account of this event is included in God's Word so we will learn from it and realize there is more to life and what is happening in our circumstances than merely what we can see with our natural eyes.

In John 3:3, Jesus said, "Unless a person is born again... he cannot [ever] see *and* experience the kingdom of God." Unless God's Spirit lives in us, we won't be able to see or discern the things of God properly. We need the Holy Spirit to give us revelation concerning our circumstances. He reminds us of the promises of God, and those promises help us to remain full of

faith during times of battle.

Let's learn to see with spiritual eyes and hear with spiritual ears (see Matt. 13:15–16), because God wants us to see far beyond our circumstances, what we see and hear in the natural realm. Faith goes beyond sight and believes God's Word even when nothing in our natural circumstances confirms that it is true. It didn't appear there was any way that Elisha and his servant would be safe as the battle raged, but in reality the help God was providing for them was more than enough to defeat their enemies.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Holy Spirit, enlighten me in every way. Enable me to see You in every area of my life and to grasp the spiritual truths and realities You want to show me. I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

²⁹“So we cooked my son and ate him. The next day I said to her, ‘Give your son so that we may eat him’; but she had hidden her son.”

³⁰When the king heard the woman’s words, he tore his clothes—now he was still walking along on the wall—and the people looked [at him], and he had on sackcloth underneath [his royal robe] next to his skin.

³¹Then he said, “May God do so to me and more also, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat remains on him today!”

³²Now Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. And *the king* sent a man ahead of him [to behead Elisha]; but before the messenger arrived, Elisha told the elders, “Do you see how this son of [Jezebel] a murderer has sent [a man] to remove my head? Look, when the messenger comes, shut the door and hold it securely against him. Is not the sound of his master’s feet [just] behind him?”

³³While Elisha was still talking with them, the messenger came down to him [followed by the king] and the king said, “This evil [situation] is from the LORD! Why should I wait for [help from] the LORD any longer?”

7 THEN ELISHA said, “Hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the LORD, ‘Tomorrow about this time a measure of finely-milled flour will sell for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria.’”

²Then the royal officer on whose arm the king leaned answered the man of God and said, “If the LORD should make

windows in heaven [for the rain], could this thing take place?” Elisha said, “Behold, you will see it with your own eyes, but [because you doubt] you will not eat of it.”

³Now four men who were lepers were at the entrance of the [city’s] gate; and they said to one another, “Why should we sit here until we die?

⁴“If we say, ‘We will enter the city’—then the famine is in the city and we will die there; and if we sit still here, we will also die. So now come, let us go over to the camp of the Arameans (Syrians). If they let us live, we will live; and if they kill us, we will only die.”

⁵So they got up at twilight to go to the Aramean camp. But when they came to the edge of the camp, there was no one there.

⁶For the LORD had caused the Aramean army to hear the sound of chariots, and the sound of horses, the sound of a great army. They had said to one another, “The king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come [and fight] against us.”

⁷So the Arameans set out and fled during the twilight, and left their tents, horses, and donkeys, *even left* the camp just as it was, and fled for their lives.

⁸When these lepers came to the edge of the camp, they went into one tent and ate and drank, and carried away from there silver, gold, and clothing, and went and hid them. Then they went back and entered another tent and carried [some valuable things] from there *also*, and went and hid them.

⁹Then they said one to another, “We are not doing the right thing. This is a day of good news, yet we are keeping silent. If

we wait until the morning light, some punishment [for not reporting this now] will come on us. So now come, let us go and tell the king's household."

¹⁰So they came and called to the gatekeepers of the city. They told them, "We went to the camp of the Arameans (Syrians), and behold, there was no one there, nor the sound of man there—only the horses and donkeys tied up, and the tents [had been left] just as they were."

¹¹Then the gatekeepers called out and it was reported to the king's household inside [the city].

¹²Then the king got up in the night and said to his servants, "I will tell you what the Arameans have done to us. They know that we are hungry; so they have left the camp to hide themselves in the open country, thinking, 'When they come out of the city, we shall take them alive and get into the city.'"

¹³One of his servants replied, "Please let some *men* take five of the horses which remain inside the city. Consider this: [if they are caught then at worst] they will be like all the people of Israel who are left in the city; [even if they are killed then] they will be like all the people of Israel who have already died. So let us send [them] and see [what happens]."

¹⁴So they took two chariots with horses, and the king sent them after the Aramean army, saying, "Go and see."

¹⁵They went after them to the Jordan, and all the road was entirely littered with clothing and equipment which the Arameans (Syrians) had thrown away when they hurriedly fled. And the messengers returned and told the king.

¹⁶Then the people [of Israel] went out and plundered the

camp of the Arameans. So [goods were so plentiful that] a measure of finely-milled flour [was sold] for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in accordance with the word of the LORD [as spoken through Elisha]. [2 Kin 7:1]

¹⁷Now the king had appointed the royal officer on whose arm he leaned to be in charge of the [city] gate; and the [starving] people trampled him at the gate [as they struggled to get through for food], and he died, just as the man of God had foretold when the king came down to him.

¹⁸It happened just as [Elisha] the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, “Two measures of barley will be sold for a shekel and a measure of finely-milled flour for a shekel tomorrow about this time at the gate of Samaria.”

¹⁹The royal officer had answered the man of God and said, “Now behold, [even] if the LORD should make windows in heaven, could such a thing happen?” And Elisha had answered, “You will see it with your own eyes, but [because of your doubt] you will not eat it.” [2 Kin 7:2]

²⁰And so it happened to him; for the people trampled him at the gate, and he died.

8 NOW ELISHA had said to the [Shunammite] woman whose son he had restored to life, “Prepare and go, you and your household, and stay temporarily wherever you can; for the LORD has called for a famine, and moreover, it will come on the land [and continue] for seven years.”

²So the woman set out and did everything in accordance with the word of the man of God. She and her household went

and stayed temporarily as foreigners in the land of the Philistines for seven years.

³At the end of the seven years the woman returned from the land of the Philistines; and she went to appeal to the king [of Israel] for her house and for her land.

⁴Now the king was talking with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, saying, "Tell me all the great things that Elisha has done."

⁵And [just] as Gehazi was telling the king how Elisha had restored the dead to life, behold, the woman whose son he had restored to life appealed to the king for her house and for her land. And Gehazi said, "My lord, O king, this is the woman and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life."

⁶When the king asked the woman, she told him [everything]. So the king appointed for her a certain high official, saying, "Restore everything that was hers, including all the produce of the field since the day that she left the land until now."

⁷Now Elisha came to Damascus, and Ben-hadad king of Aram (Syria) was sick; and he was told, "The man of God has come here."

⁸And the king said to Hazael, "Take a gift with you and go to meet the man of God, and inquire of the LORD by him, saying, 'Will I recover from this illness?'"

⁹So Hazael went to meet Elisha and took a gift with him of every good thing of Damascus, forty camels' loads; and he came and stood before him and said, "Your son Ben-hadad king of Aram has sent me to you, asking, 'Will I recover from this illness?'"

¹⁰And Elisha said to him, “Go, say to him, ‘You will certainly recover,’ but the LORD has shown me that he will certainly die.”

¹¹Elisha stared steadily at Hazael until he was embarrassed, and then the man of God wept.

¹²Hazael said, “Why are you weeping, my lord?” He answered, “Because I know the evil that you will do to the sons (descendants) of Israel. You will set their strongholds on fire, kill their young men with the sword, smash their children to pieces, and rip up their pregnant women.”

¹³Then Hazael said, “*Surely not!* For what is your servant, *who is nothing more than* a dog, that he would do this monstrous thing?” And Elisha answered, “The LORD has shown me that you will be king over Aram.”

¹⁴Then Hazael departed from Elisha and came to his master, who said to him, “What did Elisha say to you?” And he answered, “He told me you would certainly recover.”

¹⁵But the next day Hazael took the bedspread and dipped it in water and covered the king’s face, so that he died. And Hazael became king in his place.

¹⁶Now in the fifth year of Joram (Jehoram) the son of Ahab king of Israel, when Jehoshaphat was king of Judah, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah became king.

¹⁷He was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned for eight years in Jerusalem.

¹⁸He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done, for [Athaliah] the daughter of Ahab became his wife. He did evil in the sight of the LORD.

¹⁹Yet for the sake of His servant David the LORD was not

willing to destroy Judah, since He had promised to give him a lamp (enthroned descendant) through his sons always.

²⁰In his days Edom revolted from the rule of Judah, and set up a king over themselves.

²¹So Jehoram [king of Judah] went over to Zair [in Edom] with all his chariots. He set out by night and struck down the Edomites who had surrounded him and the captains of his chariots; but the people [of his army] fled to their tents.

²²So Edom revolted against Judah to this day. Then Libnah revolted at the same time.

²³The rest of the acts of Jehoram and everything that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

²⁴Jehoram slept with his fathers [in death] and was buried with them in the City of David. Ahaziah his son became king in his place.

²⁵In the twelfth year of Joram (Jehoram) the son of Ahab king of Israel, Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah began to reign.

²⁶Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah, the granddaughter of Omri king of Israel.

²⁷He walked in the ways of the house of Ahab and did evil in the sight of the LORD, as *did* the house of Ahab, for he was a son-in-law of the house of Ahab.

²⁸Ahaziah went with Joram the son of Ahab to battle against Hazael king of Aram (Syria) in Ramoth-gilead; and the Arameans wounded Joram.

²⁹King Joram returned to Jezreel to be healed of the

wounds which the Arameans had inflicted on him at Ramah when he fought against Hazael king of Aram. And Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to see Joram the son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was sick.

9 NOW ELISHA the prophet called one of the sons of the prophets and said to him, “Gird up your loins (prepare for action), take this flask of oil in your hand and go to Ramoth-gilead.

²“When you arrive there, look for Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi, and go in and have him arise from among his brothers, and take him into an inner room.

³“Then take the flask of oil and pour it on his head and say, ‘Thus says the LORD: “I have anointed you king over Israel.” ’ Then open the door and flee and do not delay.”

⁴So the young man, the servant of the prophet, went to Ramoth-gilead.

⁵When he arrived, the captains of the army were sitting [outside]; and he said, “I have a message for you, O captain.” Jehu said, “To which one of us?” And he said, “For you, O captain.”

⁶So Jehu got up, and they went into the house. And he poured the oil on Jehu’s head and said to him, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: ‘I have anointed you king over the people of the LORD, over Israel.

⁷‘You shall strike the house of Ahab your master, so that I may avenge the blood of My servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, [who have died] at the

hands of Jezebel.

⁸“For the entire house of Ahab shall perish, and I will cut off from Ahab every male, both bond and free, in Israel.

⁹“I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah. [1 Kin 21:22]

¹⁰“And the dogs will eat Jezebel in the territory of Jezreel, and there will be no one to bury her.” Then he opened the door and fled. [1 Kin 9:33–37]

¹¹When Jehu came out to the servants of his master, one said to him, “Is all well? Why did this madman come to you?” And he said to them, “You know [very well] the man and his talk.”

¹²And they said, “It is a lie; tell us now.” And he said, “Thus and thus he spoke to me, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: “I have anointed you king over Israel.”’”

¹³Then they hurried and each man took his garment and placed it [as a cushion] under Jehu on the top of the [outside] stairs, and blew the trumpet, saying, “Jehu is king!”

¹⁴So Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi, conspired against Joram [to dethrone and kill him]. Now Joram with all Israel was protecting Ramoth-gilead against Hazael king of Aram (Syria),

¹⁵but King Joram had returned to Jezreel to heal from the wounds which the Arameans had inflicted on him when he fought with Hazael king of Aram. So Jehu said, “If this is your intent, let no one survive and leave the city (Ramoth-gilead) to go and tell *of the plan* in Jezreel [the capital].”

¹⁶So Jehu rode in a chariot and went to Jezreel, for Joram

was lying there. And Ahaziah king of Judah had come down to see Joram.

¹⁷Now the watchman was standing on the tower in Jezreel and he saw the crowd with Jehu as he approached, and said, "I see a company." And Joram said, "Send a horseman to meet them and have him ask, 'Do you come in peace?'"

¹⁸So the horseman went to meet him and said, "Thus says the king: 'Do you come in peace?'" And Jehu said, "What have you to do with peace? Rein in behind me." And the watchman reported, "The messenger approached them, but he has not returned."

¹⁹Then Joram sent out a second horseman, who approached them and said, "Thus says the king: 'Do you come in peace?'" Jehu replied, "What have you to do with peace? Rein in behind me."

²⁰And the watchman reported, "He approached them, but he has not returned; and the driving [of the chariot] is like that of Jehu the son of Nimshi, for he drives furiously."

²¹Then Joram said, "Harness [the chariot]." When they harnessed his chariot *horses*, Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went out, each in his chariot, and they went out to meet Jehu and met him on the property of Naboth the Jezreelite.

²²When Joram saw Jehu, he said, "Do you come in peace, Jehu?" And he answered, "What peace [can exist] as long as the fornications of your mother Jezebel and her sorceries are so many?"

²³So Joram reined [his chariot] around and fled, and he said to Ahaziah, "Treachery *and* betrayal, Ahaziah!"

²⁴But Jehu drew his bow with his full strength and shot Joram between his shoulders; and the arrow went out through his heart and he sank down in his chariot.

²⁵Then Jehu said to Bidkar his officer, “Pick him up and throw him on the property of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite; for I remember when you and I were riding together after his father Ahab, that the LORD uttered this prophecy against him:

²⁶‘I certainly saw the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons yesterday,’ says the LORD, ‘and I will repay you on this property,’ says the LORD. Now then, pick him up and throw him into the property [of Naboth], in accordance with the word of the LORD.” [1 Kin 21:15–29]

²⁷When Ahaziah the king of Judah saw this, he fled by the way of the garden house. Jehu pursued him and said, “Shoot him too, [while he is] in the chariot.” *So they shot him* at the ascent to Gur, which is by Ibleam. And Ahaziah fled to Megiddo and died there.

²⁸Then his servants carried him in a chariot to Jerusalem and buried him in his grave with his fathers in the City of David.

²⁹In the eleventh year of Joram, the son of Ahab, Ahaziah became king over Judah.

³⁰So when Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard about it, and she painted her eyes and adorned her head and looked down from the [upper] window.

³¹As Jehu entered in at the gate, she said, “Is it well, Zimri, your master’s murderer?” [1 Kin 16:9, 10]

³²Then Jehu raised his face toward the window and said, “Who is on my side? Who?” And two or three officials looked

down at him.

³³And he said, “Throw her down.” So they threw her down, and some of her blood splattered on the wall and on the horses, and he trampled her underfoot.

³⁴When he came in, he ate and drank, and said, “See now to this cursed woman and bury her, for she is a king’s daughter.”

³⁵They went to bury her, but they found nothing left of her except the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands.

³⁶So they returned and told Jehu. Then he said, “This is the word of the LORD, which He spoke through His servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ‘In the property of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel. [1 Kin 21:23]

³⁷“The corpse of Jezebel will be like dung on the surface of the field in the property of Jezreel, so they cannot say, “This is Jezebel.”””

10 AHAB HAD seventy sons [and grandsons] in Samaria.

So Jehu wrote letters and sent them to Samaria, to the rulers of Jezreel, to the elders, and to the guardians of *the children of* Ahab, saying,

²“Now as soon as this letter comes to you, since your master’s sons (male descendants) are with you, as well as chariots and horses and a fortified city and weapons,

³select the best and most capable of your master’s sons, and set him on his father’s throne, and fight for your master’s [royal] house.”

⁴But they were extremely afraid and said, “Look, the two

kings did not stand before Jehu; so how can we stand?”

⁵And the one who was in charge of the household, and the one who was overseer of the city, the elders, and the guardians [of the children] sent *word* to Jehu, saying, “We are your servants and we will do whatever you tell us, *but* we will not make any man king; do what is good in your eyes.”

⁶Then Jehu wrote a second letter to them, saying, “If you are with me and will obey me, take the heads of your master’s sons, and come to me at Jezreel tomorrow about this time.” Now the [dead] king’s sons, seventy persons, were with the great men of the city, who were rearing them.

⁷When the letter came to them, they took the king’s sons and slaughtered them, seventy persons, and put their heads in baskets, and sent them to Jehu at Jezreel.

⁸When a messenger came and told him, “They have brought the heads of the king’s sons,” he said, “Put them in two heaps at the entrance of the city gate until morning.”

⁹The next morning he went out and stood and said to all the people, “You are just *and* innocent; behold, I conspired against [Joram] my master and killed him, but who killed all these?

¹⁰“Know then [without any doubt] that there shall fall to the earth nothing of the word of the LORD, which the LORD spoke concerning the house of Ahab, for the LORD has done what He said through His servant Elijah.” [1 Kin 19:17]

¹¹So Jehu killed all who remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men and his familiar friends and his priests, until he left him without a survivor.

¹²And he set out and went to Samaria. On the way as he

was at the place of the sand heaps [meeting place] for the shepherds,

¹³Jehu met the relatives of Ahaziah king of Judah and said, "Who are you?" They answered, "We are the relatives of Ahaziah; and we came down to greet the royal princes and the sons of the queen mother [Jezebel]."

¹⁴Then Jehu said, "Take them alive." So they took them alive and [later] slaughtered them at the well by the place of the sand heaps, forty-two men; he left none of them [alive].

¹⁵When Jehu went on from there, he met Jehonadab the son of Rechab *coming* to meet him. He greeted him and said to him, "Is your heart right, as my heart is with yours?" Jehonadab answered, "It is." *Jehu said* "If it is, give me your hand." He gave him his hand, and Jehu pulled him up into the chariot.

¹⁶And he said, "Come with me and see my zeal for the LORD." So he had Jehonadab in his chariot.

¹⁷When Jehu came to Samaria, he killed everyone who remained of Ahab's family in Samaria, until he had destroyed all of them, in accordance with the word of the LORD which He spoke to Elijah.

¹⁸Jehu assembled all the people and said [in pretense] to them, "Ahab served Baal a little; Jehu will serve him much [more]."

¹⁹"Now, summon unto me all the prophets of Baal, all his worshipers and all his priests. Let no one be missing, for I have a great sacrifice for Baal; whoever is missing shall not live." But Jehu did it with trickery, in order to destroy the worshipers of Baal.

²⁰Jehu said, “Consecrate a festive assembly (celebration) for Baal.” And they proclaimed it.

²¹Then Jehu sent throughout Israel, and all the worshipers of Baal came; there was no one left who did not come. They went to the house (temple) of Baal, and the house of Baal was filled from one end to the other.

²²He said to the man in charge of the wardrobe, “Bring out garments for all the worshipers of Baal.” And he brought the garments out to them.

²³Then Jehu with Jehonadab the son of Rechab went into the house of Baal; and he said to the worshipers of Baal, “Search carefully and see that there are no servants of the LORD here with you, but only the worshipers of Baal.”

²⁴Then they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings.

Now Jehu had stationed eighty men outside for himself and said, “If any of the men whom I have brought into your hands escape, the one who lets him go shall forfeit his own life for that man’s life.”

²⁵Then it came about, as soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, that Jehu said to the guards and to the royal officers, “Go in and kill them; let no one come out.” And they killed them with the edge of the sword; and the guard and the royal officers threw *their bodies* out, and went to the inner room of the house of Baal.

²⁶They brought out the *sacred* pillars (obelisks) of the house of Baal and burned them.

²⁷They also tore down the *sacred* pillar of Baal and tore down the house of Baal, and made it into a latrine [forever unclean] to this day.

²⁸Thus Jehu eradicated Baal from Israel.

²⁹However, Jehu did not turn from the [idolatrous] sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, that is, [led them to worship] the golden calves which were at Bethel and Dan. [1 Kin 12:28ff]

³⁰The LORD said to Jehu, “Because you have done well in executing what is right in My eyes, and have done to the house of Ahab in accordance with everything that was in My heart, your sons (descendants) shall sit on Israel’s throne to the fourth generation.” [2 Kin 15:12]

³¹But Jehu did not take care to walk in the law of the LORD, the God of Israel, with all his heart; he did not turn from the sins of Jeroboam, who made Israel sin.

³²So in those days the LORD began to cut off *portions* of Israel; Hazael [of Aram] defeated them throughout the territory of Israel:

³³from the Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites and the Reubenites and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the Arnon River, even Gilead and Bashan.

³⁴Now the rest of the acts of Jehu and everything that he did and all his might, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

³⁵Jehu slept with his fathers [in death], and they buried him in Samaria. Jehoahaz his son became king in his place.

³⁶The time that Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria was twenty-eight years.

11 WHEN ATHALIAH the mother of Ahaziah [king of Judah] saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal offspring.

²But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Joram [of Judah and half] sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah and abducted him from among the king's sons who were to be killed, and hid him and his nurse in the bedroom. So they hid him from Athaliah, and he was not put to death.

³Joash was hidden with his nurse in the house (temple) of the LORD for six years, while Athaliah reigned over the land.

⁴Now in the seventh year Jehoiada [the priest, Jehosheba's husband] sent for the captains of hundreds of the Carites and of the guard and brought them to him to the house of the LORD. Then he made a covenant with them and put them under oath in the house of the LORD, and showed them the king's [hidden] son.

⁵He commanded them, saying, "This is the thing that you shall do: a third of you who come in [reporting for duty] on the Sabbath shall keep watch over the king's house

⁶(a third shall also be at the [city] gate Sur, and a third at the gate behind the guards); so you shall keep watch over the palace [from three posts] for defense.

⁷"Two units of you, all those who go out [off duty] on the Sabbath, shall also keep watch over the house (temple) of the LORD for [the protection of] the king.

⁸"You shall surround the [young] king, each man with weapons in his hand; and whoever comes through the ranks shall be put to death. You are to be with the king when he goes

out and when he comes in.”

⁹The captains of hundreds acted in accordance with everything that Jehoiada the priest commanded; and each of them took his men who were to come in (on duty) on the Sabbath, with those who were to go out (off duty) on the Sabbath, and they came to Jehoiada the priest.

¹⁰The priest gave to the captains of hundreds the spears and shields that had been King David's, which were in the house of the LORD.

¹¹And the guards stood, each man with weapons in his hand, from the right side to the left side of the temple area, by the altar [in the courtyard] and by the temple [proper], all around the king.

¹²Then Jehoiada brought out the king's son and put the crown on him and gave him the Testimony [a copy of the Mosaic Law]; and they made him king and anointed him, and they clapped their hands and said, “*Long* live the king!”

¹³When Athaliah heard the sound of the guards and of the people, she went into the house of the LORD to the people.

¹⁴When she looked, behold, there stood the [young] king [on the platform] by the pillar, as was customary [on such occasions], and the captains and the trumpeters were beside the king; and all the people of the land rejoicing and blowing the trumpets. Then Athaliah tore her clothes and cried, “Treason! Treason!”

¹⁵Then Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of hundreds appointed over the army and said to them, “Take her out between the ranks, and whoever follows her put to death with the sword.” For the priest had said, “Let her not be put to

death in the house (temple) of the LORD.”

¹⁶So they seized her, and she went through the horses’ entrance to the king’s house (palace), and she was put to death there.

¹⁷Then Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD, the king, and the people, that they would be the LORD’s people—also between the king and the people [to be his subjects].

¹⁸Then all the people of the land went to the house of Baal and tore it down. They utterly smashed his altar and his images to pieces, and they put Mattan the priest of Baal to death in front of the altars. And [Jehoiada] the priest appointed officers over the house of the LORD.

¹⁹Then he took the captains of hundreds, the Carites (royal bodyguards), the guard, and all the people of the land; and they brought the [young] king down from the house of the LORD, and came by way of the guards’ gate to the king’s house. And [little] Joash sat on the throne of the kings.

²⁰So all the people of the land rejoiced and the city [of Jerusalem] was quiet. For they had put Athaliah to death with the sword at the king’s house.

²¹Jehoash (Joash) was seven years old when he became king.

12 IN THE seventh year of Jehu [king of Israel], Jehoash became king [over Judah], and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Zibiah of Beersheba.

²Jehoash did right in the sight of the LORD all his days in which Jehoiada the priest instructed him.

³Only the high places were not removed; the people were still sacrificing and burning incense [to the LORD] on the high places [rather than at the temple].

⁴Jehoash said to the priests, “All the money for the dedicated things which is brought into the house of the LORD, in current money, *both* the money of each man’s assessment [for all those bound by vows], *and* all the money which any man’s heart prompts him to bring into the house (temple) of the LORD,

⁵let the priests receive such contributions for themselves, each from his acquaintance; and they shall repair any breach in the house of *the* LORD, wherever a breach is found.”

⁶But it came about in the twenty-third year of [the reign of] King Jehoash, that the priests *still* had not repaired the damages of the LORD’s house.

⁷Then King Jehoash called for Jehoiada the priest and the [other] priests and said to them, “Why are you not repairing the damage of the house (temple)? Now then, do not take any more money from your acquaintances, but turn it all over for [the repair of] the damages of the house.” [You are no longer responsible for this work. I will take it into my own hands.]

⁸So the priests agreed that they would receive no [more] money from the people, nor [be responsible to] repair the damages of the house.

⁹Then Jehoiada the priest took a chest and bored a hole in its lid and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one enters the house of the LORD; and the priests who guarded the door put in the chest all the money that was brought [by the people] into the house of the LORD.

¹⁰And whenever they saw that there was a large amount of money in the chest, the king's scribe and the high priest came up and tied it in bags and counted the money that was found in the house of the LORD.

¹¹Then they gave the money, which was weighed out into the hands of those who were doing the work, who had the oversight of the house of the LORD; and they paid it out to the carpenters and builders who worked on the house (temple) of the LORD,

¹²and to the masons and stonecutters, and to buy timber and hewn (cut) stone to repair any breach in the house of the LORD, and for all that was laid out for repairing the house.

¹³However, there were not made for the house of the LORD basins of silver, snuffers, bowls, trumpets, any gold containers or [other] silver containers, from the money that was brought into the house of the LORD;

¹⁴but they gave that to those who did the work, and with it they repaired the house of the LORD.

¹⁵Moreover, they did not require an accounting from the men into whose hands they placed the money to be paid to those who did the work, for they acted in good faith.

¹⁶Money from the guilt offerings and money from the sin offerings was not brought into the house of the LORD [for repairs]; it was for the priests.

¹⁷Then Hazael king of Aram (Syria) went up, fought against Gath [in Philistia], and captured it. And Hazael resolved to go up to Jerusalem.

¹⁸So Jehoash the king of Judah took all the sacred things

that Jehoshaphat and Jehoram and Ahaziah, his fathers, kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own sacred things and all the gold that was found in the treasures of the house (temple) of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent them to Hazael king of Aram; and Hazael departed from Jerusalem. [1 Kin 15:18]

¹⁹Now the rest of the acts of Joash and everything that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

²⁰His servants arose and formed a conspiracy [against him] and struck down Joash [in revenge] at the house of Millo, [on the way] that goes down to Silla. [2 Chr 24:22–25]

²¹For Jozacar (Jozachar) the son of Shimeath and Jehozabad the son of Shomer, his servants, struck him and he died; and they buried Joash with his fathers in the City of David. Amaziah his son became king in his place.

13 IN THE twenty-third year of Joash the son of Ahaziah, king of Judah, Jehoahaz the son of Jehu became king over Israel in Samaria, *and he reigned* seventeen years.

²He did evil in the sight of the LORD, and followed the [idolatrous] sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin; he did not turn from them.

³So the anger of the LORD was kindled *and* burned against Israel, and He handed them over time and again to Hazael the king of Aram (Syria), and of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael.

POWERPOINT

One king of Israel after another followed the sins of Jeroboam, which finally led to Israel's being taken captive and led away into exile because of their disobedience (see 2 Kin. 17:23).

Don't ever get careless about doing what God has spoken in His Word or asked you to do, letting sin creep into your life. Captivity to sin leads only to destruction.



WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Belief Calls for Action

It's easy to say, "I believe," but the true test of our faith comes when we have to act on what we believe. In 2 Kings 13:15–19, the king sought Elisha's help in obtaining deliverance from the Syrians. The prophet told him to strike the ground with arrows as a symbol of Israel's attacks against their enemy. The king struck the ground with arrows only three times and then stopped.

Had the king believed, he would have struck the ground with arrows as many times as it took to receive victory. Because of his unbelief, he stopped before he even got a good start. Not surprisingly, Elisha became frustrated and angry with him because of his unbelief.

Incidents of unbelief are recorded throughout the Bible. Matthew 17:14–20 records the story of the epileptic boy whom Jesus' disciples had not been able to heal. The disciples had seen Jesus perform miracles everywhere they went. They themselves had performed a number of miracles and healings (see Luke 10).

Why couldn't the disciples heal the boy? Jesus said: "Because of your little faith [your lack of trust and confidence in the power of God]" (Matt. 17:20).

I believe Jesus' answer probably caused the disciples to examine their hearts and ask what held them back. Why didn't they believe? Perhaps they had allowed negative thinking to enter their minds. Perhaps they weren't able to grasp the fact that Jesus wanted to use them and empower them to perform miracles.

We know from the book of Acts that once the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, they demonstrated God's supernatural power at work—but not in this story. He said to them, "I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, anyone who believes in Me [as Savior] will also do the things that I do; and he will do even greater things than these [in extent and outreach], because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12).

The promise remains valid to this day. Unbelief will keep us from doing what God has called and anointed us to accomplish in life. When God tells us we can do something, we must believe that we can. It is not by our power or our might that we are able to do what He tells us to do, but by His Spirit working in us we can win the battle of unbelief.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord Jesus, forgive the lack of faith I have at times. I know that when I don't believe, I am disobeying You. I ask You to help me push away every bit of unbelief so I can focus on faithfully following You. Amen.

⁴But Jehoahaz sought the favor of the LORD, and the LORD listened to him; for He saw the oppression of Israel, how the king of Aram oppressed them.

⁵Then the LORD gave Israel a savior [to rescue them and give them peace], so that they escaped from under the hand of the Arameans; and the sons (descendants) of Israel lived in their tents as before.

⁶Yet they did not turn from the [idolatrous] sins of the [royal] house of Jeroboam, who made Israel sin; but walked in them. And the Asherah [set up by Ahab] also remained standing in Samaria [Israel's capital].

⁷For he left to Jehoahaz [king of Israel] an army of no more than fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and 10,000 footmen, for the king of Aram (Ben-hadad) had destroyed them and made them like dust to be trampled.

⁸Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz, everything that he did and his might, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

⁹Jehoahaz slept with his fathers [in death], and they buried him in Samaria; Joash his son became king in his place.

¹⁰In the thirty-seventh year of Joash king of Judah, Jehoash (Joash) the son of Jehoahaz became king over Israel in Samaria, *and reigned* sixteen years.

¹¹He did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not turn away from all the [idolatrous] sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin; but he walked in them.

¹²Now the rest of the acts of Joash, everything that he did,

and his might with which he fought against Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

¹³Joash slept with his fathers [in death], and Jeroboam [II] sat on his throne. Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.

¹⁴Now Elisha had become sick with the illness by which he would die. And Joash the king of Israel came down to him and wept over him and said, “O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!” [2 Kin 2:12]

¹⁵And Elisha said to him, “Take a bow and arrows.” So he took a bow and arrows.

¹⁶Then he said to the king of Israel, “Put your hand on the bow.” And he put his hand on it, and Elisha put his hands on the king’s hands.

¹⁷And he said, “Open the window to the east,” and he opened it. Then Elisha said, “Shoot!” And he shot. And Elisha said, “The LORD’s arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram (Syria); for you will strike the Arameans in Aphek until you have destroyed them.”

¹⁸Then he said, “Take the arrows,” and he took them. And Elisha said to the king of Israel, “Strike the ground,” and he struck *it* three times and stopped.

¹⁹So the man of God was angry with him and said, “You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck down Aram until you had destroyed it. But now you shall strike Aram *only* three times.”

²⁰Elisha died, and they buried him. Now marauding bands of Moabites would invade the land in the spring of the year.

²¹And it happened that as a man was being buried [on an open bier], they saw a marauding band [coming]; and they threw the man into Elisha's grave. But when the [body of the] man [was being let down and] touched the bones of Elisha he revived and stood up on his feet.

²²Hazael the king of Aram oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz.

²³But the LORD was gracious to them and had compassion on them and turned toward them for the sake of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and He was unwilling to destroy them, and did not cast them from His presence until now. [Mal 3:6]

²⁴Hazael king of Aram (Syria) died; Ben-hadad his son became king in his place.

²⁵Then Jehoash (Joash) the son of Jehoahaz recovered from Ben-hadad the son of Hazael the cities which he had taken from Jehoahaz his father by war. Three times Joash defeated Ben-hadad and recovered the cities of Israel. [2 Kin 13:19]

14 IN THE second year of Joash the son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel, Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah became king.

²He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jehoaddin of Jerusalem.

A Prayer To

Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that You see
my suffering and affliction,
and You will save me.*

• adapted from 2 Kings 14:26–27

³He did right in the sight of the LORD, though not like David his father (ancestor). He acted in accordance with everything that his father Joash had done.

⁴However, the high places were not removed; the people were still sacrificing and burning incense on the high places.

⁵As soon as the kingdom was firmly in Amaziah's hand, he executed his servants who had killed his father the king. [2 Kin 12:20]

⁶But he did not put the sons of the murderers to death, in compliance with what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, in which the LORD commanded, saying, "The fathers shall not be put to death for the sons, nor shall the sons be put to death for the fathers; but each shall be put to death [only] for his own sin." [Deut 24:16]

⁷Amaziah killed 10,000 [men] of Edom in the Valley of Salt, and took Sela (rock) by war, and renamed it Joktheel, to this day.

⁸Then Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash (Joash) the son of Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, “Come, let us face each other [in combat].”

⁹Jehoash the king of Israel sent *word* to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, “The [little] thorn-bush in Lebanon sent *word* to the [tall] cedar in Lebanon, saying, ‘Give your daughter to my son as wife.’ But a wild beast that was in Lebanon passed by and trampled the thorn-bush.

¹⁰“You have indeed defeated Edom, and your heart has lifted you up [in pride]. Enjoy your glory but stay at home; for why should you plunge into misery so that you, even you, would fall [at my hand], and Judah with you?”

¹¹But Amaziah would not listen. So Jehoash king of Israel went up; and he and Amaziah king of Judah faced each other [in combat] at Beth-shemesh, which belongs to Judah.

¹²Judah was defeated by Israel, and every man fled to his tent.

¹³Then Jehoash king of Israel captured Amaziah the king of Judah, the son of Jehoash (Joash), the son of Ahaziah, at Beth-shemesh, and came to Jerusalem and broke through the wall of Jerusalem from the Gate of Ephraim to the Corner Gate, 400 cubits (600 feet).

¹⁴He seized all the gold and silver and all the utensils found in the house (temple) of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king’s house, as well as hostages, and returned to Samaria.

¹⁵Now the rest of the acts of Jehoash which he did, and his might and how he fought with Amaziah the king of Judah, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

¹⁶Jehoash slept with his fathers [in death] and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel. His son Jeroboam [II] became king in his place.

¹⁷Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah lived for fifteen years after the death of Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz king of Israel.

¹⁸The rest of the acts of Amaziah, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

¹⁹Now a conspiracy was formed against him in Jerusalem, and Amaziah fled [south] to Lachish; but they sent [men] after him to Lachish and killed him there.

²⁰Then they carried him on horses and he was buried at Jerusalem with his fathers in the City of David.

²¹And all the people of Judah took Azariah, who was [only] sixteen years old, and made him king in place of his father Amaziah.

²²He built Elath and restored it to Judah after the king [his father Amaziah] slept with his fathers [in death].

²³In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam [II] the son of Joash (Jehoash) king of Israel became king in Samaria, *and reigned* forty-one years.

²⁴He did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not turn from all the [idolatrous] sins of Jeroboam [I] the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin.

²⁵Jeroboam restored Israel's border from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah (Dead Sea), in accordance with the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, which He spoke through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet who was from Gath-hepher.

²⁶For the LORD saw the affliction (suffering) of Israel as very bitter; there was no one left, bond or free, nor any helper for Israel.

²⁷But the LORD had not said that He would blot out the name of Israel from under the heavens, so He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam [II] the son of Joash [king of Israel].

²⁸The rest of the acts of Jeroboam [II], all that he did, his might, how he fought, and how he recovered Damascus and Hamath for Israel, *which had belonged* to Judah, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

²⁹Jeroboam [II] slept with his fathers [in death], even with the kings of Israel. Zechariah his son became king in his place.

15 IN THE twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam [II] king of Israel, Azariah (Uzziah) the son of Amaziah king of Judah became king.

²He was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jecoliah of Jerusalem.

³He did right in the sight of the LORD, in accordance with all that his father Amaziah had done.

⁴Only [the altars on] the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places [instead of worshipping God at the temple].

⁵And the LORD struck (afflicted) the king, and he was a leper until the day of his death, and lived in a separate house. Jotham the king's son was in charge of the household, judging the people of the land. [2 Chr 26:16–21]

⁶Now the rest of Azariah's acts, and everything that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

⁷Azariah slept with his fathers [in death], and they buried him with his fathers in the City of David. His son Jotham became king in his place.

⁸In the thirty-eighth year of Azariah king of Judah, Zechariah the son of Jeroboam [II] became king over Israel in Samaria for six months.

⁹He did evil in the sight of the LORD, just as his fathers had done; he did not turn from the sins of Jeroboam [I] the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin.

¹⁰But Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against Zechariah and struck and killed him in the presence of the people and reigned in his place.

¹¹Now the rest of the acts of Zechariah, behold, they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

¹²This is [the fulfillment of] the word of the LORD which He spoke to Jehu, saying, "Your sons (descendants) shall sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation." And so it came to pass. [2 Kin 10:30]

¹³Shallum the son of Jabesh became king in the thirty-ninth year of Uzziah (Azariah) king of Judah, and he reigned one month in Samaria.

¹⁴For Menahem the son of Gadi went up from Tirzah and came to Samaria, and struck and killed Shallum the son of Jabesh in Samaria and became king in his place.

¹⁵The rest of Shallum's acts, and his conspiracy which he made, they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the

Kings of Israel.

¹⁶Then Menahem struck [the town of] Tiphshah and all who were in it and its borders from Tirzah; [he attacked it] because they did not surrender *to him*; so he struck it and ripped up all the women there who were pregnant.

¹⁷In the thirty-ninth year of Azariah king of Judah, Menahem the son of Gadi became king over Israel, *and reigned* ten years in Samaria.

¹⁸He did evil in the sight of the LORD; for all his days he did not turn from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin.

¹⁹Pul, [Tiglath-pileser III] king of Assyria, came against the land [of Israel], and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver [as a bribe], so that he might help him to strengthen his control of the kingdom.

²⁰Menahem exacted the money from Israel, from all the wealthy, influential men, fifty shekels of silver from each man to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back and did not stay there in the land.

²¹Now the rest of Menahem's acts, and everything that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?

²²And Menahem slept with his fathers [in death]; his son Pekahiah became king in his place.

²³In the fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekahiah the son of Menahem became king over Israel, *and reigned* two years in Samaria.

²⁴He did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not turn from the [idolatrous] sins of Jeroboam [I] the son of Nebat, who

made Israel sin.

²⁵But Pekah the son of Remaliah, his officer, conspired against Pekahiah and struck him in Samaria, in the citadel of the king's house, with Argob and Arieih; and with Pekah were fifty Gileadites. So he killed Pekahiah and became king in his place.

²⁶Now the rest of the acts of Pekahiah, all that he did, they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

²⁷In the fifty-second year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekah the son of Remaliah became king over Israel, *and reigned* twenty years in Samaria.

²⁸He did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not turn from the [idolatrous] sins of Jeroboam [I] the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin.

²⁹In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and took Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of [the tribe of] Naphtali, and he carried the people captive to Assyria.

³⁰Hoshea the son of Elah conspired against Pekah the son of Remaliah [of Israel]; he struck and killed him, and became king in his place in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah [king of Judah].

³¹Now the rest of Pekah's acts, and everything that he did, they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of Israel's Kings.

³²In the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel, Jotham the son of Uzziah king of Judah became king.

³³When he was twenty-five years old, he became king [over Judah], and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jerusha daughter of Zadok.

³⁴He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, in

accordance with everything that his father Uzziah had done.

³⁵Only [the altars on] the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places [rather than in the temple]. He built the upper gate of the house of the LORD.

³⁶Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of Judah's Kings?

³⁷In those days the LORD began sending Rezin the king of Aram (Syria) and [Israel's king] Pekah the son of Remaliah against Judah.

³⁸Jotham slept with his fathers [in death], and was buried with them in the City of David his father (ancestor). Ahaz his son became king in his place.

16 IN THE seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, Ahaz the son of Jotham, king of Judah, became king.

²Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. He did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD his God, as his father (ancestor) David had done.

³Instead he walked in the way of the [idolatrous] kings of Israel, and even made his son pass through the fire [as a human sacrifice], in accordance with the repulsive [and idolatrous] practices of the [pagan] nations whom the LORD drove out before the Israelites.

⁴He also sacrificed and burned incense on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree.

⁵Then Rezin the king of Aram (Syria) and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, came up to Jerusalem to wage war. They besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome *and* conquer him.

⁶At that time Rezin king of Aram recovered Elath [in Edom] for Aram, and drove the Jews away from it. The Arameans came to Elath, and live there to this day.

⁷So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, "I am your servant and son. Come up and rescue me from the hand of the kings of Aram and of Israel, who are rising up against me."

⁸And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king's house, and sent a gift to the king of Assyria.

⁹So the king of Assyria listened to him; and he went up against Damascus and captured it, and carried *its people* away into exile to Kir, and put Rezin [king of Aram] to death.

¹⁰Now King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser the king of Assyria, and saw the *pagan* altar which was at Damascus. Then King Ahaz sent a model of the altar to Urijah the priest along with a [detailed] pattern for all its construction.

¹¹So Urijah the priest built an altar; in accordance with everything that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus, that is how Urijah the priest made it before King Ahaz returned from Damascus.

¹²When the king came from Damascus, he saw the altar; then the king approached the altar and offered [sacrifices] on it,

¹³and burned his burnt offering and his grain offering, and

poured out his drink offering, and sprinkled the blood of his peace offerings on the altar.

¹⁴He brought the bronze altar, which was before the LORD, from the front of the house (temple), from between the [new] altar and the house of the LORD, and put it on the north side of the [new] altar.

¹⁵Then King Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, “Upon the great [new] altar, burn the morning burnt offering and the evening grain offering, and the king’s burnt offering and his grain offering, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land and their grain offering and their drink offerings; and sprinkle on the new altar all the blood of the burnt offering and all the blood of the sacrifice. But the [old] bronze altar shall be kept for me to use to examine the sacrifices.”

¹⁶Urijah the priest acted in accordance with everything that King Ahaz commanded.

¹⁷Then King Ahaz cut away the frames of the basin stands [in the temple], and removed the basin from [each of] them; and he took down the [large] Sea from the bronze oxen which were under it, and put it on a plastered stone floor.

¹⁸He removed from the house of the LORD the covered way for the Sabbath which they had built in the house, and the outer entrance of the king, because of the king of Assyria [who might confiscate them].

¹⁹Now the rest of the acts of Ahaz, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

²⁰So Ahaz slept with his fathers [in death] and was buried with his fathers in the City of David; and his son Hezekiah became king in his place.

17 IN THE twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah became king over Israel in Samaria, *and reigned* for nine years.

²He did evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel who came before him.

³Shalmaneser [V] king of Assyria came up against him, and Hoshea became his servant and paid him tribute (money).

⁴But the king of Assyria discovered a conspiracy in Hoshea, who sent messengers to So, king of Egypt, and offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as *he had done* year by year; therefore the king of Assyria arrested him and bound him in prison.

⁵Then the king of Assyria invaded all the land [of Israel] and went up to Samaria and besieged it for three years.

⁶In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried [the people of] Israel into exile to Assyria, and settled them in Halah and in Habor, by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

⁷Now this came about because the Israelites had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and they had feared [and worshiped] other gods

⁸and walked in the customs of the [pagan] nations whom the LORD had driven out before the sons (descendants) of Israel, and *in the pagan customs of* the kings of Israel which they had introduced.

⁹The Israelites ascribed things to the LORD their God which were not true. They built for themselves high places [of

worship] in all their towns, from [the lonely] lookout tower to the [populous] fortified city.

¹⁰They set up for themselves *sacred* pillars (memorial stones) and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree.

¹¹There they burned incense on all the high places, just as the [pagan] nations whom the LORD had deported before them; and they did evil *and* contemptible things, provoking the LORD [to anger].

¹²And they served idols, of which the LORD had said to them, “You shall not do this thing.”

¹³Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah through all His prophets and every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments and My statutes, in accordance with all the Law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets.”

¹⁴However they did not listen, but stiffened their necks as did their fathers who did not believe (trust in, rely on, remain steadfast to) the LORD their God.

¹⁵They rejected His statutes and His covenant which He made with their fathers, as well as His warnings that he gave them. And they followed vanity [that is, false gods, idols] and became vain (empty-headed). They followed the [pagan practices of the] nations which surrounded them, although the LORD had commanded that they were not to do as they did.

¹⁶They abandoned all the commandments of the LORD their God and made for themselves cast images of two calves; and they made an Asherah [idol] and worshiped all the [starry] host of heaven and served Baal.

¹⁷They made their sons and their daughters pass through the fire [as human sacrifices], and used divination [to foretell the future] and enchantments; and they sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger.

¹⁸Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from His sight; none [of the tribes] was left except the tribe of Judah.

¹⁹Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God either, but walked in the customs which Israel introduced.

²⁰So the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel (Jacob) and [repeatedly] afflicted them and handed them over to plunderers, until He had cast them out of His sight.

²¹When He had torn Israel from the [royal] house of David, they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. And Jeroboam drove Israel away from following the LORD and made them commit a great sin.

²²For the Israelites walked in all the [idolatrous] sins which Jeroboam committed; they did not turn from them

²³until the LORD removed Israel from His sight, just as He had foretold through all His servants the prophets. So Israel went into exile from their own land to Assyria to this day [the date of this writing].

²⁴The king of Assyria brought *men* from Babylon and from Cuthah and from Avva and from Hamath and Sepharvaim, and settled them in the cities of Samaria in place of the sons (people) of Israel. They took possession of Samaria and lived in its cities.

²⁵Now when they began to live there, they did not fear the LORD; therefore the LORD sent lions among them which killed

some of them.

²⁶So the king of Assyria was told, “The nations whom you have sent into exile and settled in the cities of Samaria do not know the custom of the god of the land; so He has sent lions among them, and they are killing them because they do not know the manner of [worship demanded by] the god of the land.”

²⁷Then the king of Assyria commanded, “Take back [to Samaria] one of the priests whom you brought from there, and have him go and live there; and have him teach the people the custom of the god of the land.”

²⁸So one of the priests whom they had exiled from Samaria came [back] and lived in Bethel and taught them how they should fear [and worship] the LORD.

²⁹But every nation still made gods of its own and put them in the houses (shrines) of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in the cities where they lived.

³⁰The men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, the men of Cuth made Nergal, the men of Hamath made Ashima,

³¹the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak; and the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim.

³²They also feared the LORD and appointed from among themselves priests of the high places, who sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places.

³³They feared the LORD, yet served their own gods, following the custom of the nations from among whom they had been sent into exile.

³⁴To this day they act in accordance with their former

[pagan] customs: they do not [really] fear the LORD, nor do they obey their statutes and ordinances, nor the law, nor the commandments which the LORD commanded the sons (descendants) of Jacob, whom He named Israel;

Speak God's Word

*The Lord my God I will fear
and worship; He will rescue
me from the hands of all my
enemies.*

| adapted from 2 KINGS 17:39 |

³⁵with whom the LORD had made a covenant and commanded them, saying, “You shall not fear other gods or bow yourselves to them nor serve them, nor sacrifice to them.

³⁶“But the LORD, who brought you up from the land of Egypt with great power and an outstretched arm, Him you shall fear, and to Him you shall bow yourselves down, and to Him you shall sacrifice.

³⁷“The statutes and the ordinances and the law and the commandment which He wrote for you [by the hand of Moses], you shall observe and do forever. You shall not fear (worship, serve) other gods.

³⁸“The covenant that I have made with you, you shall not forget; you shall not fear other gods.

³⁹“But the LORD your God you shall fear [and worship]; then He will rescue you from the hands of all your enemies.”

⁴⁰However, they did not listen, but they acted in

accordance with their former custom.

⁴¹So these nations [superficially] feared the LORD; they also served their idols, as did their children and their children's children, just as their fathers did, so do they to this day [the date of this writing].

18 NOW IT came about in the third year of Hoshea the son of Elah king of Israel, Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah became king.

²He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah.

³Hezekiah did right in the sight of the LORD, in accordance with everything that David his father (ancestor) had done.

⁴He removed the high places [of pagan worship], broke down the images (memorial stones) and cut down the Asherim. He also crushed to pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the Israelites had burned incense to it; and it was called Nehushtan [a bronze sculpture]. [Num 21:8]

⁵Hezekiah trusted in *and* relied confidently on the LORD, the God of Israel; so that after him there was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, nor *among those* who were before him.

⁶For he clung to the LORD; he did not turn away from [faithfully] following Him, but he kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses.

⁷And the LORD was with Hezekiah; he was successful wherever he went. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria

and refused to serve him.

⁸He defeated the Philistines as far as Gaza [the most distant city] and its borders, from the [isolated] lookout tower to the [populous] fortified city.

⁹Now in the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which was the seventh of Hoshea the son of Elah king of Israel, Shalmaneser the king of Assyria went up against Samaria and besieged it.

¹⁰At the end of three years they captured it; in the sixth year of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Israel, Samaria was taken.

¹¹Then the king of Assyria sent Israel into exile to Assyria, and put them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of [the city of] Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes,

¹²because they did not obey the voice of the LORD their God, but broke His covenant, everything that Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded; and they would not listen nor do it.

¹³In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria went up against all the fortified cities of Judah [except Jerusalem] and captured them.

¹⁴Then Hezekiah king of Judah sent *word* to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, "I have done wrong. Withdraw from me; whatever you impose on me I will bear." So the king of Assyria imposed on Hezekiah king of Judah [a tribute tax of] three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Be a Confident Believer

I have discovered that staying confident is a key to being positive in my mind and overall life. Confidence in God helps me step out in faith to do what He wants me to do.

Consider that King Hezekiah “trusted in and relied confidently on the LORD” in the midst of the worst of predicaments (2 Kin. 18:5). The devil is constantly trying to introduce thoughts into our minds to make us lose our confidence in the Lord. The mind is the battlefield, and the devil lies to everyone through wrong thinking. One thing he’s always trying to steal is our confidence in the Lord, to get us to rely on our own understanding or on the wisdom of the world, or to believe that we are incapable of doing the things we want or need to do.

The devil doesn’t want us to have confidence in anything, including prayer. He doesn’t want us to believe we can hear from God. He discourages us concerning the call of God on our lives. He wants us to feel like a failure in our faith walk.

We need to confidently declare what the Word says about us, such as, “I am more than a conqueror through Jesus. I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me. I am triumphant in every situation because God always causes me to triumph.” We need to speak the truth of God’s Word and it will drive the enemy away. Let’s begin every day with a

confident heart, believing that God is with us and that through Him we can do whatever we need to do.

¹⁵Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house (temple) of the LORD, and in the treasuries of the king's house (palace).

¹⁶At that time Hezekiah cut away *the gold framework* from the doors of the temple of the LORD and from the doorposts which he had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.

¹⁷Then the king of Assyria sent the Tartan and the Rab-saris and the Rabshakeh [his highest officials] with a large army, from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. They went up and came to Jerusalem, and when they went up and arrived, they stood by the aqueduct of the upper pool, which is on the road of the Fuller's Field. [2 Chr 32:9–19; Is 36:1–22]

¹⁸When they called for the king, Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was in charge of the [king's] household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the secretary went out to [meet] them.

¹⁹Then the Rabshakeh said to them, "Say to Hezekiah, 'Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria, "What is [the reason for] this confidence that you have?

²⁰"You say (but they are only empty words) '*I have counsel and strength for the war.*' Now on whom do you rely, that you have rebelled against me?

²¹"Now pay attention: you are relying on Egypt, on that staff of crushed reed; if a man leans on it, it will *only* go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust *and* rely on him.

²²“But if you tell me, ‘We trust in *and* rely on the LORD our God,’ is it not He whose high places and altars Hezekiah has removed, and has said to Judah and Jerusalem, ‘You shall worship [only] before this altar in Jerusalem’?”

²³“Now then, make a bargain with my lord the king of Assyria, and I will give you two thousand horses, if on your part you can put riders on them.

²⁴“How then can you drive back *even* one official of the least of my master’s servants, when you rely on Egypt for chariots and horsemen?”

²⁵“Now have I come up against this place to destroy it without the LORD’s approval? The LORD said to me, ‘Go up against this land and destroy it.’”

²⁶Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and Shebna and Joah, said to the Rabshakeh, “Please speak to your servants in the Aramaic (Syrian) language, because we understand it; and do not speak with us in the Judean (Hebrew) language in the hearing of the people who are on the wall.”

²⁷But the Rabshakeh said to them, “Has my master sent me *only* to your master and to you to say these things? Has he not sent me to the men who sit on the wall, [who are doomed by the siege] to eat their own excrement and drink their own urine along with you?”

²⁸Then the Rabshakeh stood and shouted out with a loud voice in Judean (Hebrew), “Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria.

²⁹“Thus says the king, ‘Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to rescue you from my hand;

³⁰nor let Hezekiah make you trust in *and* rely on the LORD,

saying, “The LORD will certainly rescue us, and this city [of Jerusalem] will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.”

³¹“Do not listen to Hezekiah, for thus says the king of Assyria: “Surrender to me and come out to [meet] me, and every man may eat from his own vine and fig tree, and every man may drink the waters of his own well,

³²until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive trees and honey, so that you may live and not die.” Do not listen to Hezekiah when he misleads *and* incites you, saying, “The LORD will rescue us!”

³³“Has any one of the gods of the nations ever rescued his land from the hand of the king of Assyria?

³⁴“Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad [in Aram]? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah [in the valley of the Euphrates]? Have they rescued Samaria (Israel’s capital) from my hand?

³⁵“Who among all the gods of the lands have rescued their lands from my hand, that the LORD would rescue Jerusalem from my hand?”

³⁶But the people kept silent and did not answer him, for the king had commanded, “Do not answer him.”

³⁷Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was in charge of the [royal] household, and Shebna the scribe and Joah the son of Asaph the secretary, came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn [in grief and despair] and told him what the Rabshakeh had said.

19 WHEN KING Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes and he covered himself with sackcloth and went into the house (temple) of the LORD. [Is 37:1–13]

²Then he sent Eliakim who was in charge of his household, Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz.

³They said to him, “Thus says Hezekiah, ‘This is a day of distress *and* anxiety, of punishment and humiliation; for children have come to [the time of their] birth and there is no strength to rescue them.

⁴‘It may be that the LORD your God will hear all the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to taunt *and* defy the living God, and will rebuke the words which the LORD your God has heard. So offer a prayer for the remnant [of His people] that is left [in Judah].’”

⁵So the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

⁶Isaiah said to them, “Say this to your master: ‘Thus says the LORD, “Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have reviled (blasphemed) Me.

⁷‘Behold, I will put a spirit in him so that he will hear a rumor and return to his own land. And I will make him fall by the sword in his own land.’””

⁸So the Rabshakeh returned and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah [a fortified city of Judah]; for he had heard that the king had left Lachish.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Fear Is Not from God

God wants us to pray about everything and fear nothing. We could avoid a lot of problems if we would pray more, worry less, and fear less. Second Timothy 1:7 says that “God did not give us a spirit of timidity or cowardice or fear.” So when we feel fear—little fear or big fear—it is not from God. It’s from the devil who will try to intimidate us with all kinds of fear so that we don’t pray or do anything that God tells us to do.

Had King Hezekiah and his people bowed their knees to fear when the large Assyrian army overwhelmed their land and defied the living God, they would never have experienced God as their abundant provision (see 2 Kin. 19:6).

One of the most important things we can do is to meditate on and confess God’s Word, because the Word will give power to overcome fear. Memorize scriptures so when you feel afraid, you can open your mouth and confess those Bible verses out loud in faith-filled prayer.

When we have to deal with something disconcerting, we often feel dread. We reason and wonder what to do. Fear must be confronted. We can’t wish fear away; it needs to be confronted with the Word of God.

⁹When the king heard them say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, “Behold, he has come out to make war against

you,” he sent messengers again to Hezekiah, saying,

¹⁰“Say this to Hezekiah king of Judah, ‘Do not let your God on whom you rely deceive you by saying, “Jerusalem shall not be handed over to the king of Assyria.”’

¹¹“Listen, you have heard what the Assyrian kings have done to all the lands, destroying them completely. So will you be spared?

¹²“Did the gods of the nations whom my forefathers destroyed rescue them—Gozan and Haran [of Mesopotamia] and Rezech and the people of Eden who were in Telassar?

¹³“Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad [of northern Syria], the king of the city of Sepharvaim, and of Hena and Ivvah?”

¹⁴Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it. Then he went up to the house (temple) of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD. [Is 37:14–20]

¹⁵Hezekiah prayed before the LORD and said, “O LORD, the God of Israel, who is enthroned *above* the cherubim [of the ark in the temple], You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made the heavens and the earth.

¹⁶“O LORD, bend down Your ear and hear; LORD, open Your eyes and see; hear the [taunting] words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to taunt *and* defy the living God.

¹⁷“It is true, LORD, that the Assyrian kings have devastated the nations and their lands

¹⁸and have thrown their gods into the fire, for they were not [real] gods but [only] the work of men’s hands, wood and stone. So they [could destroy them and] have destroyed them.

¹⁹“Now, O LORD our God, please, save us from his hand so

that all the kingdoms of the earth may know [without any doubt] that You alone, O LORD, are God.”

²⁰Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent *word* to Hezekiah, saying, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: ‘I have heard your prayer to Me regarding Sennacherib king of Assyria.’ [Is 37:21–38]

²¹“This is the word that the LORD has spoken against him:

‘The virgin daughter of Zion
Has despised you and mocked you;
The daughter of Jerusalem
Has shaken her head behind you!

²²‘Whom have you taunted and blasphemed?
Against whom have you raised your voice,
And haughtily lifted up your eyes?
Against the Holy One of Israel!

²³‘Through your messengers you have taunted *and* defied the Lord,
And have said [boastfully], “With my many chariots
I came up to the heights of the mountains,
To the remotest parts of Lebanon;
I cut down its tall cedar trees and its choicest cypress trees.
I entered its most distant lodging, its densest forest.

²⁴“I dug *wells* and drank foreign waters,
And with the sole of my feet I dried up
All the rivers of [the Lower Nile of] Egypt.”

²⁵‘Have you not heard [asks the God of Israel]?
Long ago I did it;
From ancient times I planned it.

Now I have brought it to pass,
That you [king of Assyria] should [be My instrument to]
turn fortified cities into ruinous heaps.

26[‘]Therefore their inhabitants were powerless,
They were shattered [in spirit] and put to shame;
They were like plants of the field, the green herb,
As grass on the housetops is scorched before it is grown up.

27[‘]But I [the LORD] know your sitting down [O Sennacherib],
Your going out, your coming in,
And your raging against Me.

28[‘]Because of your raging against Me,
And because your arrogance *and* complacency have come
up to My ears,
I will put My hook in your nose,
And My bridle in your lips,
And I will turn you back [to Assyria] by the way that you
came.

29[‘]Then this shall be the sign [of these things] to you
[Hezekiah]: this year you will eat what grows of itself, in the
second year what springs up voluntarily, and in the third year
sow and reap, plant vineyards, and eat their fruit.

30[‘]The survivors who remain of the house of Judah will
again take root downward and bear fruit upward.

31[‘]For a remnant will go forth from Jerusalem, and [a band
of] survivors from Mount Zion. The zeal of the LORD of hosts
shall perform this.

32[‘]Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of
Assyria: “He will not come to this city [Jerusalem] nor shoot an

arrow there; nor will he come before it with a shield nor throw up a siege ramp against it.

³³“By the way that he came, by the same way he will return, and he will not come into this city,” ’ declares the LORD.

³⁴“For I will protect this city to save it, for My own sake and for My servant David’s sake.”

³⁵Then it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went forth and struck down 185,000 [men] in the camp of the Assyrians; when *the survivors* got up early in the morning, behold, all [185,000] of them were dead.

³⁶So Sennacherib king of Assyria left and returned *home*, and lived at Nineveh.

³⁷It came about as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, that his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with a sword; and they escaped to the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son became king in his place.

20 IN THOSE days [when Sennacherib first invaded Judah] Hezekiah became deathly ill. The prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came and said to him, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Set your house in order, for you shall die and not recover.’” [2 Chr 32:24–26; Is 38:1–8]

²Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, saying,

³“Please, O LORD, remember now [with compassion] how I have walked before You in faithfulness *and* truth and with a whole heart [entirely devoted to You], and have done what is good in Your sight.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

⁴Before Isaiah had gone out of the middle courtyard, the word of the LORD came to him, saying,

⁵“Go back and tell Hezekiah the leader of My people, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father (ancestor): “I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears. Behold, I am healing you; on the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD.

⁶“I will add fifteen years to your life and save you and this city [Jerusalem] from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will protect this city for My own sake and for My servant David’s sake.””

⁷Then Isaiah said, “Bring a cake of figs. And they brought it and placed it on the [painful] inflammation, and he recovered.”

⁸Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “What will be the sign that the LORD will [completely] heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of the LORD on the third day?”

⁹Isaiah said, “This will be the sign to you from the LORD, that He will do the thing that He has spoken: shall the shadow [indicating the time of day] go forward ten steps, or go backward ten steps?”

¹⁰Hezekiah answered, “It is easy for the shadow to go forward ten steps; no, but let the shadow turn backward ten steps.”

¹¹So Isaiah the prophet called out to the LORD, and He brought the shadow on the steps ten steps backward by which it had gone down on the sundial of Ahaz.

¹²At that time Berodach-baladan a son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a gift to Hezekiah, for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick. [Is 39:1–8]

¹³Hezekiah listened to *and* welcomed them and [foolishly] showed them all his treasure house—the silver and gold and spices and precious oil and his armory and everything that was found in his treasuries. There was nothing in his house (palace) nor in all his realm that Hezekiah did not show them.

¹⁴Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah and said to him, “What did these men say [that would cause you to do this for them]? From where have they come to you?” Hezekiah said, “They have come from a far country, from Babylon.”

¹⁵Isaiah said, “What have they seen in your house?” Hezekiah answered, “They have seen everything that is in my house (palace). There is nothing in my treasuries that I have not shown them.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Watching Your Words

King Hezekiah foolishly opened his treasure house to the Babylonians (see 2 Kin. 20:13). This indicates he did not have a good sense of boundaries. We all need to learn how to establish and maintain boundaries, especially with our words. Proverbs 10:19 states, “When there are many words, transgression and offense are unavoidable, but he who controls his lips and keeps thoughtful silence is wise.” In other words, people who talk a lot often find themselves in trouble.

Because our words carry so much power, we need to learn to say only what needs to be said. Almost every time we have a problem with somebody, it’s over something we said or something another person said. There may be other elements—something somebody is doing, for example—but the main cause of the trouble most of the time is something that was said. If we learn to speak only what is wise and necessary, we will have much more peace.

¹⁶Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Hear the word of the LORD.

¹⁷‘Behold, the time is coming when everything that is in your house, and that your fathers have stored up until this day, will be carried to Babylon; nothing will be left,’ says the LORD.

¹⁸“And some of your sons (descendants) who will be born to you will be taken away [as captives]; and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.”

¹⁹Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good.” For he thought, “Is it not good, if [at least] there will be peace and security in my lifetime?”

²⁰The rest of the acts of Hezekiah and all his might, and how he made the [Siloam] pool and the aqueduct and brought water into the city, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

²¹Hezekiah slept with his fathers [in death], and Manasseh his son became king in his place.

21 MANASSEH WAS twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned for fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Hephzibah.

²He did [great] evil in the sight of the LORD, in accordance with the [idolatrous] repulsive acts of the [pagan] nations whom the LORD dispossessed before the sons (descendants) of Israel.

³For he rebuilt the high places [for the worship of pagan gods] which his father Hezekiah had destroyed; and he set up altars for Baal and made an [image of] Asherah, just as Ahab king of Israel had done, and he worshiped all the [starry] host of heaven and served them.

⁴And he built [pagan] altars in the house (temple) of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, “In Jerusalem I will put My

Name (Presence).”

⁵And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courtyards of the house of the LORD.

⁶He made his son pass through the fire *and* burned him [as an offering to Molech]; he practiced witchcraft and divination, and dealt with mediums and soothsayers. He did great evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking *Him to anger*.

⁷He made a carved image of the [goddess] Asherah and set it up in the house (temple), of which the LORD said to David and to his son Solomon, “In this house and in Jerusalem [in the tribe of Judah], which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel, I will put My Name forever.

⁸“And I will not make the feet of Israel wander anymore from the land which I gave their fathers, if only they will be careful to act in accordance with everything that I have commanded them, and with all the law that My servant Moses commanded them.”

⁹But they did not listen; and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the sons (descendants) of Israel.

¹⁰Now the LORD spoke through His servants the prophets, saying,

¹¹“Because Manasseh king of Judah has committed these repulsive acts, having done more evil than all the Amorites did who were before him, and has also made Judah sin with his idols;

¹²therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: ‘Behold, I am bringing *such* catastrophe on Jerusalem and Judah, that everyone who hears of it, both of his ears will ring [from the

shock].

¹³“I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab; and I will wipe Jerusalem clean just as one wipes a [dirty] bowl clean, wiping it and turning it upside down.

¹⁴“I will abandon the remnant (remainder) of My inheritance and hand them over to their enemies; and they will become plunder and spoil to all their enemies,

¹⁵because they have done evil in My sight, and have been provoking Me to anger, since the day their fathers came from Egypt to this day.”

¹⁶Moreover, Manasseh shed a very great quantity of innocent blood, until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; besides his sin with which he made Judah sin, by doing evil in the sight of the LORD. [2 Chr 33:1–10]

¹⁷Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, everything that he did, and the sin that he committed, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

¹⁸Manasseh slept with his fathers [in death] and was buried in the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza. And his son Amon became king in his place.

¹⁹Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Meshullemeth the daughter of Haruz of Jotbah.

²⁰He also did evil in the sight of the LORD, just as his father Manasseh had done. [2 Kin 23:26, 27; 24:3, 4]

²¹He walked in all the [evil] ways that his father had walked; and he served the idols that his father had served, and worshiped them;

²²he abandoned the LORD, the God of his fathers, and did not walk in the way of the LORD.

²³But the servants of Amon conspired against him and killed the king in his own house (palace).

²⁴Then the people of the land [of Judah] killed all those who had conspired against King Amon, and the people of the land made his son Josiah king in his place.

²⁵Now the rest of the acts of Amon which he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

²⁶He was buried in his tomb in the garden of Uzza, and his son Josiah became king in his place.

22 JOSIAH WAS eight years old when he became king, and reigned for thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath.

²He did what was right in the sight of the LORD and walked in all the ways of his father (ancestor) David, and did not turn aside to the right or to the left.

³In the eighteenth year of King Josiah, the king sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam the scribe to the house of the LORD, saying,

⁴“Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, so that he may count the entire amount of money brought into the house of the LORD, which the doorkeepers have collected from the people. [2 Kin 12:4]

⁵“And have them deliver it to the hands of the workmen

who have been appointed over the house of the LORD, and have them give it to the workmen who are in the house of the LORD to repair the damages of the house—

⁶that is, [have them give the money] to the carpenters and the builders and the masons—and to buy timber and cut stones to repair the house (temple).

⁷“However, no accounting shall be required of them for the money placed in their hands, because they act faithfully.”

⁸Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, “I have found the Book of the Law in the house (temple) of the LORD.” Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it.

⁹Shaphan the scribe came to the king and brought back word to him: “Your servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house, and have placed it in the hands of the workmen who have been appointed over the house of the LORD.”

¹⁰Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, “Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.” And Shaphan read it [aloud] before the king.

¹¹Now when the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes.

¹²Then the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor the son of Micaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the servant of the king, saying,

¹³“Go, inquire of the LORD for my sake and for the sake of the people and for all Judah concerning the words of this book which has been found, for great is the wrath of the LORD which has been kindled against us, because our fathers have not listened to *and* obeyed the words of this book, so as to act in

accordance with everything that is written concerning us.”

¹⁴So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe (she was living in Jerusalem, in the Second Quarter [the new part of the city]); and they spoke to her.

¹⁵She said to them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: ‘Tell the man who sent you to me,

¹⁶thus says the LORD: “Behold, I am bringing a catastrophe on this place (Judah) and on its inhabitants, [according to] all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read.

¹⁷“Because they have abandoned (rejected) Me and have burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore My wrath burns against this place, and it will not be quenched.” ’

POWERPOINT

Huldah the prophetess, speaking for the Lord, stated that young King Josiah had a tender heart, which is equivalent to having a tender conscience, and a tender conscience is vital to our being available for God to use. One way we develop a tender conscience is by repenting quickly, as Josiah did, when God convicts us of something, and by not making excuses for our behavior.



¹⁸“But to the king of Judah who sent you to inquire of the LORD, you shall say this to him: ‘Thus says the LORD God of Israel, “*Regarding* the words which you have heard,

¹⁹because your heart was tender (receptive, penitent) and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I said against this place and against its inhabitants, that they

should become a desolation and a curse, and because you have torn your clothes and wept before Me, I have heard you,” declares the LORD.

²⁰“Therefore, behold, [King Josiah,] I will gather you to your fathers, and you will be taken to your grave in peace, and your eyes will not see all the evil (catastrophe) which I will bring on this place.”” So they brought back word to the king.

23 KING JOSIAH sent *word* and they brought to him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem.

²The king went up to the house of the LORD, and with him all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests, the prophets, and all the people, both small and great; and he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house (temple) of the LORD.

³The king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD and to keep His commandments, His testimonies, and His statutes with all his heart and soul, to confirm the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people entered into the covenant.

⁴Then the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest and the priests of the second rank and the doorkeepers to bring out of the temple of the LORD all the articles made for Baal, for [the goddess] Asherah, and for all the [starry] host of heaven; and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel [where Israel’s idolatry began]. [1 Kin 12:28, 29]

⁵He got rid of the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense [to pagan gods] in the high places in Judah's cities and all around Jerusalem—also those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, to the constellations [of the zodiac], and to all the [starry] host of heaven.

⁶Josiah brought out the Asherah from the house of the LORD to the Brook Kidron outside Jerusalem, and burned it there, and ground it to dust, and threw its dust on the graves of the common people [who had sacrificed to it].

⁷And he tore down the houses of the [male] cult prostitutes, which were at the house (temple) of the LORD, where the women were weaving [tent] hangings for the Asherah [shrines].

⁸Then Josiah brought all the [idolatrous] priests from the cities of Judah, and desecrated the high places where the priests had burned incense [to idols], from Geba to Beersheba, [that is, north to south]; and he tore down the high places of the gates which were at the entrance of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were on one's left at the city gate.

⁹However, the priests of the high places were not allowed to go up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem [to serve], but they ate unleavened bread among their brothers.

¹⁰Josiah also defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of Ben-hinnom (son of Hinnom), so that no man could make his son or his daughter pass through the fire [as a burnt offering] for Molech. [Ezek 16:21]

¹¹And he got rid of the horses that the kings of Judah had given [in worship] to the sun at the entrance of the house of

the LORD, by the chamber of Nathan-melech the official, which was in the annex; and he burned the chariots of the sun.

POWERPOINT

King Josiah made certain that the people of Judah would know what it meant to follow God and would know how He wanted them to respond in certain situations. He realized they must be taught God's law in order to do these things. Likewise, if you want to walk in God's ways, you need to learn all you can about God and His ways by studying Scripture and then doing what He says.



¹²The altars [dedicated to the starry host of heaven] which were on the roof, the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courtyards of the house of the LORD, the king tore down; and he smashed them there and threw their dust into the Brook Kidron.

¹³The king desecrated the high places which were opposite

[east of] Jerusalem, which were on the right (south) of the mount of corruption which Solomon the king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the repulsiveness of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the repulsiveness of Moab, and for Milcom the repulsiveness of the sons (descendants) of Ammon.

¹⁴He broke in pieces the *sacred* pillars (cultic memorial stones, images) and cut down the Asherim and replaced them with human bones [to desecrate the places forever].

¹⁵Further, the altar that was at Bethel, the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, had made, even that altar and the high place he tore down. Then he demolished its stones, ground them to dust, and burned the Asherah.

¹⁶And as Josiah turned, he saw the graves that were there on the mountain, and he sent *men* and had the bones taken from the graves, and burned them on the altar and [thereby] desecrated it, in accordance with the word of the LORD which the man of God prophesied, who proclaimed these things [about this altar, naming Josiah before he was born]. [1 Kin 13:2–5]

¹⁷Then Josiah said, “What is this monument (gravestone) that I see?” The men of the city told him, “It is the grave of the man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed these things which you have done to the altar of Bethel.”

¹⁸He said, “Let him alone; let no one disturb his bones.” So they left his bones undisturbed, with the bones of the prophet who came from Samaria. [1 Kin 13:31, 32]

¹⁹Josiah also removed all the houses of the high places which were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made provoking the LORD [to anger]; and he did to them

just as he had done [to those] in Bethel.

²⁰All the priests of the high places who were there he slaughtered on the altars, and burned human bones on them [to desecrate the places forever]. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

²¹Then the king commanded all the people, saying, “Celebrate the Passover to the LORD your God as it is written in this book of the covenant.”

²²Indeed, such a Passover as this had not been held since the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah.

²³But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, this Passover to the LORD was kept in Jerusalem.

²⁴Moreover, Josiah removed the mediums and the soothsayers and the teraphim (household gods) and the idols and all the repulsive things that were seen in Judah and in Jerusalem, so that he might fulfill the words of the law written in the book which Hilkiah the priest found in the house (temple) of the LORD.

²⁵Before him there was no king like Josiah who turned to the LORD with all his heart and all his soul and all his might, in accordance with all the Law of Moses; nor did anyone like him arise after him.

²⁶However, the LORD did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath which was kindled against Judah because of all the despicable acts with which Manasseh had provoked Him.

²⁷The LORD said, “I will also remove Judah from My sight, just as I have removed Israel; and will reject this city which I have chosen, this Jerusalem, and the house, of which I said,

‘My Name [and the pledge of My Presence] shall be there.’”

²⁸Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, everything that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

²⁹In his days Pharaoh Neco (Necho) king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates [to help him fight Nabopolassar the king of Babylon]. King Josiah went out to meet him, but Pharaoh killed Josiah at Megiddo when he saw him.

³⁰Josiah’s servants carried his dead body in a chariot from Megiddo, brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own tomb. Then the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah and anointed him and made him king in his father’s place.

³¹Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned for [only] three months in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.

³²He did evil in the sight of the LORD, in accordance with everything that his forefathers had done.

³³Pharaoh Neco imprisoned him at Riblah in the land of Hamath, so that he would not reign in Jerusalem, and imposed a fine on the land of a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold.

³⁴Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in place of his father Josiah, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. But he took Jehoahaz and brought him to Egypt, where he died.

³⁵Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh, but he taxed the land to give the money as Pharaoh commanded. He collected the silver and gold from the people of the land, from

everyone according to his assessment, to give it to Pharaoh Neco.

³⁶Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned for eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zebidah daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah.

³⁷He did evil in the sight of the LORD, in accordance with everything that his forefathers had done.

24 IN HIS days, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant for three years; then he turned and rebelled against him.

²The LORD sent marauding bands of Chaldeans, Arameans (Syrians), Moabites, and Ammonites against Jehoiakim. And He sent them against Judah to destroy it, in accordance with the word of the LORD which He spoke through His servants the prophets.

³Surely this came on Judah at the command of the LORD, to remove them from His sight because of the sins of [King] Manasseh, in accordance with everything that he had done,

⁴and also for the innocent blood that he shed, for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; and the LORD would not pardon it.

⁵Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and everything that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

⁶So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers [in death], and his son Jehoiachin became king in his place.

⁷The king of Egypt did not come out of his land again,

because the king of Babylon had taken everything that belonged to the king of Egypt, from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates.

⁸Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned [only] three months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Nehushta daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem.

⁹He did evil in the sight of the LORD, in accordance with everything that his father had done.

¹⁰At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon went up to Jerusalem, and the city came under siege.

¹¹Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to the city while his servants were besieging it.

¹²Jehoiachin king of Judah surrendered to the king of Babylon, he and his mother and his servants and his captains and his [palace] officials. So the king of Babylon took him prisoner in the eighth year of his [own] reign.

¹³He carried out of there (Jerusalem) all the treasures of the house (temple) of the LORD, and the treasures of the house (palace) of the king, and cut in pieces all the articles of gold in the temple of the LORD, which Solomon king of Israel had made, just as the LORD had said.

¹⁴He led away into exile all Jerusalem and all the captains and all the brave men, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths. None remained except the poorest people of the land.

¹⁵Nebuchadnezzar led Jehoiachin away into exile to Babylon; also he took the king's mother and the king's wives and his officials and the leading men of the land [including Ezekiel] as exiles from Jerusalem to Babylon. [Ezek 1:1]

¹⁶And the king of Babylon brought as exiles to Babylon all the brave men, seven thousand [of them], and the craftsmen and the smiths, a thousand [of them], all strong and fit for war.

¹⁷Then the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

¹⁸Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned for eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. [2 Kin 23:31]

¹⁹He did evil in the sight of the LORD, in accordance with everything that Jehoiakim had done.

²⁰Because of the anger of the LORD *these things* happened in Jerusalem and Judah, and it [finally] came to the point that He cast them from His presence. And Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

25 NOW IN the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he with all his army, against Jerusalem, and camped against it and built siege works surrounding it.

²The city came under siege [for nearly two years] until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah.

³On the ninth day of the *fourth* month the famine [caused by the siege] was severe in the city; there was no food for the people of the land.

⁴Then the city [wall] was broken into [and conquered]; all the men of war *fled* by night by way of the gate between the two walls by the king's garden, though the Chaldeans

(Babylonians) were all around the city. And they went by way of the Arabah (the plain of the Jordan).

⁵The army of the Chaldeans pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho. Then his entire army was dispersed from him.

⁶So they seized the king (Zedekiah) and brought him to the king of Babylon at Riblah [on the Orontes River], and sentence was passed on him.

⁷They slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, then put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him [hand and foot] with bronze fetters and brought him to Babylon. [Jer 34:3; Ezek 12:13]

⁸On the seventh day of the fifth month in the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, Nebuzaradan, captain of the bodyguard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem.

⁹He burned the house (temple) of the LORD, the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem; every great house he burned down.

¹⁰All the army of the Chaldeans (Babylonians) who *were with* the captain of the bodyguard tore down the walls around Jerusalem.

¹¹Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard deported [into exile] the rest of the people who were left in the city and the deserters who had joined the king of Babylon, and the rest of the multitude.

¹²But the captain of the bodyguard left some of the unimportant *and* poorest people of the land to be vineyard workers and farmers.

¹³Now the Chaldeans (Babylonians) smashed the bronze pillars which were in the house of the LORD and their bases and the bronze sea (large basin) which were in the house of the LORD, and carried the bronze to Babylon.

¹⁴They took away the pots, the shovels, the snuffers, the spoons, and all the bronze articles which were used in the *temple* service,

¹⁵the captain of the bodyguard also took away the firepans and basins, anything made of fine gold and anything made of fine silver.

¹⁶The two pillars, the one sea (large basin), and the bases which Solomon had made for the house of the LORD, the bronze of all these articles was incalculable.

¹⁷The height of the one pillar was eighteen cubits (27 ft.), and a capital of bronze was on top of it. The height of the capital was three cubits (4.5 ft.); a network (lattice work) and pomegranates around the capital were all of bronze. And the second pillar had the same as these, with a network.

¹⁸The captain of the bodyguard took [captive] Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the second priest, and the three doorkeepers [of the temple].

¹⁹And from the city [of Jerusalem] he took an officer who was in command of the men of war, and five men from the king's personal advisors who were found in the city, and the scribe of the captain of the army who mustered the people of the land [for military service] and sixty men from the people of the land who were found in the city.

²⁰Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard took them and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah.

²¹Then the king of Babylon struck them down and killed them at Riblah in the land of Hamath [north of Damascus]. So Judah was taken into exile from its land.

²²Now over the people whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left in the land of Judah, he appointed [as governor] Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan.

²³When all the captains of the forces, they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah *governor*, they came with their men to Gedaliah at Mizpah, namely, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah the son of the Maacathite.

²⁴Gedaliah swore [an oath] to them and their men, and said to them, “Do not be afraid of the servants (officials) of the Chaldeans. Live in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it will be well with you.”

²⁵But in the seventh month Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the royal family [who had a claim to be governor], came with ten men and struck and killed Gedaliah and the Jews and the Chaldeans who were with him at Mizpah.

²⁶Then all the people, both small and great, and the captains of the forces set out and went to Egypt; for they were afraid of the Chaldeans (Babylonians).

²⁷Now it came about in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, on the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he became king, showed favor to Jehoiachin king of Judah *and* released him from prison;

²⁸and he spoke kindly to him and set his throne above the

throne of the [other] kings [of captive peoples] who were with him in Babylon.

²⁹Jehoiachin changed his prison clothes [for palace garments] and he dined regularly in the king's presence for the remainder of his life;

³⁰and his allowance, a continual one, was given to him by the king (Evil-meridach), a portion every day, for the rest of his life.

1 Chronicles

Author: |

Attributed to Ezra

Date: | Probably

between 425 BC and

400 BC

Many people think of the book of 1 Chronicles as simply a genealogy and a great deal of historical information on the reign of King David. While the first nine chapters do focus in detail on David's family history, we learn from this that family is important to God. Everyone does not have a good experience in their natural family, but all believers are part of the family of God, where we can be healed, redeemed, and restored.

Other important aspects of 1 Chronicles include its emphasis on God's faithfulness and on the importance of seeking God's presence. One of the key moments in this book is when David returns the ark, which represents God's presence, to Jerusalem. God's presence was vital to His people centuries ago and is still vital to you and me today.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM 1 CHRONICLES:

The reasons for Saul's death include his failure to keep God's word and his decision to consult a medium, instead of inquiring of the Lord (see 1 Chronicles 10:13–14). There is only one way to blessing, which is to honor God, and there is only one source of truth, which is God's Word.

One of the best pieces of advice anyone could ever give you is to seek the Lord continually and to hunger for His presence (see 1 Chronicles 16:11).

There is no one and nothing on earth that we need as much as we need God. He is a vital necessity in our lives (see 1 Chronicles 22:19)!

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM 1 CHRONICLES:

Remember [with gratitude] His marvelous deeds which He has done, His miracles and the judgments from His mouth. | 1 Chronicles 16:12

The LORD searches all hearts and minds, and understands every intent and inclination of the thoughts. If you seek Him [inquiring for and of Him and requiring Him as your first and vital necessity] He will let you find Him. | 1 Chronicles 28:9

Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all. In Your hand is power and might; and it is in Your hands to make great and to give strength to everyone. | 1 Chronicles 29:12

THE FIRST BOOK OF THE CHRONICLES

- 1 ADAM [HIS genealogical line], Seth, Enosh,
 ²Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared,
 ³Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech,
 ⁴Noah, [and his sons] Shem, Ham, and Japheth.
 ⁵The sons (descendants) of Japheth: Gomer, Magog,
Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.
 ⁶The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Diphath, and Togarmah.
 ⁷The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim.
 ⁸The sons of Ham: Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.
 ⁹The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabta, Raama, and
Sabteca. The sons of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan.
 ¹⁰Cush became the father of Nimrod; he began to be a
mighty one upon the earth.
 ¹¹Mizraim became the father of the people of Lud, Anam,
Lehab, Naphtuh,
 ¹²Pathrus, and Casluh, from whom came the Philistines, and
Caphtor.
 ¹³Canaan became the father of Sidon his firstborn, and
Heth,

¹⁴the Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites,

¹⁵Hivites, Arkites, Sinites,

¹⁶Arvadites, Zemarites, and Hamathites.

¹⁷The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, Aram, Uz, Hul, Gether, and Meshech.

¹⁸Arpachshad became the father of Shelah, and Shelah became the father of Eber.

¹⁹To Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg, because in his days [the population of] the earth was divided [according to its languages], and his brother's name was Joktan.

²⁰Joktan became the father of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah,

²¹Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah,

²²Ebal, Abimael, Sheba,

²³Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these were the sons of Joktan.

²⁴Shem [his genealogical line], Arpachshad, Shelah,

²⁵Eber, Peleg, Reu,

²⁶Serug, Nahor, Terah,

²⁷Abram, the same as Abraham.

²⁸The sons of Abraham: Isaac [by his wife Sarah] and Ishmael [by Hagar her maid].

²⁹These are their descendants: The firstborn of Ishmael, Nebaioth; then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam,

³⁰Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema,

³¹Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. These are the sons of

Ishmael.

³²Now the sons of Keturah, Abraham's concubine: she gave birth to Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. The sons of Jokshan: Sheba and Dedan.

³³The sons of Midian: Ephah, Epher, Hanoah, Abida, and Eldaah. All these are the sons [and grandsons] of Keturah.

³⁴Abraham became the father of Isaac. The sons of Isaac: Esau and Israel (Jacob).

³⁵The sons of Esau: Eliphaz, Reuel, Jeush, Jalam, and Korah.

³⁶The sons of Eliphaz: Teman, Omar, Zephi, Gatam, Kenaz, Timna, and Amalek.

³⁷The sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah.

³⁸The sons of Seir: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan.

³⁹The sons of Lotan: Hori and Homam; and Timna was Lotan's sister.

⁴⁰The sons of Shobal: Alian, Manahath, Ebal, Shephi, and Onam. The sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah.

⁴¹The son of Anah: Dishon. The sons of Dishon: Hamran, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran.

⁴²The sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Jaakan. The sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran.

⁴³These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the sons (descendants) of Israel (Jacob): Bela the son of Beor; the name of his city was Dinhabah.

⁴⁴When Bela died, Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah

became king in his place.

⁴⁵When Jobab died, Husham of the land of the Temanites became king in his place.

⁴⁶When Husham died, Hadad [I of Edom] the son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the field of Moab, became king in his place; the name of his city was Avith.

⁴⁷When Hadad [I] died, Samlah of Masrekah became king in his place.

⁴⁸When Samlah died, Shaul of Rehoboth on the River [Euphrates] became king in his place.

⁴⁹When Shaul died, Baal-hanan the son of Achbor became king in his place.

⁵⁰When Baal-hanan died, Hadad [II] became king in his place; the name of his city was Pai; his wife's name was Mehetabel daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab.

⁵¹Hadad died also.

The chiefs of Edom were: chiefs Timna, Aliah, Jetheth,

⁵²Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon,

⁵³Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar,

⁵⁴Magdiel, and Iram. These are the chiefs of Edom.

2 THESE ARE the sons of Israel: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun,

²Dan, Joseph, Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.

³The sons of Judah: Er, Onan, and Shelah; the three were born to him by Shua's daughter the Canaanitess. Er, Judah's eldest, was evil in the LORD's sight, and He put him to death.

⁴Tamar, Judah's daughter-in-law, bore him Perez and Zerah.
Judah's sons were five in all. [Gen 38]

POWERPOINT

If you've ever wondered why there are so many genealogies in the Bible, as we find in First Chronicles, it's because family is important to God. As believers, we need to also be reminded of our heritage in God so we can remember and honor the legacy of faith in our lives. There are powerful lessons for us to learn from and remember.



⁵The sons of Perez: Hezron and Hamul.

⁶The sons of Zerah: Zimri, Ethan, Heman, Calcol, and Dara—five in all. [1 Kin 4:31]

⁷The son of Carmi: Achar, the troubler of Israel, who violated the ban [by taking things from Jericho that had been banned]. [Josh 7:1]

⁸The son of Ethan: Azariah.

⁹The sons of Hezron who were born to him: Jerahmeel, Ram, and Chelubai [that is, Caleb].

¹⁰Ram became the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab became the father of Nahshon, leader of the sons of Judah.

¹¹Nahshon became the father of Salma, Salma became the father of Boaz,

¹²Boaz became the father of Obed, and Obed became the father of Jesse.

¹³Jesse became the father of Eliab his firstborn, Abinadab the second, Shimea the third,

¹⁴Nethanel the fourth, Raddai the fifth,

¹⁵Ozem the sixth, David the seventh.

¹⁶Their sisters were Zeruiah and Abigail. The sons of Zeruiah: Abishai, Joab, and Asahel, three.

¹⁷Abigail gave birth to Amasa, and the father of Amasa was Jether the Ishmaelite.

¹⁸And Caleb the son of Hezron had sons by his wife Azubah and by Jerioth. Azubah's sons were: Jesher, Shobab, and Ardon.

¹⁹Azubah died, and Caleb married Ephrath, who bore him Hur.

²⁰Hur became the father of Uri, and Uri became the father of Bezalel [the skillful craftsman who made the furnishings of the tabernacle]. [Ex 31:2–5]

²¹Later, when Hezron was sixty years old, he married the daughter of Machir the father of Gilead, and she bore him Segub.

²²Segub became the father of Jair, who [later] had twenty-three cities in the land of Gilead.

²³But Geshur and Aram took from them Havvoth-jair, with

Kenath and its villages, sixty towns *in all*. All these were the sons (descendants) of Machir, the father of Gilead.

²⁴After Hezron died in Caleb-ephraim, Abijah, Hezron's wife, bore him Ashhur the father of Tekoa.

²⁵The sons of Jerahmeel the firstborn of Hezron: Ram the firstborn, Bunah, Oren, Ozem, and Ahijah.

²⁶Jerahmeel had another wife, named Atarah; she was the mother of Onam.

²⁷The sons of Ram the firstborn of Jerahmeel were: Maaz, Jamin, and Eker.

²⁸The sons of Onam: Shammai and Jada. The sons of Shammai: Nadab and Abishur.

²⁹The name of Abishur's wife was Abihail; she bore him Ahban and Molid.

³⁰The sons of Nadab: Seled and Appaim. Seled died childless.

³¹The son of Appaim: Ishi. The son of Ishi: Sheshan. The son of Sheshan: Ahlai.

³²The sons of Jada the brother of Shammai: Jether and Jonathan. Jether died childless.

³³The sons of Jonathan: Peleth and Zaza. These were the sons (descendants) of Jerahmeel.

³⁴Sheshan had no sons—only daughters. But Sheshan had a servant, an Egyptian, whose name was Jarha.

³⁵So Sheshan gave his daughter to Jarha his servant as a wife; she bore him Attai.

³⁶Attai became the father of Nathan, and Nathan became the father of Zabad.

³⁷Zabad became the father of Ephlal, and Ephlal became the father of Obed.

³⁸Obed became the father of Jehu, and Jehu became the father of Azariah.

³⁹Azariah became the father of Helez, and Helez became the father of Eleasah.

⁴⁰Eleasah became the father of Sismai, and Sismai became the father of Shallum.

⁴¹Shallum became the father of Jekamiah, and Jekamiah became the father of Elishama.

⁴²The sons of Caleb, the brother of Jerahmeel: Mesha his firstborn was the father of Ziph; and his son Mareshah was the father of Hebron.

⁴³The sons of Hebron: Korah, Tappuah, Rekem, and Shema.

⁴⁴Shema became the father of Raham, the father of Jorkeam. And Rekem became the father of Shammai.

⁴⁵The son of Shammai was Maon; Maon became the father of Bethzur.

⁴⁶Ephah, Caleb's concubine, gave birth to Haran, Moza, and Gazez; Haran became the father of Gazez.

⁴⁷The sons of Jahdai: Regem, Jotham, Geshan, Pelet, Ephah, and Shaaph.

⁴⁸Maacah, Caleb's concubine, gave birth to Sheber and Tirhanah.

⁴⁹She also bore Shaaph the father of Madmannah and Sheva the father of Machbena and of Gibeaz; and the daughter of Caleb was Achsah.

⁵⁰These were the sons (descendants) of Caleb.

The sons of Hur, the firstborn of Ephrathah: Shobal the father of Kiriath-jearim,

⁵¹Salma the father of Bethlehem and Hareph the father of Beth-gader.

⁵²Shobal the father of Kiriath-jearim had [other] sons (descendants): Haroeh, half of the Manahathites [in Judah],

⁵³and the families of Kiriath-jearim: the Ithrites, Puthites, Shumathites, and Mishraites. From these came the Zorathites and the Eshtaolites.

⁵⁴The sons (descendants) of Salma: Bethlehem, the Netophathites, Atroth-beth-joab, and half of the Manahathites, the Zorites.

⁵⁵The families of scribes who lived at Jabez: the Tirathites, Shimeathites, and Sucathites. These are the Kenites who came from Hammath, the father of the house of Rechab.

3 THESE WERE the sons of David who were born to him in Hebron: the firstborn was Amnon, by Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; second, Daniel (Chileab), by Abigail the Carmelitess;

²third, Absalom the son of Maacah, daughter of Talmai king of Geshur; fourth, Adonijah, the son of Haggith;

³fifth, Shephatiah, by Abital; sixth, Ithream, by his wife Eglah.

⁴These six were born to David in Hebron; he reigned there seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years.

⁵These were born to David in Jerusalem: Shimea (Shammua), Shobab, Nathan, Solomon—four by Bath-shua (Bathsheba) daughter of Ammiel (Eliam);

⁶then Ibhar, Elishama (Elishua), Eliphelet (Elpelet),

⁷Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia,

⁸Elishama, Eliada (Beeliada), and Eliphelet—nine *in all*.

⁹All *these were* the sons of David, besides the sons of the concubines; and Tamar was their sister.

¹⁰Solomon's son was Rehoboam. Abijah was his son, Asa his son, Jehoshaphat his son,

¹¹Joram (Jehoram) his son, Ahaziah his son, Joash his son,

¹²Amaziah his son, Azariah his son, Jotham his son,

¹³Ahaz his son, Hezekiah his son, Manasseh his son,

¹⁴Amon his son, Josiah his son.

¹⁵The sons of Josiah: firstborn, Johanan; second, Jehoiakim (Eliakim); third, Zedekiah; fourth, Shallum (Jehoahaz).

¹⁶The sons (descendants) of Jehoiakim: Jehoiachin (Jeconiah) his son, Zedekiah his son.

¹⁷The sons (descendants) of Jehoiachin (Jeconiah) the prisoner: Shealtiel his son,

¹⁸Malchiram, Pedaiah, Shenazzar, Jekamiah, Hoshama and Nedabiah.

¹⁹The sons of Pedaiah: Zerubbabel and Shimei. The sons of Zerubbabel: Meshullam and Hananiah, and Shelomith was their sister;

²⁰and Hashubah, Ohel, Berechiah, Hasadiah, and Jushabhesed—five *in all*.

²¹The sons of Hananiah: Pelatiah and Jeshaiah, the sons of Rephaiah, the sons of Aman, the sons of Obadiah, the sons of Shecaniah.

²²The sons (descendants) of Shecaniah: Shemaiah. The sons of Shemaiah: Hattush, Igal, Bariah, Neariah, and Shaphat—six *in all*.

²³The sons of Neariah: Elioenai, Hizkiah, and Azrikam—three *in all*.

²⁴The sons of Elioenai: Hodaviah, Eliashib, Pelaiah, Akkub, Johanan, Delaiah, and Anani—seven *in all*.

4 THE SONS of Judah: Perez, Hezron, Carmi, Hur, and Shobal.

²Reaiah the son of Shobal became the father of Jahath, and Jahath became the father of Ahumai and Lahad. These were the families of the Zorathites.

³These were the sons of Etam: Jezreel, Ishma, and Idbash; and the name of their sister was Hazzelelponi.

⁴Penuel was the father of Gedor, and Ezer the father of Hushah. These were the sons of Hur, the eldest of Ephrathah (Ephrath), the father of Bethlehem.

⁵Ashhur, the father of Tekoa, had two wives, Helah and Naarah.

⁶Naarah bore him Ahuzzam, Hepher, Temeni and Haahashtari. These were Naarah's sons.

⁷The sons of Helah: Zereth, Izhar, and Ethnan.

⁸Koz fathered Anub, Zobebah, and the families of Aharhel the son of Harum.

⁹Jabez was more honorable than his brothers; but his mother named him Jabez, saying, “Because I gave birth to him in pain.”

¹⁰Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, saying, “Oh that You would indeed bless me and enlarge my border [property], and that Your hand would be with me, and You would keep me from evil so that it does not hurt me!” And God granted his request.

¹¹Chelub the brother of Shuhah became the father of Mehir, the father of Eshton.

¹²Eshton became the father of Beth-rapha, Paseah, and Tehinnah the father of Ir-nahash. These are the men of Recah.

¹³The sons of Kenaz: Othniel and Seraiah. The sons of Othniel: Hathath and Meonothai.

¹⁴Meonothai became the father of Ophrah, and Seraiah became the father of Joab the father of Ge-harashim [the Valley of Craftsmen, so named] because they were craftsmen.

¹⁵The sons of Caleb [Joshua’s companion] the son of Jephunneh: Iru, Elah, and Naam. The son of Elah: Kenaz.

¹⁶The sons of Jehallelel: Ziph, Ziphah, Tiria, and Asarel.

¹⁷The sons of Ezrah: Jether, Mered, Ephraim, and Jalon. These are the sons of Bithiah daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered took: she conceived *and gave birth to* Miriam, Shammai, and Ishbah the father of Eshtemoa.

¹⁸Mered’s Jewish wife gave birth to Jered the father of Gedor, Heber the father of Soco, and Jekuthiel the father of Zanoah.

¹⁹The sons of the wife of Hodiah, the sister of Naham, were: the fathers of Keilah the Garmite and Eshtemoa the Maacathite.

²⁰The sons of Shimon: Amnon, Rinnah, Benhanan, and Tilon. The sons of Ishi: Zoheth and Ben-zoheth.

²¹The sons of Shelah son of Judah: Er the father of Lecah and Laadah the father of Mareshah, and the families of the house of the linen workers at Beth-ashbea;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Bad Beginnings Can Lead to Happy Endings

Jabez's name signifies sorrow and pain, which tells us he didn't have the best of beginnings in this world (see 1 Chr. 4:9–10). But his remarkably bold prayer shows that our lives are not limited to our circumstances. No matter what comes up in your life, you can have a positive attitude if you set your mind ahead of time. You will look for the good in it, find the joy in the midst of it, and enjoy your life.

God is positive, and you can be too. Face every day with excitement, believing something good will happen as Jabez did. And if good doesn't seem to happen, believe it for the next day. Make an announcement out loud to the devil: "I will outlast you!" There's good in everything if you'll just look for it. The minute you decide to have a more positive attitude, you will begin to feel more joy in your life.

²²and Jokim, the men of Cozeba, Joash, and Saraph, who ruled in Moab, and Jashubi-lehem. These are ancient words (genealogical records).

²³These were the potters and those who lived [among plantations and hedges] at Netaim and Gederah; they lived there with the king for his work.

²⁴The sons of Simeon: Nemuel, Jamin, Jarib, Zerah, and Shaul;

²⁵Shallum was Shaul's son, Mibsam his son, Mishma his son.

²⁶The sons of Mishma: Hammuel his son, Zaccur his son, Shimei his son.

²⁷Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters; but his brothers did not have many sons, neither did all their family multiply like the sons of Judah.

²⁸They lived at Beersheba, Moladah, Hazar-shual,

²⁹Bilhah, Ezem, Tolad,

³⁰Bethuel, Hormah, Ziklag,

³¹Beth-marcaboth, Hazar-susim, Beth-biri, and at Shaaraim. These were their cities until the reign of David.

³²*These were* their villages: Etam, Ain, Rimmon, Tochen, and Ashan—five cities—

³³and all their villages that were around these towns as far as Baal. These were their settlements, and they have their genealogical record.

³⁴Meshobab, Jamlech, Joshah the son of Amaziah,

³⁵Joel, Jehu the son of Joshibiah, the son of Seraiah, the son of Asiel,

³⁶also Elioenai, Jaakobah, Jeshohaiah, Asaiah, Adiel, Jesimiel, Benaiah,

³⁷Ziza the son of Shiphi, the son of Allon, the son of Jedaiah, the son of Shimri, the son of Shemaiah;

³⁸these mentioned by name were leaders in their families; and their fathers' houses increased greatly [so they needed more land].

³⁹So they journeyed to the entrance of Gedor, to the east

side of the valley, to seek pasture for their flocks.

⁴⁰They found rich, good pasture, and the [cleared] land was wide, quiet, and peaceful; for those who had lived there previously came from Ham [and had left it a better place for those who came after them].

⁴¹These, registered by name, came in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and they attacked their tents and the Meunites (foreigners) who were found there, and utterly destroyed them to this day; and they settled in their place, because there was pasture there for their flocks.

⁴²From them, from the sons of Simeon, five hundred men went to Mount Seir, with Pelatiah, Neariah, Rephaiah, and Uzziel, the sons of Ishi, as their leaders.

⁴³They destroyed the remnant of the Amalekites who escaped, and they have lived there to this day (the date of this writing).

5 NOW [WE come to] the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel—for Reuben was the eldest, but because he defiled his father's bed [with Bilhah his father's concubine], his birthright was given to [Manasseh and Ephraim] the sons of Joseph [the favorite] son of Israel, so that he is not enrolled in the genealogy according to the birthright. [Gen 35:22; 48:15–22; 49:3, 4]

²Though Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came [David] the leader [and eventually the Messiah], yet the birthright was Joseph's—[Gen 49:10; Mic 5:2]

³the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel: Hanoch, Pallu,

Hezron, and Carmi.

⁴The sons of Joel: Shemaiah his son, Gog his son, Shimei his son,

⁵Micah his son, Reaiah his son, Baal his son,

⁶Beerah his son, whom Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria carried away into exile; he was a leader of the tribe of Reuben.

⁷And his brothers (relatives) by their families, in the genealogy of their generations, were the chief Jeiel, and Zechariah,

⁸Bela the son of Azaz, the son of Shema, the son of Joel, who lived in Aroer as far as Nebo and Baal-meon.

POWERPOINT

During Bible times the birthright was an extremely valuable blessing to a man. Whoever had the birthright inherited “the best” from his father. Reuben forfeited this treasure for a few moments of fleshly pleasure with his father’s concubine. Let me encourage you to not allow your emotions or a lack of self-control to cause you to miss out on God’s best blessings.



⁹To the east Bela settled as far as the entrance into the desert from the river Euphrates, because their cattle had multiplied in the land of Gilead.

¹⁰In the days of King Saul they made war with the Hagrites, who fell by their hands; and they lived in their tents throughout all the land east of Gilead.

¹¹The sons of Gad lived opposite them in the land of

Bashan, as far as Salecah:

¹²Joel was the chief, Shapham the second, then Janai and Shaphat in Bashan.

¹³Their relatives from the households of their fathers: Michael, Meshullam, Sheba, Jorai, Jacan, Zia, and Eber—seven *in all*.

¹⁴These were the sons of Abihail the son of Huri, the son of Jaroah, the son of Gilead, the son of Michael, the son of Jeshishai, the son of Jahdo, the son of Buz;

¹⁵Ahi the son of Abdiel, the son of Guni, was chief in their fathers' households.

¹⁶They lived in Gilead, in Bashan and in its towns, and in all the [surrounding] pasture lands of Sharon, as far as their borders.

¹⁷All these were enrolled in the genealogies in the days of Jotham king of Judah and in the days of Jeroboam [II] king of Israel.

¹⁸The sons of Reuben, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh—valiant men able to bear shield and sword, and to shoot with the bow, and skillful in war—were 44,760 who went to war.

¹⁹And these Israelites, [on the east side of the Jordan River] made war with the Hagrites [a tribe of northern Arabia], Jetur, Naphish, and Nodab.

²⁰They were given help against them, and the Hagrites were handed over to them, and all who were *allied* with them; for they cried out to God [for help] in the battle; and He granted their entreaty because they relied on *and* trusted in Him.

²¹These Israelites took away their livestock: their 50,000 camels, and 250,000 sheep, and 2,000 donkeys; and 100,000 people.

²²For a great number fell mortally wounded, because the battle was of God. And these Israelites settled in their territory until the exile [by Assyria more than five centuries later]. [2 Kin 15:29]

²³Now the sons (people) of the half-tribe of Manasseh lived in the land; their settlements spread from Bashan to Baal-hermon and Senir and Mount Hermon.

²⁴These were the heads of their fathers' households: Ephraim, Ishi, Eliel, Azriel, Jeremiah, Hodaviah, and Jahdiel, warriors of valor [willing and able to encounter danger], famous men, and heads of the households of their fathers.

²⁵But they acted treacherously against the God of their fathers and played the prostitute with the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them.

²⁶So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul, king of Assyria, [that is,] the spirit of Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away into exile—the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh—and brought them to Halah, Habor, Hara, and the river Gozan, [where they remain] to this day.

6 THE SONS of Levi: Gershon, Kohath and Merari.

²The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

³The sons of Amram: Aaron, Moses and Miriam. And the sons of Aaron: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

⁴Eleazar became the father of Phinehas, Phinehas became the father of Abishua,

⁵and Abishua became the father of Bukki, and Bukki became the father of Uzzi,

⁶and Uzzi became the father of Zerahiah, and Zerahiah became the father of Meraioth,

⁷Meraioth became the father of Amariah, and Amariah became the father of Ahitub,

⁸and Ahitub became the father of Zadok, and Zadok became the father of Ahimaaz,

⁹and Ahimaaz became the father of Azariah, and Azariah became the father of Johanan,

¹⁰and Johanan became the father of Azariah (it was he who was priest in the house (temple) which Solomon built in Jerusalem)

¹¹and Azariah became the father of Amariah, and Amariah became the father of Ahitub,

¹²and Ahitub became the father of Zadok, and Zadok became the father of Shallum,

¹³and Shallum became the father of Hilkiah, and Hilkiah became the father of Azariah,

¹⁴and Azariah became the father of Seraiah, and Seraiah became the father of Jehozadak;

¹⁵and Jehozadak went into captivity when the LORD sent [the people of] Judah and Jerusalem into exile by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

¹⁶The sons of Levi: Gershom, Kohath, and Merari.

¹⁷These are the names of the sons of Gershom: Libni and

Shimei.

¹⁸The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

¹⁹The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites according to their fathers.

²⁰Of Gershom: Libni his son, Jahath his son, Zimmah his son,

²¹Joah his son, Iddo his son, Zerah his son, Jeatherai his son.

²²The sons of Kohath: Amminadab his son, Korah his son, Assir his son,

²³Elkanah his son, Ebiasaph his son, Assir his son,

²⁴Tahath his son, Uriel his son, Uziah his son, and Shaul his son.

²⁵The sons of Elkanah: Amasai and Ahimoth.

²⁶*As for* Elkanah, the sons of Elkanah: Zophai his son and Nahath his son,

²⁷Eliab his son, Jeroham his son, Elkanah [Samuel's father] his son.

²⁸The sons of Samuel: Joel the firstborn and Abijah the second.

²⁹The sons of Merari: Mahli, Libni his son, Shimei his son, Uzza his son,

³⁰Shimea his son, Haggiah his son, Asaiah his son.

³¹Now these are those whom David appointed over the service of song in the house of the LORD after the ark [of the covenant] rested *there*.

³²They ministered with singing before the tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting, until Solomon had built the LORD's house

(temple) in Jerusalem, performing their service in due order.

³³These men and their sons served from the Kohathites: Heman the singer, the son of Joel, the son of Samuel [the great prophet and judge],

³⁴the son of Elkanah [III], the son of Jeroham, the son of Eiel, the son of Toah,

³⁵the son of Zuph, the son of Elkanah [II], the son of Mahath, the son of Amasai,

³⁶the son of Elkanah [I], the son of Joel, the son of Azariah, the son of Zephaniah,

³⁷the son of Tahath, the son of Assir, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah,

³⁸the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, the son of Israel (Jacob).

³⁹Heman's [tribal] brother Asaph stood at his right hand: Asaph the son of Berechiah, the son of Shimea,

⁴⁰the son of Michael, the son of Baaseiah, the son of Malchijah,

⁴¹the son of Ethni, the son of Zerah, the son of Adaiah,

⁴²the son of Ethan, the son of Zimmah, the son of Shimei,

⁴³the son of Jahath, the son of Gershon, the son of Levi.

⁴⁴Their relatives the sons of Merari *stood* at the left hand: Ethan the son of Kishi, the son of Abdi, the son of Malluch,

⁴⁵the son of Hashabiah, the son of Amaziah, the son of Hilkiah,

⁴⁶the son of Amzi, the son of Bani, the son of Shemer,

⁴⁷the son of Mahli, the son of Mushi, the son of Merari, the son of Levi.

⁴⁸Their relatives the Levites [who were not descended from Aaron] were appointed for all *the other kinds of* service of the tabernacle of the house of God.

⁴⁹But [the line of] Aaron and his sons made offerings on the altar of burnt offering and on the altar of incense, *ministering* for all the work of the Holy of Holies (Most Holy Place), and [they did so] to make atonement for Israel, according to all that Moses, God's servant, had commanded.

⁵⁰These are the sons of Aaron: Eleazar his son, Phinehas his son, Abishua his son,

⁵¹Bukki his son, Uzzi his son, Zerahiah his son,

⁵²Meraioth his son, Amariah his son, Ahitub his son,

⁵³Zadok his son, Ahimaaz his son.

⁵⁴Now these are their settlements according to their camps within their borders: to the sons of Aaron of the families of the Kohathites (for theirs was the *first* allocation by lot) [Josh 21:10]

⁵⁵to them they gave Hebron in the land of Judah and its surrounding pasture land;

⁵⁶but the fields of the city and its villages they gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh.

⁵⁷To the sons of Aaron they gave the *following* cities of refuge: Hebron, Libnah with its pasture lands, Jattir, Eshtemoa with its pasture lands, [Josh 21:13]

⁵⁸Hilen with its pasture lands, Debir with its pasture lands,

⁵⁹Ashan with its pasture lands, and Beth-shemesh with its pasture lands;

⁶⁰and from the tribe of Benjamin: Geba, Alemeth, and

Anathoth, with their pasture lands. All their cities throughout their families were thirteen cities.

⁶¹Then to the rest of the sons of Kohath *were given* ten cities by lot from the family of the tribe [of Ephraim and of Dan and], from the half-tribe, the half of Manasseh. [Josh 21:5]

⁶²To the sons of Gershom, according to their families, *were given* thirteen cities from the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and [the other half of] Manasseh in Bashan.

⁶³To the sons of Merari *were given* twelve cities by lot, according to their families, from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun.

⁶⁴So the sons of Israel gave to the Levites these cities with their pasture lands.

⁶⁵They gave by lot from the tribes of the sons of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin these cities which are mentioned by name.

⁶⁶Some of the families of the sons of Kohath had cities of their [allotted] territory from the tribe of Ephraim.

⁶⁷They gave to the Levites the *following* cities of refuge: Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim with its pasture lands, Gezer with its pasture lands;

⁶⁸Jokmeam and Beth-horon with their pasture lands,

⁶⁹Aijalon and Gath-rimmon, with their pasture lands;

⁷⁰and from the half-tribe of Manasseh [these cities], with their pasture lands: Aner and Bileam, for the rest of the families of the sons of Kohath.

⁷¹To the sons of Gershom *were given* from the family of the half-tribe of Manasseh: Golan in Bashan and Ashtaroth, with their pasture lands;

⁷²from the tribe of Issachar: Kedesh and Daberath with their pasture lands,

⁷³Ramoth and Anem with their pasture lands;

⁷⁴from the tribe of Asher: Mashal and Abdon with their pasture lands,

⁷⁵Hukok and Rehob with their pasture lands;

⁷⁶and from the tribe of Naphtali: Kedesh in Galilee, Hammon, and Kiriathaim with their pasture lands.

⁷⁷To the rest of *the Levites*, the sons of Merari *were given*, from the tribe of Zebulun: Rimmono and Tabor, with their pasture lands;

⁷⁸and on the other side of the Jordan at Jericho, on the east side of the Jordan *the Levites were given*, from the tribe of Reuben: Bezer in the wilderness and Jahzah with their pasture lands,

⁷⁹Kedemoth and Mephaath with their pasture lands;

⁸⁰from the tribe of Gad: Ramoth in Gilead and Mahanaim with their pasture lands,

⁸¹Heshbon and Jazer with their pasture lands.

7 THE SONS of Issachar were: Tola, Puah, Jashub, and Shimron—four *in all*.

²The sons of Tola: Uzzi, Rephaiah, Jeriel, Jahmai, Ibsam, and Samuel, heads of their fathers' households. *The sons of Tola* were courageous men in their generations; their number in the days of David was 22,600.

³The son of Uzzi: Izrahiah. The sons of Izrahiah: Michael,

Obadiah, Joel, Isshiah; all five of them were chief men.

⁴With them by their generations according to their fathers' households were 36,000 troops of the army for war, for they had many wives and children.

⁵Their relatives among all the families of Issachar, courageous men, registered by genealogies, were 87,000 in all.

⁶*The sons of Benjamin* were three: Bela, Becher, and Jediahel.

⁷The sons of Bela were five: Ezbon, Uzzi, Uzziel, Jerimoth, and Iri. They were heads of the households of their fathers, courageous men. By their genealogies they were 22,034.

⁸The sons of Becher: Zemirah, Joash, Eliezer, Elioenai, Omri, Jeremoth, Abijah, Anathoth, and Alemeth, all these were sons of Becher.

⁹They were registered by their genealogies according to their generations, as heads of their fathers' households, courageous men, 20,200 *in number*.

¹⁰The son of Jediahel: Bilhan. The sons of Bilhan: Jeush, Benjamin, Ehud, Chenaanah, Zethan, Tarshish, and Ahishahar.

¹¹All these were the sons of Jediahel, according to the heads of their fathers' households, 17,200 courageous men of valor, fit for military service.

¹²Shuppim and Huppim were the sons of Ir, and Hushim the son of Aher.

¹³The sons of Naphtali: Jahziel, Guni, Jezer, and Shallum, the sons of Bilhah.

¹⁴The sons of Manasseh: Asriel, whom his Aramean concubine bore; she gave birth to Machir the father of Gilead.

¹⁵Machir took as a wife the sister of Huppim and Shuppim;

her name was Maacah. The name of a second [descendant, the first being Gilead], was Zelophehad; and Zelophehad had [only] daughters. [Num 27:1-7]

¹⁶Maacah the wife of Machir gave birth to a son; she named him Peresh. The name of his brother was Sheresh; his sons were Ulam and Rakem.

¹⁷The son of Ulam: Bedan. These were the sons of Gilead the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh.

¹⁸His sister Hammolecheth gave birth to Ishhod and Abiezer and Mahlah.

¹⁹The sons of Shemida were: Ahian, Shechem, Likhi, and Aniam.

²⁰The sons of Ephraim: Shuthelah and Bered his son, Tahath [I] his son, Eleadah his son, Tahath [II] his son,

²¹Zabad his son, Shuthelah his son, and Ezer and Elead were killed by men who were natives of Gath, because they came down to take their livestock.

²²Their father Ephraim mourned for many days, and his relatives came to comfort him.

²³Then he went in to his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to a son, and he named him Beriah (on misfortune), because tragedy had come on his house.

²⁴Beriah's daughter was Sheerah, who built both Lower and Upper Beth-horon, and also Uzen-sheerah.

²⁵Rephah was his son *along* with Resheph; Resheph's son was Telah, Tahan his son,

²⁶Ladan his son, Ammihud his son, Elishama his son,

²⁷Non (Nun) his son, and Joshua [Moses' successor] his

son.

²⁸Their possessions and settlements were Bethel and its towns, and eastward Naaran, and westward Gezer, and Shechem, and as far as Ayyah with all their towns,

²⁹and along the borders of the sons of Manasseh, Bethshean, Taanach, Megiddo, Dor, with all their towns. In these [places] lived the sons of Joseph the son of Israel (Jacob).

³⁰The sons of Asher: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, and Beriah; and Serah their sister.

³¹The sons of Beriah: Heber and Malchiel, who was the father of Birzaith.

³²Heber became the father of Japhlet, Shomer, Hotham, and Shua their sister.

³³The sons of Japhlet: Pasach, Bimhal, and Ashvath. These were the sons of Japhlet.

³⁴The sons of Shemer (Shomer) [his brother]: Ahi and Rohgah, Jehubbah, and Aram.

³⁵The sons of his brother Helem (Hotham): Zophah, Imna, Shelesh, and Amal.

³⁶The sons of Zophah: Suah, Harnepher, Shual, Beri, Imrah,

³⁷Bezer, Hod, Shamma, Shilshah, Ithran, and Beera.

³⁸The sons of Jether: Jephunneh, Pispah, and Ara.

³⁹The sons of Ulla: Arah, Hanniel, and Rizia.

⁴⁰All these were sons (descendants) of Asher, heads of their fathers' houses, choice men, courageous men, chiefs of the leaders. Their number, enrolled by genealogies for service in war, was 26,000 men.

8 BENJAMIN BECAME the father of Bela his firstborn,
Ashbel the second, Aharah the third,

²Nohah the fourth and Rapha the fifth.

³Bela had sons: Addar, Gera, Abihud,

⁴Abishua, Naaman, Ahoah,

⁵Gera, Shephuphan, and Huram.

⁶These are the sons of Ehud: These are the heads of the fathers' *households* of the inhabitants of Geba; they were exiled to Manahath:

⁷Naaman, Ahijah, and Gera—he forced them into exile; he became the father of Uzza and Ahihud.

⁸Shaharaim became the father of children in the country of Moab after he had sent away (divorced) Hushim and Baara his wives.

⁹By Hodesh his wife he became the father of Jobab, Zibia, Mesha, Malcam,

¹⁰Jeuz, Sachia, and Mirmah. These were his sons, heads of fathers' *households*.

¹¹By Hushim he became the father of Abitub and Elpaal.

¹²The sons of Elpaal: Eber, Misham, and Shemed, who built Ono and Lod, with its towns;

¹³and Beriah and Shema, who were heads of fathers' *households* of the inhabitants of Aijalon, who drove out the inhabitants of Gath;

¹⁴and Ahio, Shashak, and Jeremoth.

¹⁵Zebadiah, Arad, Eder,

¹⁶Michael, Ishpah, and Joha *were* the sons of Beriah.

¹⁷Zebadiah, Meshullam, Hizki, Heber,

¹⁸Ishmerai, Izliah, and Jobab were the sons of Elpaal.

¹⁹Jakim, Zichri, Zabdi,

²⁰Eliezer, Zillethai, Eliel,

²¹Adaiah, Beraiah, and Shimrath were the sons of Shimei.

²²Ishpan, Eber, Eliel,

²³Abdon, Zichri, Hanan,

²⁴Hananiah, Elam, Anthothijah,

²⁵Iphdeiah and Penuel were the sons of Shashak.

²⁶Shamsherai, Shehariah, Athaliah,

²⁷Jaareshiah, Elijah, and Zichri were the sons of Jeroham.

²⁸These [men] were heads of the fathers' *households*, according to their generations, chief men who lived in Jerusalem.

²⁹Now in Gibeon, *Jeiel*, the father of Gibeon lived, and his wife's name was Maacah;

³⁰and his firstborn son was Abdon, then Zur, Kish, Baal, Nadab,

³¹Gedor, Ahio, and Zecher.

³²Mikloth became the father of Shimeah. They also lived with their relatives in Jerusalem opposite their other relatives.

³³Ner became the father of Kish, and Kish became the father of [King] Saul, and Saul became the father of Jonathan, Malchi-shua, Abinadab and Eshbaal (Ish-bosheth).

³⁴The son of Jonathan was Merib-baal (Mephibosheth), and Merib-baal became the father of Micah.

³⁵The sons of Micah: Pithon, Melech, Tarea, and Ahaz.

³⁶Ahaz became the father of Jehoaddah, and Jehoaddah became the father of Alemeth, Azmaveth, and Zimri; and Zimri became the father of Moza.

³⁷Moza became the father of Binea; Raphah was his son, Eleasah his son, Azel his son.

³⁸Azel had six sons, and these were their names: Azrikam, Bocheru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah, and Hanan. All these were the sons of Azel.

³⁹The sons of Eshek his brother: Ulam his firstborn, Jeush the second, and Eliphelet the third.

⁴⁰The sons of Ulam were courageous men, archers, and had many sons and grandsons—150 *in all*. All these were of the sons (descendants) of Benjamin.

9 SO ALL Israel was enrolled by genealogies; and they are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel. And Judah was carried away into exile to Babylon because of their unfaithfulness [to God].

²Now the first [of the returned exiles] who lived [again] in their possessions in their cities were Israel, the priests, the Levites, and the Nethinim (temple servants).

³Some of the sons (people) of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh lived in Jerusalem:

⁴Uthai the son of Ammihud, the son of Omri, the son of Imri, the son of Bani, of the sons of Perez the son of Judah.

⁵From the Shilonites: Asaiah the firstborn and his sons.

⁶From the sons of Zerah: Jeuel and their relatives, 690 [of

them].

⁷From the sons of Benjamin: Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Hodaviah, the son of Hassenuah;

⁸Ibneiah the son of Jeroham, Elah the son of Uzzi, the son of Michri, and Meshullam son of Shephatiah, the son of Reuel, the son of Ibnijah;

⁹and their relatives according to their generations, 956. All these men were heads of fathers' *households* according to their fathers' houses.

¹⁰Of the priests: Jedaiah, Jehoiarib, Jachin,

¹¹Azariah the son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, the chief officer of the house of God;

¹²and Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pashhur, the son of Malchijah; Maasai the son of Adiel, the son of Jahzerah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Meshillemith, the son of Immer;

¹³and their relatives, heads of their fathers' households, 1,760—very able men for the work of the service of the house of God.

¹⁴Of the Levites: Shemaiah the son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, of the sons of Merari;

¹⁵and Bakbakkar, Heresh, Galal, and Mattaniah son of Mica, the son of Zichri, the son of Asaph;

¹⁶and Obadiah the son of Shemaiah, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun, and Berechiah the son of Asa, the son of Elkanah, who lived in the villages of the Netophathites [near Jerusalem].

¹⁷The gatekeepers were: Shallum, Akkub, Talmon, Ahiman, and their relatives (Shallum the chief

¹⁸who until now *was assigned* to the king's gate on the east side) they were the gatekeepers for the camp of the Levites.

¹⁹Shallum the son of Kore, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah, and his relatives of his father's house, the Korahites, were in charge of the work of the service, doorkeepers of the Tent; and their fathers had been in charge of the camp of the LORD, keepers of the entrance.

²⁰Phinehas the son of Eleazar was ruler over them in times past, and the LORD was with him.

²¹Zechariah son of Meshelemiah was gatekeeper at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.

²²All those chosen to be gatekeepers at the thresholds were 212. They were enrolled by their genealogies in their villages [around Jerusalem], these men [whose grandfathers] David and Samuel the seer had appointed to their official duty.

²³So they and their sons were in charge of the gates of the house of the LORD, that is, the house of the tabernacle, as guards.

²⁴The gatekeepers were *stationed* on the four sides—on the east, west, north, and south.

²⁵Their relatives in their villages were to come in every seven days from time to time to be with them;

²⁶for these Levites, the four chief gatekeepers, had an official duty, and were in charge of the chambers and treasuries of the house of God.

²⁷They spent the night around the house of God, for the [night] watch was theirs, and they were in charge of opening *the house* morning after morning.

²⁸Now some of them were in charge of the serving utensils, being required to count them when they brought them in or took them out.

²⁹Some of them also were appointed over the furniture and over all the [sacred] utensils of the sanctuary, as well as over the fine flour and the wine and the [olive] oil and the frankincense and the spices.

³⁰Other sons of the priests prepared the mixture of spices.

³¹Mattithiah, one of the Levites, the firstborn of Shallum the Korahite, was responsible for the things baked in pans.

³²Some of their Kohathite relatives were in charge of the showbread to prepare it every Sabbath.

³³Now these are the singers, heads of the fathers' *households* of the Levites, *living* in the *temple* chambers, free *from other service* because they were on duty day and night.

³⁴These were heads of fathers' *households* of the Levites according to their generations, chief men, who lived in Jerusalem.

³⁵Jeiel the father of Gibeon lived in Gibeon, and his wife's name was Maacah,

³⁶and his firstborn son was Abdon, then Zur, Kish, Baal, Ner, Nadab,

³⁷Gedor, Ahio, Zechariah, and Mikloth.

³⁸Mikloth became the father of Shimeam. They also lived with their relatives in Jerusalem, opposite their *other* relatives.

³⁹Ner became the father of Kish, and Kish became the father of [King] Saul, and Saul became the father of Jonathan, Malchi-shua, Abinadab, and Eshbaal.

⁴⁰The son of Jonathan was Merib-baal (Mephibosheth); Merib-baal became the father of Micah.

⁴¹The sons of Micah: Pithon, Melech, Tahrea [and Ahaz].

⁴²Ahaz became the father of Jarah, and Jarah became the father of Alemeth, Azmaveth, and Zimri; and Zimri became the father of Moza,

⁴³Moza became the father of Binea and Rephaiah his son, Eleasah his son, Azel his son.

⁴⁴Azel had six sons, and these are their names: Azrikam, Bocheru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah, and Hanan. These were the sons of Azel.

10 NOW THE Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled from them and fell slain on Mount Gilboa.

²The Philistines followed closely after Saul and his sons *and* overtook them, and the Philistines killed Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchi-shua, the sons of Saul.

³The battle became heavy against Saul, and the archers found him; and he was [mortally] wounded by the archers.

⁴Then Saul said to his armor bearer, "Draw your sword and run me through with it, otherwise these uncircumcised [Philistines] will come and abuse *and* humiliate me." But his armor bearer would not, for he was terrified. So Saul took his own sword and fell on it.

⁵When his armor bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword and died.

⁶So Saul died with his three sons and all *those* of his house died together.

⁷When all the men of Israel who were in the valley saw that the army had fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned their cities and fled; and the Philistines came and lived in them.

⁸It came about the next day, when the Philistines came to strip (plunder) the slain, that they found Saul and his sons fallen on Mount Gilboa.

⁹So they stripped Saul and took his head and his armor and sent *messengers* around the land of the Philistines to bring the good news to their idols and to the people.

¹⁰They put Saul's armor in the house of their gods and nailed up his head in the house (temple) of Dagon.

¹¹When all Jabesh-gilead heard about everything that the Philistines had done to Saul,

¹²all the brave men arose, took away the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons and brought them to Jabesh, and they buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh; then they fasted seven days. [1 Sam 31:12]

POWERPOINT

One reason Saul lost his kingdom was that he consulted a medium when the Lord did not immediately answer him (see 1 Sam. 28:6). No doubt Saul thought this person would speak truth to him, but mediums and spiritists only speak deception to others and present it as truth. The only certain source of truth is found in God's Word.



¹³So Saul died for his trespass which he committed against the LORD, for his failure to keep the word of the LORD; and also because he consulted a medium [regarding a spirit of the dead], to inquire *of her*,

¹⁴and did not inquire of the LORD [instead]. Therefore the LORD killed him and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse. [1 Sam 28:6]

11 THEN ALL Israel gathered to David at Hebron, saying, “Behold, we are your bone and your flesh. [2 Sam 2:8–10]

²“In times past, even when Saul was king, it was you who led out and brought in Israel; and the LORD your God said to you, ‘You shall shepherd My people Israel, and you shall be prince *and* leader over My people Israel.’”

³So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and David made a covenant (solemn agreement) with them there before the LORD; and they anointed him king over Israel, in accordance with the word of the LORD through Samuel. [1 Sam 16:1, 12, 13]

⁴Then David and all Israel went to Jerusalem (that is Jebus); and the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, were there.

⁵Then the Jebusites said to David, “You shall not come in here.” But David captured the stronghold of Zion (that is, the City of David).

⁶Now David said, “Whoever strikes down a Jebusite first shall be chief and commander.” Joab the son of Zeruiah [David’s half sister] went up first, and so he was made chief.

⁷Then David lived in the stronghold; so it was called the City of David.

⁸He built the city around it, from the Millo (fortification) to the surrounding area; and Joab repaired the rest of the [old Jebusite] city.

⁹David became greater and greater, for the LORD of hosts was with him.

¹⁰Now these are the chiefs of David’s mighty men, who

strongly supported him in his kingdom, together with all Israel, to make him king, in accordance with the word of the LORD concerning Israel.

¹¹This is the list of David's mighty men: Jashobeam, the son of a Hachmonite, the chief of the thirty [heroes]. He lifted up his spear against three hundred whom he killed at one time.

¹²Next to him [in rank] was Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, who was one of the three mighty men.

¹³He was with David at Pasdammim [where David had killed Goliath] and there the Philistines were gathered together for battle, and there was a plot of ground full of barley; and the people [of Israel] fled before the Philistines.

¹⁴But they took their stand in the midst of that plot and defended it, and killed the Philistines; and the LORD rescued them by a great victory. [2 Sam 23:9, 10]

¹⁵Three of the thirty chief men went down to the rock to David, into the cave of Adullam, while the army of the Philistines was camped in the Valley of Rephaim.

¹⁶David was then in the stronghold, while the garrison of the Philistines was in Bethlehem.

¹⁷David had a craving and said, "Oh that someone would give me a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem, which is next to the gate!"

¹⁸Then the three [mighty men] broke through the camp of the Philistines and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem which was next to the gate, and brought it to David. But David would not drink it; he poured it out to the LORD [as an offering];

¹⁹and he said, "Far be it from me before my God that I

would do this thing! Shall I drink the blood of these men who have put their lives in jeopardy? For they brought it at the risk of their lives.” So he would not drink it. These things the three mighty men did.

²⁰Abishai the brother of Joab was chief of the [other] three, and he lifted up his spear against three hundred and killed them, and he had a name as well as the three.

²¹Of the three in the second [rank] he was the most honored and became their captain; however, he did not attain to the *first* three [Jashobeam, Eleazar, and Shammah].

²²Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a courageous man of Kabzeel who had done great things, killed the two *sons* of Ariel of Moab. Also he went down and killed a lion in a pit on a snowy day.

²³He killed an Egyptian also, a man of *great* stature, five cubits tall. In the Egyptian’s hand was a spear like a weaver’s beam, and Benaiah went down to him with [only] a staff (rod) and grabbed the spear from the Egyptian’s hand and killed him with his own spear.

²⁴Benaiah the son of Jehoiada did these *things*, and had a name as well as the three mighty men.

²⁵He was honored among the thirty, but he did not attain to [the rank of] the [first] three. David appointed him over his bodyguard.

²⁶Now the mighty men of the armies were: Asahel the brother of Joab, Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem,

²⁷Shammoth the Harorite, Helez the Pelonite,

²⁸Ira the son of Ikkes of Tekoa, Abiezer of Anathoth,

²⁹Sibbecai the Hushathite, Ilai the Ahohite,

³⁰Maharai the Netophathite, Heled the son of Baanah the Netophathite,

³¹Ithai the son of Ribai of Gibeah of the Benjamites, Benaiah the Pirathonite,

³²Hurai of the brooks of Gaash, Abiel the Arbathite,

³³Azmaveth the Baharumite, Eliahba the Shaalbonite,

³⁴the sons of Hashem the Gizonite, Jonathan the son of Shagee the Hararite,

³⁵Ahiam the son of Sacar the Hararite, Eliphal the son of Ur,

³⁶Hepher the Mecherathite, Ahijah the Pelonite,

³⁷Hezro the Carmelite, Naarai the son of Ezbai,

³⁸Joel the brother of Nathan, Mibhar the son of Hagri,

³⁹Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Berothite, the armor bearer of Joab the son of Zeruiah [David's half sister],

⁴⁰Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite,

⁴¹Uriah the Hittite [Bathsheba's husband], Zabad the son of Ahlai,

⁴²Adina the son of Shiza the Reubenite, a chief of the Reubenites, and thirty [heroes] with him,

⁴³Hanan the son of Maacah, and Joshaphat the Mithnite,

⁴⁴Uzzia the Ashterathite, Shama and Jeiel the sons of Hotham the Aroerite,

⁴⁵Jediael the son of Shimri, and his brother Joha, the Tizite,

⁴⁶Eliel the Mahavite, Jeribai and Joshaviah the sons of Elnaam, Ithmah the Moabite,

⁴⁷Eliel and Obed and Jaasiel the Mezobaite.

12 THESE ARE the ones who came to David at Ziklag, while he still concealed himself from Saul the son of Kish; they were among the courageous men who helped him in battle.

²They were armed with bows, and could use the right hand or the left to *sling* stones and *shoot* arrows from the bow; *they were* Saul's relatives from [the tribe of] Benjamin.

³The chief was Ahiezer and then Joash, the sons of Shemaah of Gibeah; Jeziel and Pelet the sons of Azmaveth; Beracah, and Jehu of Anathoth,

⁴Ishmaiah of Gibeon, a mighty man among the thirty, and [a leader] over them; Jeremiah, Jahaziel, Johanan, Jozabad of Gederah,

⁵Eluzai, Jerimoth, Bealiah, Shemariah, Shephatiah the Haruphite,

⁶Elkanah, Isshiah, Azarel, Joezer, and Jashobeam, the Korahites,

⁷and Joelah and Zebadiah the sons of Jeroham of Gedor.

⁸Courageous men from the Gadites came over to David in the stronghold in the wilderness, men trained for war, who could handle shield and spear, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and who were swift as gazelles on the mountains.

⁹Ezer was the first, Obadiah the second, Eliab the third,

¹⁰Mishmannah the fourth, Jeremiah the fifth,

¹¹Attai the sixth, Eliel the seventh,

¹²Johanan the eighth, Elzabad the ninth,

¹³Jeremiah the tenth, Machbannai the eleventh.

¹⁴These from the sons (descendants) of Gad were captains

of the army; he who was least was equal to a hundred, and the greatest was equal to a thousand.

¹⁵These are the men who crossed over the Jordan in the first month when it had overflowed all its banks and they put to flight all those in the valleys, east and west.

¹⁶Then some of the men of Benjamin and Judah came to the stronghold to David.

¹⁷David went out to meet them and said to them, “If you have come peacefully to me to help me, my heart shall be united with you; but if *you have come* to betray me to my adversaries, since there is no violence *or* wrong in my hands, may the God of our fathers look on [what you are doing] and punish [you].”

¹⁸Then the [Holy] Spirit came on Amasai, who was chief of the thirty, *and he said*,

“We are yours, O David,
And with you, O son of Jesse!
Peace, peace be to you,
And peace be to him who helps you;
For your God helps you.”

Then David accepted *and* received them and made them officers of his troops.

¹⁹Some [of the men] of Manasseh also defected to David when he came with the Philistines to go to battle against Saul. But David’s men did not [actually] assist the Philistines, for the lords (governors) of the Philistines after consultation sent him away, saying, “At *the cost of* our heads he may defect to his master Saul.” [1 Sam 29:2–9]

²⁰As David went to Ziklag, *these men* defected to him from Manasseh: Adnah, Jozabad, Jediahel, Michael, Jozabad, Elihu, and Zillethai, captains of thousands who belonged to Manasseh.

²¹They helped David against the band of raiders, for they were all courageous men, and [all seven] became commanders in his army.

²²For day by day men kept coming to David to help him, until there was a great army, like the army of God.

²³These are the numbers of the [armed] units equipped for war who came to David at Hebron to turn [over] the kingdom of Saul to him, in accordance with the word of the LORD.

²⁴Those of the tribe of Judah who carried shield and spear were 6,800, armed for war;

²⁵of the tribe of Simeon, brave warriors, 7,100;

²⁶of the tribe of Levi, 4,600.

²⁷Jehoiada was the leader of [the house of] Aaron, and with him were 3,700,

²⁸and Zadok, a courageous young man, and twenty-two captains from his father's house.

²⁹Of the tribe of Benjamin, the relatives of [King] Saul, 3,000; for until now the majority of them had kept their allegiance to the house of Saul.

³⁰Of the tribe of Ephraim, 20,800, courageous men, famous in their fathers' houses.

³¹Of the half-tribe of Manasseh, 18,000, who were designated by name to come and make David king.

³²Of the tribe of Issachar, men who understood the times,

with knowledge of what Israel should do, two hundred chiefs; and all their relatives were at their command;

³³of the tribe of Zebulun, there were 50,000 in military service who could draw up in battle formation with all kinds of weapons of war and helped *David, men* with an undivided heart.

POWERPOINT

The 50,000 brave soldiers who helped David wage war were men of “undivided heart” (1 Chr. 12:33). They were focused and stable. They stuck to their sole purpose. God taught many biblical characters to be single-minded in their purpose of following Him. Likewise, you and I need to hear from God, make decisions based on what He has said to us, and then obey with all our hearts.



³⁴Of the tribe of Naphtali, *there were* 1,000 captains, and with them 37,000 [of the rank and file armed] with shield and spear.

³⁵Of the tribe of Dan, 28,600 men who could draw up in battle formation.

³⁶Of the tribe of Asher, 40,000 men in military service, able to draw up in battle formation.

³⁷From the other side [east] of the Jordan *River*, of [the tribes of] Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh, 120,000 men, *armed* with all kinds of weapons of war for the battle.

³⁸All these, being men of war arrayed in battle formation, came to Hebron with a perfect (committed) heart to make David king over all Israel; and all the rest of Israel were also of one mind to make David king.

³⁹They were there with David for three days, eating and drinking, for their relatives had prepared for them.

⁴⁰Also those who were [living] near them [from] as far as [the tribes of] Issachar, Zebulun, and Naphtali, brought food on donkeys, camels, mules, and oxen, abundant supplies of flour, cakes of figs and raisins, wine, [olive] oil, oxen, and sheep, for there was joy in Israel.

13 DAVID CONSULTED with the captains of the thousands and the hundreds, even with every leader.

²David said to all the assembly of Israel, “If it seems good to you, and if it is from the LORD our God, let us send *word* everywhere to our fellow countrymen who remain in all the land of Israel, and to the priests and Levites who are with them in their cities with pasture lands, so that they may meet with us;

³and let us bring back the ark of our God to us, for we did not seek it during the days of Saul.”

⁴Then all the assembly agreed to do so, for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people.

⁵So David gathered all Israel together, from the Shihor

[watercourse] of Egypt, to the entrance of Hamath [in the north], to bring the ark of God from Kiriath-jearim.

⁶David and all Israel went up to Baalah, *that is*, to Kiriath-jearim, which belongs to Judah, to bring up from there the ark of God the LORD who sits enthroned *above* the cherubim, *the ark* which is called by *His* name.

POWERPOINT

Many people believe God is angry with them, and that creates a fierce battle in their minds. That belief keeps them from receiving the love, mercy, grace, and forgiveness that God continually offers them. Choose today to believe that God loves you!



⁷They carried the ark of God on a new cart and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, and Uzza and Ahio [his brother] drove the cart.

⁸David and all Israel celebrated [joyfully] before God with all their might, with songs, lyres, harps, tambourines, cymbals, and trumpets.

⁹When they came to the threshing floor of Chidon, Uzza put out his hand to hold *and* steady the ark, for the oxen [that were drawing the cart] nearly overturned it.

¹⁰The anger of the LORD burned against Uzza, and He struck him down because he touched the ark; and there he died

before God. [Num 4:15]

¹¹David became angry because of the LORD's outburst against Uzza; so that place is called Perez-uzza to this day.

¹²David was afraid of God that day, and he said, "How can I bring the ark of God *home* with me?"

¹³So David did not bring the ark with him to the City of David, but took it aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. [Josh 21:20, 24; 1 Chr 15:24]

¹⁴So the ark of God remained with the family of Obed-edom in his house three months; and the LORD blessed the house of Obed-edom and all that he had.

14 NOW HIRAM king of Tyre sent messengers to David with cedar timbers, masons and carpenters, to build a house (palace) for him.

²And David understood that the LORD had established *and* confirmed him as king over Israel, for his kingdom was highly exalted for the sake of His people Israel.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

God Is Not Mad at You

One day I sent this message through social media: “God’s not mad at you.” The response our ministry received was overwhelming. Obviously, people were afraid that God was angry with them for some reason, and they desperately needed to hear that He is not.

In 1 Chronicles 13:10, God became very angry with a man named Uzza because Uzza violated the sacredness of the ark of God when he touched it. To touch the ark was sin, and that sin provoked God’s anger. Although God does get angry at sin, wickedness, and evil, He is not an angry God. He hates sin, but He loves sinners! He is “good, and ready to forgive [our sins, sending them away, completely letting them go forever and ever]; and abundant in lovingkindness *and* overflowing in mercy” (Ps. 86:5) to those who call on Him.

God does not approve of sin, but He does love sinners and will continue to work with us toward positive change in our lives. God never stops loving us for even one second, and because of His great love, He refuses to leave us alone, lost

and abandoned in sin. He meets us where we are and helps us to get where we need to be.

To live in the reality that God is not mad at us is the most freeing truth we will ever find. Knowing we will sin, and that God has already decided to forgive us for our sins eliminates the fear of failure. The beautiful truth is that when we no longer focus on our sin, we find that we do it less and less. As we focus on God's goodness instead of our weaknesses, we become more and more like Jesus. God, in Christ, has totally taken care of the problem of sin. God commands us not to sin, but He has always known we would sin because of the weaknesses of the flesh. He took care of the sin problem by sending His Son, Jesus, as the sacrifice and payment for our sins. Jesus has already paid the price for everything we have ever done or will do wrong, and He opened a new way for us to love and serve God in freedom and joy, without guilt or fear.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Thank You, God, for not being angry with me. I believe You sent Your Son, Jesus, to pay the price for all my sin and that because of His sacrifice, You always forgive me. Help me to focus less on my sins and shortcomings and to focus more and more on Your limitless, unconditional love for me. In Jesus' name. Amen.

³Then David took more wives at Jerusalem, and he became the father of more sons and daughters.

⁴Now these are the names of the children born [to him] in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon,

⁵Ibhar, Elishua, Elpelet,

⁶Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia,

⁷Elishama, Beeliada, and Eliphelet.

⁸When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over all Israel, they all went up in search of David; and he heard about it and went out against them.

⁹Now the Philistines had come and made a raid in the Valley of Rephaim.

¹⁰So David inquired of God, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? And will You hand them over to me?" Then the LORD said to him, "Go up, and I will hand them over to you."

¹¹So Israel came up to Baal-perazim, and David defeated the Philistines there. Then David said, "God has broken through my enemies by my hand, like the breakthrough of waters." Therefore they named that place Baal-perazim.

¹²The Philistines abandoned their gods (idols) there; so David gave a command and they were burned in a fire [as the Law of Moses required]. [Deut 7:5]

¹³The Philistines again made a raid in the valley.

¹⁴So David inquired again of God, and God said to him, "Do not go up after them; circle around behind them and come at them in front of the balsam trees.

¹⁵"It shall be when you hear the sound of marching in the

tops of the balsam trees, then you shall go out to battle, for God has gone out before you to strike the Philistine army.”

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, help me to be like David
and inquire of You every time
I face a battle in my life. Help
me to hear and obey Your
voice as You lead me to
victory.*

• adapted from 1 Chronicles 14:10

¹⁶So David did just as God had commanded him, and they struck down the army of the Philistines from Gibeon as far as Gezer.

¹⁷Then David's fame spread into all the lands; and the LORD caused all nations to fear him.

15 *DAVID* BUILT houses for himself in the City of David;

and he prepared a place for the ark of God and pitched a tent for it.

²Then David said, “No one is to carry the ark of God except the Levites; for the LORD chose them to carry the ark of God and to minister to Him forever.”

³And David assembled all Israel at Jerusalem to bring up the ark of the LORD to the place which he had prepared for it.

⁴David gathered together the sons of Aaron and the Levites:

⁵of the sons of Kohath, Uriel the chief, with 120 of his relatives;

⁶of the sons of Merari, Asaiah the chief, with 220 of his relatives;

⁷of the sons of Gershon, Joel the chief, with 130 of his relatives;

⁸of the sons of Elizaphan, Shemaiah the chief, with 200 of his relatives;

⁹of the sons of Hebron, Eliel the chief, with 80 of his relatives;

¹⁰of the sons of Uzziel, Amminadab the chief, with 112 of his relatives.

¹¹Then David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites—Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel, and Amminadab,

¹²and he said to them, “You are the heads of the fathers’ *households* of the Levites; consecrate yourselves, both you and your relatives, so that you may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel, to *the place* that I have prepared for it.

¹³“Because you did not [carry it as God directed] the first time, the LORD our God made an [angry] outburst against us, for we did not seek Him in accordance with the ordinance.” [Num 1:50; 1 Chr 13:7–10]

¹⁴So the priests and the Levites consecrated (dedicated) themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel.

¹⁵The Levites carried the ark of God on their shoulders with the poles, as Moses commanded in accordance with the word of the LORD.

¹⁶Then David told the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their relatives as the singers, with instruments of music—harps, lyres, and cymbals—to play loudly *and* to raise sounds of joy [with their voices].

¹⁷So the Levites appointed Heman the son of Joel, and from his relatives, Asaph the son of Berechiah; and from the sons of Merari their relatives, Ethan the son of Kushaiah,

¹⁸and with them their relatives of the second rank: Zechariah, Ben, Jaaziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, and Mikneiah, Obed-edom, and Jeiel, the gatekeepers.

¹⁹So the singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan *were appointed* to sound aloud the bronze cymbals;

²⁰and Zechariah, Aziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Maaseiah, and Benaiah [were to play] with harps *tuned* to Alamoth [that is, a high pitch];

²¹and Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed-edom, Jeiel, and Azaziah were to lead with lyres set to Sheminith [that is, the eighth string, a low pitch].

²²Chenaniah, leader of the Levites, was *in charge* of the

singing; he gave instruction in singing because he was skilled.

²³Berechiah and Elkanah were gatekeepers for the ark.

²⁴Shebaniah, Joshaphat, Nethanel, Amasai, Zechariah, Benaiah, and Eliezer the priests blew the trumpets before the ark of God. Obed-edom and Jehiah (Jeiel) were also gatekeepers for the ark.

²⁵So David, with the elders of Israel and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD from the house of Obed-edom with joy.

²⁶Because God was helping the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD [to do it carefully and safely], they sacrificed seven bulls and seven rams.

²⁷David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, as were all the Levites who carried the ark, and the singers and Chenaniah, director of the music of the singers. David also wore an ephod (a priestly upper garment) of linen.

²⁸Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the horn, with trumpets, with loud-sounding cymbals, with harps and lyres.

Speak God's Word

I will seek the Lord and His strength. I will seek His face always.

| adapted from 1 CHRONICLES
16:11 |

²⁹It happened that as the ark of the covenant of the LORD came to the City of David, Michal [David's wife] the daughter of Saul, looking down through a window, saw King David leaping and dancing [in celebration]; and she despised him in her heart.

16 SO THEY brought the ark of God and set it inside the tent which David had pitched for it, and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before God.

²When David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD.

³He distributed to everyone in Israel, both man and woman, to everyone a loaf of bread, a portion of meat, and a raisin cake.

⁴He appointed some of the Levites to minister before the

ark of the LORD and to profess [God's name] and to thank and praise the LORD, the God of Israel:

⁵Asaph the chief, and second to him Zechariah, *then* Jeiel (Jaaziel), Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-edom, and Jeiel with musical instruments, harps and lyres; also Asaph *played* loud-sounding cymbals;

⁶and Benaiah and Jahaziel the priests *blew* trumpets continually before the ark of the covenant of God.

⁷Then on that day David first entrusted to Asaph and his relatives to give thanks to the LORD [as their chief task].

⁸O give thanks to the LORD, call on His name;
Make His deeds known among the people.

⁹Sing to Him, sing praises to Him;
Speak of all His wonders.

¹⁰Glory in His holy name;
Let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.

¹¹Seek the LORD and His strength;
Seek His face continually [longing to be in His presence].

¹²Remember [with gratitude] His marvelous deeds which He
has done,
His miracles and the judgments from His mouth,

¹³O seed of Israel His servant,
Children of Jacob, His chosen ones!

¹⁴He is the LORD our God;
His judgments are in all the earth.

¹⁵Be mindful of His covenant forever,
The promise which He commanded *and* established to a

- thousand generations,
- ¹⁶ *The covenant* which He made with Abraham,
And His oath (sworn promise) to Isaac.
- ¹⁷ He confirmed it as a statute to Jacob,
And to Israel as an everlasting covenant, [Gen 35:11, 12]
- ¹⁸ Saying, “To you I will give the land of Canaan,
As the portion of your possession *and* inheritance.”
- ¹⁹ When you were few in number,
Even a very few, and strangers in it,
- ²⁰ When they wandered from nation to nation,
And from *one* kingdom to another people,
- ²¹ He allowed no man to oppress *or* exploit them,
And, He reproved *and* punished kings for their sakes,
saying, [Gen 12:17; 20:3; Ex 7:15–18]
- ²² “Do not touch My anointed ones,
And do My prophets no harm.” [Gen 20:7]
- ²³ Sing to the LORD, all the earth;
Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.
- ²⁴ Declare His glory among the nations,
His marvelous works among all peoples.
- ²⁵ For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
He is also to be feared [with awe-filled reverence] above all
gods.
- ²⁶ For all the gods of the peoples are [lifeless] idols,
But the LORD made the heavens.
- ²⁷ Splendor and majesty are [found] in His presence;
Strength and joy are [found] in His place (sanctuary).

²⁸ Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples,
Ascribe to the LORD glory *and* honor and strength.

²⁹ Ascribe to the LORD the glory *and* honor due His name;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Choosing Gratitude

Some people are very thankful for every little thing that is done for them, while others are never satisfied, no matter how much is done on their behalf. Choose to be a grateful person—one filled with gratitude not only toward God, but also toward people. When someone does something nice for you, let that person know you appreciate them and what they did for you.

Meditate daily on all the things you have to be thankful for. David declared, “Ascribe to the LORD the glory and honor due His name; bring an offering [of thanksgiving], and come before Him” (1 Chr. 16:29). Bring your offering of thanksgiving to the Lord in prayer, and as you do, you will find your heart filling up with His peace, love, and joy. Thankful people are happy people, so go ahead and increase your joy today by being thankful.

Bring an offering [of thanksgiving], and come before Him;
Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.

³⁰Tremble [reverently] before Him, all the earth;
The world is firmly established, it will not be moved.

³¹Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
And let them say among the nations, “The LORD reigns.”

³²Let the sea roar, and all the things that fill it;

Let the field rejoice, and all that is in it.

³³Then the trees of the forest will sing for joy before the LORD;

For He comes to judge *and* govern the earth.

³⁴O give thanks to the LORD, for *He is* good;
For His lovingkindness endures forever.

³⁵Then say, "Save us, O God of our salvation;
Gather us together and rescue us from the nations,
That we may give thanks to Your holy name,
And glory in Your praise."

³⁶Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
Forever and ever.

And all the people said, "Amen," and praised the LORD.

³⁷So David left Asaph and his relatives there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD to minister before the ark continually, as each day's work required;

³⁸and Obed-edom with his sixty-eight relatives; also Obed-edom the son of Jeduthun, and Hosah, were to be gatekeepers.

³⁹*David left* Zadok the priest and his relatives the priests before the dwelling place (tabernacle) of the LORD in the high place which was at Gibeon, [1 Chr 21:29]

⁴⁰to offer burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of burnt offering continually, morning and evening, in accordance with all that is written in the Law of the LORD, which He commanded Israel.

⁴¹With them were Heman and Jeduthun, and the rest who were chosen and designated by name, to give thanks to the

LORD, for His lovingkindness endures forever.

POWERPOINT

Do you see in 1 Chronicles 17:1–4 that as you desire to be led by the Spirit and hear from God, you find a certain degree of freedom to follow your desires as long as you are ready to go in another direction if God shows you that you need to do so? It is good to have a plan and follow it as long as you are willing to give up that plan when God does not approve of it.



⁴²With them were Heman and Jeduthun *with* trumpets and cymbals for those who *were to* sound aloud, and instruments for [accompanying] the songs of God. And the sons of Jeduthun were to be at the gate.

⁴³Then all the people departed, each to his house, and David returned [home] to bless his household.

17 AS DAVID sat in his house (palace), he said to Nathan the prophet, “Behold, I live in a house of cedars, while the ark of the covenant of the LORD is under tent curtains.”

²Then Nathan said to David, “Do all that is in your heart, for God is with you.”

³But it came about that same night that the word of God came to Nathan, saying,

⁴“Go and tell David My servant, ‘Thus says the LORD, “You shall not build a house for Me to dwell in;

⁵for I have not dwelt in a house since the day that I brought Israel up [from Egypt] until this day, but I have gone from tent to tent and from *one* dwelling place to *another*.

⁶“Wherever I have walked with all Israel, did I say a word to any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people, saying, ‘Why have you not built for Me a house of cedar?’” ’

⁷“Now, therefore, this is what you shall say to My servant David: ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be leader over My people Israel.

⁸“I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make your name like the name of the great ones of the earth.

⁹“I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place and not be moved again [nor tremble with fear]; and the wicked will not waste (persecute) them anymore, as formerly,

¹⁰since the time that I commanded judges to be over My

people Israel. And I will humble *and* subdue all your enemies.

“Furthermore, I tell you that the LORD will build you a house (a blessed posterity).

¹¹“And it shall come to pass that when your days are completed and you must go to be with your fathers [in death], I will raise up *one of* your descendants after you, one of your own sons; and I will establish his kingdom.

¹²“He shall build Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. [1 Chr 28:7]

¹³“I will be his father and he shall be My son; and I will not take My steadfast love *and* mercy away from him, as I took it from him (King Saul) who was before you. [Heb 1:5, 6]

¹⁴“But I will settle him in My house and in My kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forevermore.”” [Is 9:7]

¹⁵According to all these words and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.

¹⁶Then David the king went in and sat before the LORD and said, “Who am I, O LORD God, and what is my house *and* family that You have brought me this far?

¹⁷“This was a small thing in Your eyes, O God; but You have spoken of Your servant’s house for a great while to come, and have regarded me according to the standard *and* estate of a man of high degree (prominence), O LORD God.

¹⁸“What more can David say to You for the honor *granted* to Your servant? For You know Your servant.

¹⁹“O LORD, for Your servant’s sake, and in accordance with Your own heart, You have accomplished all this greatness, to make known all these great things.

²⁰“O LORD, there is no one like You, nor is there any God except You, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

²¹“And what one nation on the earth is like Your people Israel, whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people, to make a name for Yourself by great and awesome *and* terrible things, by driving out nations from before Your people, whom You redeemed out of Egypt?

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Lord, let Your name and the character that it denotes endure and be magnified forever.

• adapted from 1 Chronicles 17:24

²²“You made Your people Israel Your own people forever, and You, LORD, became their God.

²³“Therefore now, O LORD, let the word which You have spoken concerning Your servant and his house endure forever,

and do as You have said.

²⁴“Let Your name [and the character that it denotes] endure and be magnified forever, saying, ‘The LORD of hosts is the God of Israel, yes, a God to Israel; and the house of Your servant David is established before You.’

²⁵“For You, O my God, have revealed to Your servant that You will build for him a house (descendants); therefore Your servant has found *courage* to pray before You.

²⁶“And now, O LORD, You are God, and you have spoken *and* promised this good thing to Your servant.

²⁷“Therefore may it please You to bless the house (descendants) of Your servant, that it may continue before You forever; for what You bless, O LORD, is blessed forever.”

18 AFTER THIS it came about that David defeated and subdued the Philistines, and he took Gath and its villages out of the hand of the Philistines.

²He defeated Moab, and the Moabites became David’s servants and brought tribute (gifts).

³David also defeated Hadadezer king of Zobah *as far as* Hamath, as he went to establish his dominion to the Euphrates River.

⁴David took from him 1,000 chariots, 7,000 horsemen, and 20,000 foot soldiers (infantrymen). David also hamstrung [nearly] all the chariot horses [to make them lame and useless], but left enough of them for 100 chariots.

⁵When the Arameans (Syrians) of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David killed 22,000 of the Arameans.

⁶Then David put *military outposts* among the Arameans in Damascus; and the Arameans became David's servants and brought tribute. Thus the LORD helped David wherever he went.

⁷David took the shields of gold which were carried by the servants of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem.

⁸Likewise from Tibhath and from Cun, cities of Hadadezer, David brought a very large amount of bronze, with which Solomon later made the bronze Sea (large basin), the pillars, and the utensils of bronze. [1 Kin 7:13–47; 2 Chr 4:2–18]

⁹When Tou king of Hamath heard how David had defeated all the army of Hadadezer king of Zobah,

¹⁰he sent Hadoram his son to King David to greet him and to bless (congratulate) him, because he had fought against Hadadezer and had defeated him; for Hadadezer had been at war with Tou. And *Hadoram brought* all kinds of articles of gold and silver and bronze.

¹¹King David also dedicated these to the LORD [setting them apart for sacred use], with the silver and the gold which he brought from all the nations: from Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, and from Amalek.

¹²Also Abishai the son of Zeruiah [David's half sister] defeated 18,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt.

¹³He put military outposts in Edom, and all the Edomites became David's servants. Thus the LORD helped David wherever he went.

¹⁴So David reigned over all Israel and administered justice and righteousness for all his people.

¹⁵Joab the son of Zeruiah was in command of the army, and

Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was the recorder;

¹⁶Zadok the son of Ahitub and Abimelech the son of Abiathar were the priests, and Shavsha was secretary (state scribe);

¹⁷and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was in charge of the Cherethites and the Pelethites [David's bodyguards], and the sons of David were chiefs at the king's side.

19 NOW IT came about after this, that Nahash king of the Ammonites died, and his son became king in his place.

²David said, "I will be kind (gracious) to Hanun son of Nahash, because his father was kind to me." So David sent messengers to comfort him concerning [the death of] his father. And the servants of David came to the land of the Ammonites to comfort Hanun.

³But the leaders of the Ammonites said to Hanun, "Do you think that David has sent people to console *and* comfort you because he honors your father? Have his servants not come to you to search and to overthrow and to spy out the land?"

⁴Therefore Hanun took David's servants, shaved them [cutting off half their beards], and cut off their garments in the middle as far as their buttocks, and sent them away [in humiliation].

⁵When David was told how the men were treated, he sent *messengers* to meet them, for they were very humiliated *and* ashamed [to return]. So the king said, "Stay in Jericho until your beards grow [back], and *then* return."

⁶When the Ammonites saw that they had made themselves

hateful to David, Hanun and his people sent 1,000 talents of silver to hire for themselves chariots and horsemen from Mesopotamia, Aram-maacah, and Zobah.

⁷So they hired for themselves 32,000 chariots and the king of Maacah and his troops, who came and camped before Medeba. And the Ammonites gathered together from their cities and came to battle.

⁸When David heard *about it*, he sent Joab and all the army of courageous men.

⁹The Ammonites came out and lined up in battle formation at the entrance of the city [Medeba], while the kings who had come were by themselves in the open country.

¹⁰Now when Joab saw that the battle was set against him in the front and in the rear, he chose *warriors* from all the choice men of Israel and put them in formation against the Arameans (Syrians).

¹¹The rest of the soldiers he placed in the hand of Abishai his brother, and they lined up against the Ammonites.

¹²He said, "If the Arameans are too strong for me, then you shall help me; but if the Ammonites are too strong for you, I will help you.

¹³"Be strong and let us show ourselves courageous for the sake of our people and for the cities of our God; and may the LORD do what is good in His sight."

¹⁴So Joab and the people who were with him approached the Arameans for battle, and they fled before him.

¹⁵When the Ammonites saw that the Arameans fled, they also fled before Abishai, Joab's brother, and entered the city [Medeba]. Then Joab came to Jerusalem.

¹⁶When the Arameans (Syrians) saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they sent messengers and brought out the Arameans who were beyond the [Euphrates] River, with Shophach the commander of the army of Hadadezer leading them.

¹⁷When this was told to David, he gathered all Israel and crossed the Jordan, and came upon them and drew up in formation against them. So when David drew up in battle array against the Arameans, they fought against him.

¹⁸But the Arameans fled before Israel, and David killed of the Arameans 7,000 charioteers and 40,000 foot soldiers, and put to death Shophach the commander of the army.

¹⁹When the servants of Hadadezer saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they made peace with David and became subject to *and* served him. And the Arameans (Syrians) were not willing to help the Ammonites anymore.

20 THEN IT happened at the end of the year, at the time when kings go out *to battle*, Joab led out the army and ravaged *and* devastated the land of the Ammonites, and came and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem [with Bathsheba]. Joab struck Rabbah and overthrew it. [2 Sam 12:24–29]

²David took the crown of their king from his head and found that it weighed a talent of gold and that there was a precious stone in it; so it was set on David's head. He also brought a very great amount of spoil (plunder) out of the city [of Rabbah].

³He brought out the people who were in it, and put them [to work] with saws, iron picks, and axes. David dealt *in this way* with all the Ammonite cities. Then David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.

⁴Now it came about after this that war broke out at Gezer with the Philistines; then Sibbecai the Hushathite killed Sippai, one of the descendants of the giants, and they were subdued.

⁵There was war again with the Philistines, and Elhanan the son of Jair killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.

⁶Again there was war at Gath, where there was a man of *great* stature who had twenty-four fingers and toes, *six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot*; and he also was descended from the giants.

⁷When he taunted Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea, David's brother, killed him.

⁸These were descended from the giants in Gath, and they fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants.

21 SATAN [THE adversary] stood up against Israel and incited David to count [the population of] Israel.

²So David said to Joab and the leaders of the people, "Go, count Israel from Beersheba to Dan, and bring me their total, so that I may know it."

³Joab said, "May the LORD add to His people a hundred times as many as they are! But, my lord the king, are they not all my lord's servants? Why then does my lord require this? Why will he bring guilt on Israel?"

⁴But the king's word prevailed over Joab. So Joab left and went throughout all Israel and came to Jerusalem.

⁵Then Joab gave the total of the census of the people to David. And all Israel were 1,100,000 men who drew the sword; and in Judah 470,000 men who drew the sword.

⁶But he did not count Levi and Benjamin among them, because the king's order was detestable to Joab.

⁷Now God was displeased with this act [of arrogance and pride], and He struck Israel.

⁸Then David said to God, "I have sinned greatly because I have done this thing. But now, I beseech You, take away the wickedness *and* guilt of Your servant, for I have acted very foolishly."

⁹And the LORD said to Gad, David's seer,

¹⁰"Go and tell David, saying, 'Thus says the LORD, "I offer you three *choices*; choose for yourself one of them, which I will do to you [as punishment for your sin]."'"

¹¹So Gad came to David and said to him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Choose for yourself

¹²either three years of famine, or three months to be swept away before your enemies, while the sword of your enemies overtakes you, or else three days of the sword of the LORD and plague in the land, and the angel of the LORD bringing destruction throughout all the territory of Israel.' Now therefore, consider what answer I shall return to Him who sent me."

¹³David said to Gad, "I am in great distress; please let me fall into the hands of the LORD, for His mercies are very great;

but do not let me fall into the hand of man.”

¹⁴So the LORD sent a plague on Israel, and 70,000 men of Israel fell.

¹⁵God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it; and as he was destroying it, the LORD looked, and relented concerning the catastrophe and said to the destroying angel, “It is enough; now remove your hand [of judgment].” And the angel of the LORD was standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

¹⁶Then David raised his eyes and saw the angel of the LORD standing between earth and heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, covered in sackcloth, fell on their faces.

¹⁷David said to God, “Is it not I who commanded the people to be counted? I am the one who has sinned and done evil; but as for these sheep [the people of Israel], what have they done? O LORD my God, please let Your hand be against me and my father’s house, but not against Your people that they should be plagued.”

¹⁸Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

¹⁹So David went up at Gad’s word, which he spoke in the name of the LORD.

²⁰Now Ornan was threshing wheat, and he turned back and saw the angel; and his four sons who were with him hid themselves.

²¹As David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw him, and went out from the threshing floor and bowed down before

David with his face to the ground.

²²Then David said to Ornan, “Give me the site of this threshing floor, so that I may build an altar on it to the LORD. You shall charge me the full price for it, so that the plague may be averted from the people.”

²³Ornan said to David, “Take it for yourself; and let my lord the king do what is good in his eyes. See, I will give you the oxen also for burnt offerings and the threshing sledges (heavy wooden platforms) for wood and the wheat for the grain offering; I give it all.”

²⁴But King David said to Ornan, “No, I will certainly pay the full price; for I will not take what is yours for the LORD, nor offer a burnt offering which costs me nothing.”

²⁵So David gave Ornan 600 shekels of gold by weight for the site. [2 Chr 3:1]

²⁶Then David built an altar to the LORD there and presented burnt offerings and peace offerings. And he called on the LORD, and He answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering.

²⁷Then the LORD commanded the [avenging] angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath.

²⁸At that time, when David saw that the LORD had answered him on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he sacrificed there.

²⁹For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of burnt offering were at that time in the high place at Gibeon.

³⁰But David could not go before it to inquire of God, for he was terrified by the sword of the angel of the LORD.

22 THEN DAVID said, “This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of burnt offering for Israel.”

²So David gave orders to gather the foreigners who were in the land of Israel, and he assigned stonecutters to hew out stones to build the house of God.

³David prepared large quantities of iron to make nails for the doors of the gates and for the clamps (trusses), and more bronze than could be weighed;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Fear Not

I have heard that there are 365 references in God's Word to "fear not"—one for every day of the year. Fear not means to resist fear and not let it control your actions.

The only acceptable attitude God's children can have toward fear is what David said to Solomon, "Be strong and courageous, do not fear nor be dismayed" (1 Chr. 22:13). If we let fear rule in our lives, it will steal our peace and joy and may hinder us from fulfilling our destinies.

Are you confident in God? Do you believe right now that no matter what comes against you, victory is yours through Christ? Form a habit of saying out loud several times a day, "I will not fear." If this is one of the first statements out of your mouth when fear does come, you will soon gain victory over fear.

⁴and cedar trees beyond number, for the Sidonians and Tyrians brought large quantities of cedar timber to David.

⁵David said, "Solomon my son is young and inexperienced, and the house that is to be built for the LORD shall be exceedingly magnificent, famous, and an object of glory and splendor throughout all lands [of the earth]. So now I will make preparations for it." Therefore, David made ample preparations before his death.

⁶Then he called for Solomon his son and ordered him to build a house for the LORD, the God of Israel.

⁷David said to Solomon, "My son, I had intended to build a house for the Name (Presence) of the LORD my God.

⁸"But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'You have shed much blood and have waged great wars; you shall not build a house for My Name, because you have shed so much blood on the earth before me.

⁹'Behold, a son will be born to you, who will be a man of peace. I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side; for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel in his days. [2 Sam 12:24, 25]

¹⁰'He shall build a house for My Name (Presence). He shall be My son and I will be his father; and I will establish his royal throne over Israel forever.'

¹¹"Now, my son, may the LORD be with you so that you may be successful and build the house of the LORD your God, just as He has spoken concerning you.

¹²"Only may the LORD give you wisdom and understanding, and give you charge over Israel, so that you may keep the law of the LORD your God.

¹³"Then you will prosper, if you are careful to observe *and* fulfill the statutes and ordinances which the LORD commanded Moses concerning Israel. Be strong and courageous, do not fear nor be dismayed.

¹⁴"Now listen, with great trouble I have prepared *and* provided for the house of the LORD 100,000 talents of gold, 1,000,000 talents of silver, and bronze and iron beyond

weighing, for they are great in quantity. I have also prepared *and* provided timber and stone, and you may add to them.

¹⁵“Further, you have workmen in abundance: stonecutters and stonemasons and carpenters, and all men who are skillful in every kind of work.

¹⁶“As for the gold, the silver, the bronze, and the iron, there is no limit. So arise and begin working, and may the LORD be with you.”

¹⁷David also commanded all the leaders of Israel to help Solomon his son, *saying*,

¹⁸“Is not the LORD your God with you? And has He not given you rest *and* peace on every side? For He has given the inhabitants of the land into my hand, and the land is subdued before the LORD and before His people.

¹⁹“Now set your heart and your soul to seek (inquire of, require as your vital necessity) the LORD your God. Arise and build the sanctuary of the LORD God, so that you may bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD and the holy articles *and* utensils of God into the house built for the Name (Presence) of the LORD.”

23 WHEN DAVID reached old age, he made his son Solomon king over Israel.

²And he assembled together all the leaders of Israel with the priests and Levites.

³The Levites thirty years old and upward were counted, and their number man by man was 38,000.

⁴Of these 24,000 were to oversee *and* inspect the work of the house of the LORD and 6,000 were to be administrators and judges,

⁵and 4,000 were gatekeepers, and 4,000 [musicians] were to praise the LORD with the instruments which David made for giving praise.

⁶And David organized them into divisions according to the sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

⁷Of the Gershonites: Ladan (Libni) and Shimei.

⁸The sons of Ladan: Jehiel the first and Zetham and Joel—three *in all*.

⁹The sons of Shimei: Shelomoth, Haziël, and Haran—three *in all*. These were the heads of the fathers' *households* of Ladan.

¹⁰The sons of Shimei: Jahath, Zina (Zizah), Jeush, and Beriah. These were the four sons of Shimei.

¹¹Jahath was the first and Zizah the second; but Jeush and Beriah did not have many sons [not enough for a father's house or clan], so they were [counted together] as one father's household, one working group.

¹²The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel—four *in all*.

¹³The sons of Amram: Aaron and Moses. Aaron was set apart to consecrate him as most holy, he and his sons forever, to burn incense before the LORD, attend to His service, and to bless [worshipers] in His name forever.

¹⁴But as for Moses the man of God, his sons were counted among the tribe of Levi.

¹⁵The sons of Moses: Gershom and Eliezer.

¹⁶The son of Gershom: Shebuel the chief.

¹⁷The son of Eliezer was Rehabiah the chief. Eliezer had no other sons, but Rehabiah's sons were very many [in number].

¹⁸The son of Izhar: Shelomith the chief.

¹⁹The sons of Hebron: Jeriah the first, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, and Jekameam the fourth.

²⁰The sons of Uzziel: Micah the first and Isshiah the second.

²¹The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. The sons of Mahli: Eleazar and Kish.

²²Eleazar died and had no sons, but daughters only, and their relatives, the sons of Kish, took them as wives.

²³The sons of Mushi: Mahli, Eder, and Jeremoth—three *in all*.

²⁴These were the Levites by their fathers' households, the heads of the fathers' *households* of those registered, according to the number of names of the individuals who were the servants of the house of the LORD, from twenty years old and upward.

²⁵For David said, "The LORD God of Israel, has given peace *and* rest to His people, and He dwells in Jerusalem forever.

²⁶"Also, the Levites will no longer need to carry the tabernacle and all its utensils for its service."

²⁷For by the last words of David, the Levites from twenty years old and above were counted.

²⁸For their duty is to assist [the priests] the sons of Aaron in the service of the house of the LORD, in [caring for] the

courtyards, the chambers, the purifying of all holy things, and any work of the service of the house of God,

²⁹and with the showbread, and the fine flour for a grain offering, and unleavened wafers, or *what is baked in* the pan or what is well-mixed, and all measures of volume and size [as the Law of Moses required].

³⁰They are to stand every morning to thank and praise the LORD, and likewise at evening,

³¹and to offer all burnt sacrifices to the LORD on the Sabbaths, the new moons, and the festivals by number according to the ordinance concerning them, continually before the LORD.

POWERPOINT

Living with the spirit of worship in your heart is the best way to live. Throughout your day, adore the Lord and be thankful for Him and for all that He does for you. You will be amazed how things begin to change as you worship and thank Him. Worship creates an atmosphere in which God can do mighty things in your life.



³²So they shall be responsible for the Tent of Meeting, the Holy Place, and the sons of Aaron their relatives, for the service of the house of the LORD.

24 THE DIVISIONS of the descendants of Aaron *were these*: the sons of Aaron were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

²But Nadab and Abihu died before their father and had no sons; therefore Eleazar and Ithamar served as priests.

³David, with Zadok of the sons of Eleazar and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, divided them according to their offices for their *assigned* duties.

⁴Since there were more chief men found among the descendants of Eleazar than among the descendants of Ithamar [because of Eli's misfortunes, and Saul's massacre of the priests at Nob], they were divided in this way: sixteen heads of fathers' households of the descendants of Eleazar and eight of the descendants of Ithamar, corresponding to their fathers' households.

⁵So they were divided by lot, one group with the other; for they were officers of the sanctuary and officers (high priests) of God, both from the descendants of Eleazar and from the descendants of Ithamar.

⁶Shemaiah, the son of Nethanel the scribe, from the Levites, recorded them in the presence of the king, the officers, Zadok the priest, Ahimelech the son of Abiathar [the priest who escaped Saul's massacre at Nob], and the heads of the fathers' *households* of the priests and of the Levites; one father's household taken for Eleazar and one taken for Ithamar.

⁷The lots fell, the first one to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah,

⁸the third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim,

⁹the fifth to Malchijah, the sixth to Mijamin,

¹⁰the seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah,

¹¹the ninth to Jeshua, the tenth to Shecaniah,

¹²the eleventh to Eliashib, the twelfth to Jakim,

¹³the thirteenth to Huppah, the fourteenth to Jeshebeab,

¹⁴the fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immer,
¹⁵the seventeenth to Hezir, the eighteenth to Happizzetz,
¹⁶the nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jehezkel,
¹⁷the twenty-first to Jachin, the twenty-second to Gamul,
¹⁸the twenty-third to Delaiah, the twenty-fourth to Maaziah.

¹⁹These were their offices *and* positions for their service in the house of the LORD according to the ordinance given to them by their father (ancestor) Aaron, just as the LORD God of Israel had commanded him.

²⁰Now as for the rest of the sons of Levi: of the sons of Amram: Shubael; of the sons of Shubael: Jehdeiah.

²¹Of Rehabiah: of the sons of Rehabiah: Isshiah the first.

²²Of the Izharites: Shelomoth; of the sons of Shelomoth, Jahath.

²³The sons *of Hebron*: Jeriah *the first*, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, Jekameam the fourth.

²⁴Of the sons of Uzziel, Micah; of the sons of Micah, Shamir.

²⁵The brother of Micah, Isshiah; of the sons of Isshiah, Zechariah.

²⁶The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi; the sons of Jaaziah, Beno.

²⁷The sons of Merari: by Jaaziah were Beno, Shoham, Zaccur, and Itri.

²⁸By Mahli: Eleazar, who had no sons.

²⁹By Kish: the sons of Kish, Jerahmeel.

³⁰The sons of Mushi: Mahli, Eder, and Jerimoth. These were the sons of the Levites according to their fathers' households.

³¹These also cast lots as did their relatives the sons of Aaron in the presence of David the king, Zadok, Ahimelech, and the heads of the fathers' *households* of the priests and of the Levites—the head of father's *households* as well as those of his younger brother.

25 MOREOVER, DAVID and the commanders of the army selected for the [temple] service some of the sons of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, who were to prophesy with lyres, harps, and cymbals. The list of the musicians who performed their service was *as follows*:

²Of the sons of Asaph: Zaccur, Joseph, Nethaniah, and Asharelah; the sons of Asaph were under the direction of Asaph, who prophesied under the direction of the king.

³Of Jeduthun, the sons of Jeduthun: Gedaliah, Zeri, Jeshaiiah, Shimei, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah, six, under the direction of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied with the lyre in thanksgiving and praise to the LORD.

⁴Of Heman, the sons of Heman: Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shebuel, Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti, Romanti-ezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, and Mahazioth.

⁵All these [men] were the sons of Heman the king's seer to exalt him in accordance with the words of God; for God gave Heman fourteen sons and three daughters. [Ps 68:25]

⁶All these were under the direction of their father to sing in

the house of the LORD, with cymbals, harps, and lyres, for the service of the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman were under the order *and* direction of the king.

⁷So their number [who led the remainder of the 4,000], with their relatives who were trained in singing to the LORD, all who were skillful, was 288. [1 Chr 23:5]

⁸The musicians cast lots for their duties, everyone alike, the small (younger) as well as the great (older), the teacher *as well* as the student.

⁹The first lot for Asaph fell to Joseph; the second to Gedaliah, to him, his relatives and his sons, twelve;

¹⁰the third to Zaccur, his sons and his relatives, twelve;

¹¹the fourth to Izri, his sons and his relatives, twelve;

¹²the fifth to Nethaniah, his sons and his relatives, twelve;

¹³the sixth to Bukkiah, his sons and his relatives, twelve;

¹⁴the seventh to Jesharelah, his sons and his relatives, twelve;

¹⁵the eighth to Jeshaiah, his sons and his relatives, twelve;

¹⁶the ninth to Mattaniah, his sons and his relatives, twelve;

¹⁷the tenth to Shimei, his sons and his relatives, twelve;

¹⁸the eleventh to Azarel, his sons and his relatives, twelve;

¹⁹the twelfth to Hashabiah, his sons and his relatives, twelve;

²⁰the thirteenth to Shubael, his sons and his relatives, twelve;

²¹the fourteenth to Mattithiah, his sons and his relatives, twelve;

²²the fifteenth to Jeremoth, his sons and his relatives,

twelve;

²³the sixteenth to Hananiah, his sons and his relatives, twelve;

²⁴the seventeenth of Joshbekashah, his sons and his relatives, twelve;

²⁵the eighteenth to Hanani, his sons and his relatives, twelve;

²⁶the nineteenth to Mallothi, his sons and his relatives, twelve;

²⁷the twentieth to Eliathah, his sons and his relatives, twelve;

²⁸the twenty-first to Hothir, his sons and his relatives, twelve;

²⁹the twenty-second to Giddalti, his sons and his relatives, twelve;

³⁰the twenty-third to Mahazioth, his sons and his relatives, twelve;

³¹the twenty-fourth to Romamti-ezer, his sons and his relatives, twelve.

26 FOR THE divisions of the gatekeepers: Of the Korahites: Meshelemiah the son of Kore, of the sons of Asaph.

²Meshelemiah had sons: Zechariah the firstborn, Jediahel the second, Zebadiah the third, Jathniel the fourth,

³Elam the fifth, Jehohanan the sixth, Eliehoenai the seventh.

⁴Obed-edom had sons: Shemaiah the firstborn, Jehozabad the second, Joah the third, Sacar the fourth, Nethanel the fifth,

⁵ Ammiel the sixth, Issachar the seventh, Peullethai the eighth; for God had blessed him.

⁶ Also to his son Shemaiah sons were born who ruled over the house of their father, for they were courageous men of ability.

⁷ The sons of Shemaiah: Othni, Rephael, Obed, and Elzabad, whose brothers were courageous *and* able men, Elihu and Semachiah.

⁸ All these were sons of Obed-edom [in whose house the ark was kept], they and their sons and relatives, strong *and* able men for the service—sixty-two from Obed-edom. [1 Chr 13:13, 14]

⁹ Meshelemiah had sons and relatives, eighteen courageous men.

¹⁰ Also Hosah, one of the sons of Merari, had sons: Shimri the first *and* chief (although he was not the firstborn, his father made him first),

¹¹ Hilkiah the second, Tebaliah the third, Zechariah the fourth; the sons and relatives of Hosah were thirteen in all.

¹² To these divisions of the gatekeepers, the chief men, *were given* duties, like their relatives, to minister in the house of the LORD.

¹³ They cast lots, the small (younger) and great (older) alike, in accordance with their fathers' households, for every gate.

¹⁴ The lot for the east [gates] fell to Shelemiah. They cast lots also for his son Zechariah, a wise counselor, and his lot came out for the north [gates].

¹⁵ To Obed-edom [it came out] for the south [gates], and the storehouse *was allotted* to his sons.

¹⁶To Shuppim and Hosah [the lot fell] for the west [gates], by the gate of Shallecheth, on the ascending highway, division by division.

¹⁷On the east were six Levites, on the north four a day, on the south four a day, and two by two at the storehouse.

¹⁸At the colonnade on the west side [of the outer court of the temple] *there were* four at the road and two at the colonnade.

¹⁹These were the divisions of the gatekeepers among the Korahites and the sons of Merari.

²⁰Of the Levites, Ahijah was in charge of the treasuries of the house of God and the treasuries of the dedicated gifts.

²¹The sons of Ladan, the sons of the Gershonites belonging to Ladan, *namely*, the Jehielites, *were* the heads of the fathers' *households*, belonging to Ladan the Gershonite.

²²The sons of Jehieli, Zetham and his brother Joel, were in charge of the treasuries of the house of the LORD.

²³Of the Amramites, Izharites, Hebronites, and Uzzielites:

²⁴Shebuel the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, was supervisor over the treasuries.

²⁵His relatives by Eliezer were his son Rehabiah, his son Jeshaiiah, his son Joram, his son Zichri, and his son Shelomoth.

²⁶This Shelomoth and his relatives were in charge of all the treasuries of the dedicated gifts which King David, the heads of the fathers' *households*, the commanders of thousands and hundreds, and the commanders of the army, had dedicated.

²⁷From spoil won in battles they dedicated *gifts* to maintain *and* repair the house of the LORD.

²⁸Also all that Samuel the seer had dedicated, and Saul the son of Kish, Abner the son of Ner and Joab the son of Zeruiah, everyone who had dedicated *anything*, this was in the care of Shelomoth and his relatives.

²⁹Of the Izharites: Chenaniah and his sons were *appointed* to outside duties for Israel, as administrators and judges.

³⁰Of the Hebronites: Hashabiah and his relatives, 1,700 capable men, were in charge of the affairs of Israel west of the Jordan, for all the work of the LORD and the service of the king.

³¹Of the Hebronites: Jerijah was the chief (these Hebronites were examined according to their descendants and fathers' *households* in the fortieth [and final] year of David's reign, and men of courage *and* ability were found among them at Jazer in Gilead)

³²and Jerijah's relatives, 2,700 capable men, were heads of fathers' *households*; and King David made them overseers of the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, for everything pertaining to God and to the king.

27 THIS IS the list of the sons (descendants) of Israel, the heads of fathers' *households*, the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, and their officers who served the king in all matters of the divisions which came in and went out month by month throughout the year, each division *numbering* 24,000:

²Jashobeam the son of Zabdiel was in charge of the first division for the first month; and in his division were 24,000.

³*He was* descended from Perez, *and was* chief of all the commanders of the army for the first month.

⁴Dodai the Ahohite and his division was in charge of the division for the second month, Mikloth was the chief officer; and in his division were 24,000.

⁵The third commander of the army for the third month was Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada the priest, as chief; and in his division were 24,000.

⁶This is the Benaiah who was the mighty man of the thirty and was in charge of the thirty; and Ammizabad his son was *over* his division.

⁷The fourth, for the fourth month was Asahel the brother of Joab, and Zebadiah his son after him; and in his division were 24,000.

⁸The fifth, for the fifth month was the commander Shamhuth the Izrahite; and in his division were 24,000.

⁹The sixth, for the sixth month was Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite; and in his division were 24,000.

¹⁰The seventh, for the seventh month was Helez the Pelonite of the sons of Ephraim; and in his division were 24,000.

¹¹The eighth, for the eighth month was Sibbecai the Hushathite of the Zerahites; and in his division were 24,000.

¹²The ninth, for the ninth month was Abiezer of Anathoth, a Benjamite; and in his division were 24,000.

¹³The tenth, for the tenth month was Maharai from Netophah of the Zerahites; and in his division were 24,000.

¹⁴The eleventh, for the eleventh month was Benaiah the Pirathonite of the sons of Ephraim; and in his division were 24,000.

¹⁵The twelfth, for the twelfth month was Heldai the Netophathite of Othniel; and in his division were 24,000.

¹⁶Now in charge of the tribes of Israel [were the following]: chief officer of the Reubenites was Eliezer the son of Zichri; of the Simeonites, Shephatiah the son of Maacah;

¹⁷of Levi, Hashabiah the son of Kemuel; of Aaron, Zadok;

¹⁸of Judah, Elihu, one of David's brothers; of Issachar, Omri the son of Michael;

¹⁹of Zebulun, Ishmaiah the son of Obadiah; of Naphtali, Jeremoth the son of Azriel;

²⁰of the Ephraimites, Hoshea the son of Azaziah; of the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joel the son of Pedaiah;

²¹of the half-tribe of Manasseh in Gilead, Iddo the son of Zechariah; of Benjamin, Jaasiel the son of Abner;

²²of Dan, Azarel the son of Jeroham. These were the leaders of the tribes of Israel.

²³But David did not count those twenty years of age and under, for the LORD had said he would multiply Israel as the stars of heaven.

²⁴Joab the son of Zeruiah began a census but did not finish; and because of this, [God's] wrath came on Israel, and the number was not recorded in the chronicles of King David.

²⁵Azmaveth the son of Adiel was in charge of the king's storerooms; and Jonathan the son of Uzziah was in charge of the storehouses in the country, in the cities, in the villages, and in the towers.

²⁶Ezri the son of Chelub was in charge of those who did the work of the field, tilling the soil.

²⁷Shimei the Ramathite was in charge of the vineyards; Zabdi the Shiphmite was in charge of the produce of the vineyards for the wine cellars.

²⁸Baal-hanan the Gederite was in charge of the olive and sycamore trees in Shephelah (the lowlands); and Joash was in charge of the stores of [olive] oil.

²⁹Shitrai the Sharonite was in charge of the cattle grazing in Sharon; Shaphat the son of Adlai was in charge of the cattle in the valleys.

³⁰Obil the Ishmaelite was in charge of the camels; and Jehdeiah the Meronothite was in charge of the donkeys.

³¹Jaziz the Hagrite was in charge of the flocks. All these were overseers *and* stewards of the property which belonged to King David.

³²Also Jonathan, David's uncle, was a counselor *and* advisor, a man of understanding *and* wisdom, and a scribe; and Jehiel the son of Hachmoni attended (tutored) the king's sons. [2 Kin 10:6]

³³Ahithophel was counselor to the king; and Hushai the Archite was the king's companion *and* friend.

³⁴Ahithophel was succeeded by Jehoiada the son of Benaiah and by Abiathar; and Joab was the commander of the king's army.

28 DAVID ASSEMBLED at Jerusalem all the leaders (officials) of Israel, the leaders of the tribes, and the commanders of the divisions that served the king, and the commanders of thousands, and the commanders of hundreds,

and the overseers of all the property and livestock of the king and his sons, with the palace officers and the mighty men, and all the brave warriors.

²Then David the king rose to his feet and said, “Hear me, my brothers [in arms] and my people. I had intended to build a permanent home for the ark of the covenant of the LORD and as a footstool for our God, and I prepared materials for the building.

³“But God said to me, ‘You shall not build a house for My Name (Presence), because you are a man of war and have shed blood.’

⁴“However, the LORD, the God of Israel, chose me from all in my father’s house to be king over Israel forever. For He has chosen Judah to be the leader; and in the house (tribe) of Judah he chose the house of my father; and among the sons of my father He was pleased to make me king over all Israel.

⁵“Of all my sons (for the LORD has given me many sons) He has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel.

⁶“He said to me, ‘Solomon your son shall build My house and My courts; for I have chosen him to be a son to Me, and I will be a father to him.

**A Prayer To
Renew Your
Mind**



*Help me to know You, God—
to have personal knowledge
of You, to appreciate, heed,
and cherish You—and to
serve You with a blameless
heart and a willing mind, for
You search all hearts and
minds and understand every
intent and inclination of my
thoughts.*

• adapted from 1 Chronicles 28:9

⁷‘I will establish his kingdom forever if he loyally *and* continually obeys My commandments and My ordinances, as is done today.’

⁸“Now therefore, in the sight of all Israel, the assembly of the LORD, and in the hearing of our God, observe and seek after all the commandments of the LORD your God so that you may possess the good land and leave it as an inheritance to your sons after you forever.

⁹“As for you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father [have personal knowledge of Him, be acquainted with, and understand Him; appreciate, heed, and cherish Him] and serve Him with a blameless heart and a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts *and* minds, and understands every

intent *and* inclination of the thoughts. If you seek Him [inquiring for and of Him and requiring Him as your first and vital necessity] He will let you find Him; but if you abandon (turn away from) Him, He will reject you forever.

¹⁰“Consider this carefully, for the LORD has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary. Be courageous *and* strong and do it.”

¹¹Then David gave to his son Solomon the plan for the porch *of the temple*, its buildings, its treasuries, its upper chambers, its inner rooms, and for the place for the [ark and its] mercy seat;

¹²and the plan of all that he had in mind, for the courts of the house of the LORD, and for all the surrounding rooms, for the storerooms of the house of God and for the storerooms for the dedicated gifts *and* offerings;

¹³*the plan* for the divisions of the priests and the Levites and for all the work of the service in the house of the LORD and for all the utensils for service in the house of the LORD;

¹⁴for the golden *utensils*, the weight of gold and silver for all the gold and silver articles for every kind of service;

¹⁵and the weight *of gold* for the golden lampstands and their golden lamps, with the weight of each lampstand and its lamps; and the *weight of silver* for the silver lampstands, with the weight of each lampstand and its lamps according to the use of each lampstand;

¹⁶the gold by weight for each table of showbread, and the silver for the tables of silver;

¹⁷and the forks, the basins, and the pitchers of pure gold; and for the golden bowls with the weight for each bowl; and

for the silver bowls with the weight for each bowl;

Speak God's Word

*I am strong and courageous,
and I take action. I will not
fear nor be dismayed, for the
Lord my God is with me. He
will not fail me nor abandon
me, but will guide me until I
have finished the work He
has given me to do.*

| *adapted from* 1 CHRONICLES
28:20 |

¹⁸and for the altar of incense refined gold by weight; and gold for the model of the chariot of the cherubim that spread *their wings* and covered the ark of the LORD's covenant.

¹⁹“All *this*,” said David, “the LORD made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, all the work *and* details [to be done] according to this plan.”

²⁰Then David said to his son Solomon, “Be strong and courageous, and take action; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you nor abandon you [but will guide you in the construction] until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD.

²¹“And see, [you have] the divisions of the priests and Levites for all the service of God’s house, and every willing, skillful man will be with you in all the kinds of work for any kind of service. Also the officers and all the people will be entirely at your command.”

29 AND KING David said to all the assembly, “My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen, is still young and inexperienced and the work is great; for the temple is not for man but for the LORD God.

²“So with all my ability I have provided for the house of my God the gold for the *things of* gold, silver for the *things of* silver, bronze for the *things of* bronze, iron for the *things of* iron, and wood for the *things of* wood, *as well as* onyx stones and stones to be inlaid, stones of antimony (a brittle, silvery-white metal) and stones of various colors, and all kinds of precious stones and alabaster in abundance.

³“Moreover, because I delight in the house of my God, the [personal] treasure that I have of gold and silver, I give to the house of my God, in addition to all that I have already provided for the holy house:

⁴*namely*, 3,000 talents of gold from the gold of Ophir, and 7,000 talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the buildings;

⁵gold for the *things of* gold, silver for the *things of* silver, that is, for all the work to be done by craftsmen. Now who is willing to consecrate himself today to the LORD?”

⁶Then the rulers of the fathers’ *households*, and leaders of

the tribes of Israel, and the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, with the overseers of the king's work, offered willingly

⁷and gave for the service of the house of God: 5,000 talents and 10,000 darics of gold, and 10,000 talents of silver, and 18,000 talents of bronze, and 100,000 talents of iron.

⁸Whoever had *precious* stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the LORD, in the care of Jehiel the Gershonite.

⁹Then the people rejoiced because they had given willingly, for with a whole *and* blameless heart they had offered freely to the LORD. King David also rejoiced greatly.

¹⁰Therefore David blessed the LORD in the sight of all the assembly and said, "Blessed (praised, adored, and thanked) are You, O LORD God of Israel (Jacob) our father, forever and ever.

¹¹"Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and on the earth; Yours is the dominion *and* kingdom, O LORD, and You exalt Yourself as head over all.

POWERPOINT

God examines our heart attitudes, and whatever we do for Him needs to be done willingly. He delights in those who give to Him willingly, joyfully, and cheerfully. And as we give willingly, even when it is difficult for us, we are filled with great joy!



A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Yours, Lord, is the greatness
and the power and the glory
and the victory and the*

majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and on the earth; Yours is the dominion and kingdom, and You exalt Yourself as head over all.

• adapted from 1 Chronicles 29:11

¹²“Both riches and honor *come* from You, and You rule over all. In Your hand is power and might; and it is in Your hands to make great and to give strength to everyone.

¹³“Now therefore, our God, we thank You, and praise Your glorious name.

¹⁴“But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer as generously as this? For all things come from You, and from Your own hand we have given to You.

¹⁵“For we are sojourners before You, and tenants, as all our fathers were; our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no hope [of remaining].

¹⁶“O LORD our God, all this abundance that we have prepared to build You a house for Your holy Name, it is from Your hand, and is all Your own.

¹⁷“I know also, my God, that You test the heart and delight in uprightness *and* integrity. In the uprightness of my heart I have willingly offered all these *things*. So now with joy I have seen Your people who are present here, make their offerings willingly *and* freely to You.

¹⁸“O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers,

keep forever such purposes *and* thoughts in the minds of Your people, and direct their hearts toward You;

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, I pray that You would
keep Your thoughts and
purposes forever in my mind
and direct my heart toward
You.*

• adapted from 1 Chronicles 29:18

¹⁹and give to my son Solomon a perfect heart to keep Your commandments, Your testimonies, and Your statutes, and to do all [that is necessary] to build the temple [for You], for which I have made provision.”

²⁰Then David said to all the assembly, “Now bless (praise, thank) the LORD your God.” And all the assembly blessed the LORD, the God of their fathers, and bowed down and honored the LORD and to the king [as His earthly representative].

²¹The next day they offered sacrifices and burnt offerings

to the LORD: 1,000 bulls, 1,000 rams, and 1,000 lambs, with their drink offerings (libations) and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel.

²²They ate and drank that day before the LORD with great rejoicing.

They made Solomon the son of David king a second time, and anointed him as ruler for the LORD and Zadok as [high] priest.

²³Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king in place of David his father; and he prospered, and all Israel obeyed him.

²⁴All of the leaders and warriors, and also all the sons of King David, pledged allegiance to King Solomon.

²⁵The LORD highly exalted Solomon in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed on him royal majesty which had not been on any king before him in Israel.

²⁶Thus David the son of Jesse reigned over all Israel.

²⁷The time that he reigned over Israel was forty years; he reigned seven years in Hebron and thirty-three years in Jerusalem.

²⁸He died in a good old age [his seventy-first year], full of days (satisfied), riches and honor. Solomon his son reigned in his place.

²⁹Now the acts of King David, from first to last, are written in the chronicles (records) of Samuel the seer, in the chronicles of Nathan the prophet, and in the chronicles of Gad the seer,

³⁰with [accounts of] all his reign, and his power, and the times *and* circumstances which came on him, on Israel, and on all the kingdoms of the [surrounding] lands.

2 Chronicles

Author: |

Attributed to Ezra

Date: | Probably

between 425 BC and

400 BC

Second Chronicles focuses on the rule of King David's son, King Solomon, who has been respected for centuries as the wisest person who ever lived.

Second Chronicles 20 includes one of the most important truths for us to live by as believers. It tells us that the battles we fight are not our own, but God's (see 2 Chronicles 20:15). No matter how the enemy comes against us, we are not alone; God is on our side. Second Chronicles 20 teaches us what this means through the story of Jehoshaphat, who led the Israelites to a seemingly impossible victory because he sought the Lord, he prayed, he worshiped, he obeyed God's directions, and he allowed God to fight for him.

Whatever battle you are fighting, follow the example in 2

Chronicles 20, and God will lead you to victory.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM 2 CHRONICLES:

In every situation in life, wisdom is an excellent guide. I encourage you to ask God for wisdom, as Solomon did (see 2 Chronicles 1:9–10) every day and in all circumstances. He will give it to you!

When you do not know what to do, keep your eyes on God (see 2 Chronicles 20:12).

When the enemy comes against you, one way to defeat him is to praise God (see 2 Chronicles 20:22). Praise is a powerful weapon!

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM 2 CHRONICLES:

If... My people, who are called by My name, humble themselves, and pray and seek (crave, requires as necessity) My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear [them] from heaven, and forgive their sin and heal their land. | 2 Chronicles 7:13–14

For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth so that He may support those whose heart is completely His. | 2 Chronicles 16:9

You need not fight in this battle; take your positions, stand and witness the salvation of the LORD who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD is with you. | 2 Chronicles 20:17

THE SECOND BOOK OF THE CHRONICLES

1 SOLOMON THE son of David established himself securely over his kingdom, and the LORD his God was with him and made him exceedingly great.

²Solomon spoke to all Israel, to the commanders of thousands and of hundreds and to the judges and to every leader in all Israel, the heads of the fathers' (ancestors') *households*.

³Then Solomon and all the assembly went to the high place at Gibeon [to offer sacrifices, where the Canaanites had habitually worshiped], for God's Tent of Meeting was there, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness.

⁴But David had brought up the ark of God from Kiriath-jearim to the place he had prepared for it, because he had pitched a tent for it in Jerusalem.

⁵Now the bronze altar, which Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, had made was there before the tabernacle of the LORD, and Solomon and the assembly sought it out.

⁶And Solomon went up to the bronze altar before the LORD at the Tent of Meeting, and offered a thousand burnt offerings

on it.

⁷That night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, “Ask what I shall give to you.”

⁸Then Solomon said to God, “You have shown great lovingkindness *and* mercy to my father David, and have made me king in his place.

⁹“Now, O LORD God, Your promise to my father David is fulfilled, for You have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth.

¹⁰“Give me wisdom and knowledge, so that I may go out and come in [performing my duties] before this people, for [otherwise] who can rule *and* administer justice to this great people of Yours?”

¹¹God replied to Solomon, “Because this was in your heart and you did not ask for riches, possessions or honor *and* personal glory, or the life of those who hate you, nor have you even asked for long life, but you have asked for wisdom and knowledge for yourself so that you may rule *and* administer justice to My people over whom I have made you king,

¹²wisdom and knowledge have been granted you. I will also give you riches, possessions, and honor, such as none of the kings who were before you has possessed nor will those who will come after you.”

¹³So Solomon went from the high place at Gibeon, from the Tent of Meeting, to Jerusalem. And he reigned over Israel.

¹⁴Solomon acquired chariots and horsemen; he had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, and he stationed them in the cities [suited for the use] of chariots and with the king at Jerusalem.

¹⁵The king made silver and gold as plentiful *and* common in Jerusalem as stones, and he made cedar as plentiful as the sycamore-fig trees in the lowland.

¹⁶Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and from Kue. The king's merchants purchased them [in large numbers] from Kue at a price.

POWERPOINT

Prayer is the blueprint for a successful life. Consider Solomon's prayer for wisdom and knowledge that he might rule well and administer justice as king (see 2 Chr. 1:10). We can pray with the same humble attitude. Don't complicate your communication with God. Believe in Him and ask Him for what you need through simple, confident prayer.



¹⁷And they imported chariots from Egypt for 600 *shekels* of silver apiece, and horses for 150 apiece; and in the same way they exported horses to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Arameans (Syrians).

2 NOW SOLOMON decided to build a house (temple) for the Name of the LORD, and a royal palace for himself.

²So Solomon assigned 70,000 men to carry loads, 80,000 men to quarry stone in the mountains, and 3,600 to supervise them.

³Then Solomon sent *word* to Hiram king of Tyre, saying, “As you dealt with my father David and sent him cedars to build himself a house in which to live, [please] do the same for me.

⁴“Observe, I am about to build a house for the Name of the LORD my God, dedicated to Him, to burn fragrant incense [of sweet spices] before Him, to set out the showbread continually, and to offer burnt offerings morning and evening, on Sabbaths, New Moons, and on the festivals of the LORD our God, as *ordained* forever in Israel.

⁵“The house I am going to build will be great, for our God is greater than all the gods.

⁶“But who is able to build a house for Him, since the heavens and [even] the highest heavens cannot contain Him? Who am I to build a house for Him, except [as a place] to burn *incense* before Him?

⁷“Now send me a man who is skilled to work in gold, silver, bronze, and iron, and in purple, crimson, and blue *fabrics*, and who knows how to make engravings, *to work* with the skilled men who are with me in Judah and Jerusalem, whom my father David provided.

⁸“Send me also cedar, cypress, and algum timber, for I know that your servants know how to cut timber in Lebanon. And indeed my servants *will work* with your servants

⁹to prepare for me an abundance of timber, because the house I am about to build will be great and wonderful.

¹⁰“And I will give to your servants who cut timber, 20,000 measures of crushed wheat and 20,000 measures of barley, and 20,000 baths of wine and 20,000 baths of [olive] oil.”

¹¹Then Hiram, king of Tyre replied in a letter sent to Solomon: “Because the LORD loves His people, He has made you king over them.”

POWERPOINT

In 2 Chronicles 2:12–14, a man named Hiram-abi had a clear sense of what he could do well and what he was supposed to do to help “build a house for the LORD and a royal palace” for Solomon. If you wonder about what you’re supposed to do with your life or what God’s calling is on your life, God will help you discover your purpose through the natural skills and unique talents He has given you. If you are unsure about what they are, simply do what you are good at doing and watch God confirm it by blessing your endeavors. Then be diligent to continue developing your skills.



¹²Hiram said also, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who made heaven and earth, who has given King David a wise son, endowed with discretion and understanding, who will build a house for the LORD and a royal palace for himself.

¹³“Now I am sending a skilled man, endowed with understanding, Hiram-abi,

¹⁴the son of a Danite woman and a Tyrian father. He is trained to work in gold, silver, bronze, iron, stone, and wood; in purple, blue, and crimson fabrics, and in fine linen. He is able to make any kind of engraving and to carry out any design given him. *He will work* with your skilled men and those of my lord, David your father.

¹⁵“Now then, let my lord send to his servants the wheat, the barley, the oil, and the wine of which he has spoken.

¹⁶“We will cut whatever timber you need from Lebanon and bring it to you on rafts by sea to Joppa, so that you may take it up to Jerusalem.”

¹⁷Then Solomon took a count of all the aliens in the land of Israel, like the census that his father David had taken; and they were found to be 153,600.

¹⁸He assigned 70,000 of them to carry loads and 80,000 to quarry stone in the mountain, and 3,600 as overseers to make the people work.

3 THEN SOLOMON began to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD appeared to his father David, in the place that David had prepared, on the threshing floor of Oman the Jebusite. [1 Chr 21:20–22]

²Solomon began to build on the second day of the second month in the fourth year of his reign.

³Now this is the [measurement of the] foundation which Solomon laid for the house of God: the length in cubits—by the old standard of measure—was sixty cubits (90 ft.), and the width was twenty cubits (30 ft.).

⁴The porch in front of the house was as long as the width of the house, twenty cubits, and the height was 120 cubits. He overlaid it inside with pure gold.

⁵He overlaid the main room [the Holy Place] with cypress wood and overlaid it with fine gold, and decorated it with palm trees and chains.

⁶And he adorned the house with precious stones; and the gold was gold from Parvaim.

⁷He also overlaid the house [the Holy Place] with gold—the beams, the thresholds, and its walls and its doors; and he carved cherubim on the walls.

⁸Now he made the room of the Holy of Holies: its length equaling the width of the house was twenty cubits, and its width was twenty cubits; and he overlaid it with 600 talents of fine gold.

⁹The weight of the nails was fifty shekels of gold. He also overlaid the upper rooms with gold.

¹⁰And in the Holy of Holies he made two sculptured cherubim, and overlaid them with gold.

¹¹The wingspan of the cherubim was twenty cubits: one wing of one cherub was five cubits, reaching to the wall of the house, and its other wing, of five cubits, touched the other cherub's wing.

¹²The wing of the other cherub, of five cubits, touched the wall of the house; and its other wing of five cubits touched the wing of the first cherub.

¹³The wings of these cherubim extended twenty cubits. The cherubim stood on their feet, their faces toward the Holy Place (the main room).

¹⁴He made the veil [between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies] of blue, purple, and crimson colors, and fine linen, and embroidered cherubim on it.

¹⁵He also made two pillars for the front of the house, thirty-five cubits high, and the capital on the top of each one was five cubits.

¹⁶He made chains [like a necklace] in the inner sanctuary and put them on the tops of the pillars; and he made a hundred pomegranates and put them on the chains.

¹⁷He erected the pillars in front of the temple, one on the right, the other on the left, and named the one on the right Jachin (may He establish) and the one on the left Boaz (in Him is strength).

4 THEN SOLOMON made an altar of bronze, twenty cubits in length, twenty cubits in width, and ten cubits in height.

²He also made the Sea [that is, the large basin used for ceremonial washing] of cast metal, ten cubits from brim to brim, circular in form, and five cubits in height, and its circumference was thirty cubits.

³Under it and entirely encircling it were figures of oxen, ten to a cubit. The oxen were in two rows, cast in one piece.

⁴It stood on twelve oxen, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, three facing east; and the Sea was set on top of them and all their hindquarters turned inward.

⁵It was a handbreadth (the width of the four fingers) thick; its brim was made like the brim of a cup, like a lily blossom. It could hold 3,000 baths (measures).

⁶He also made ten [portable] basins in which to wash, and he put five on the right (south) side and five on the left (north). They would rinse things for the burnt offering in them, but the Sea was for the priests to wash in.

⁷And he made ten golden lampstands just as directed and set them in the temple, five on the right side and five on the left.

⁸He made also ten tables and placed them in the temple, five on the right side and five on the left side, and he made a hundred [ceremonial] basins of gold.

⁹Moreover, he made the courtyard of the priests, and the great courtyard [for the people] and doors for the courtyard, and he overlaid their doors with bronze.

¹⁰He set the Sea on the right side at the southeast corner [of the house].

¹¹And Hiram also made the pails [for ashes], the shovels, and the basins. So Hiram finished the work that he did for King Solomon in the house of God:

¹²the two pillars, the bowls, the capitals on top of the two pillars, and the two lattice works to cover the two bowls of the capitals which were on top of the pillars,

¹³and the four hundred pomegranates for the two lattice works, two rows of pomegranates for each lattice to cover the

two bowls of the capitals on the pillars.

¹⁴He also made the stands and he made the basins on the stands;

¹⁵and the one Sea with the twelve oxen under it.

¹⁶The pails, the shovels, and the meat-forks, and all the utensils Hiram-abi made of polished bronze for King Solomon for the house of the LORD.

¹⁷The king cast them on the plain of the Jordan, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zeredah.

¹⁸Solomon made all these utensils in such great quantity that the weight of the bronze could not be determined.

¹⁹Solomon also made all the articles that were in the house of God: the golden altar, and the tables for the bread of the Presence (showbread),

²⁰and the lampstands with their lamps of pure gold, to burn in front of the inner sanctuary (the Holy of Holies) as directed;

²¹the flowers, the lamps, and the tongs of gold, of purest gold;?

²²and the snuffers, the basins, the dishes [for incense], and the firepans, of pure gold; and for the entrance of the house (temple), the inner doors for the Holy of Holies and the doors of the Holy Place (main room), were of gold.

5 THUS ALL the work that Solomon did for the house of the LORD was finished. He brought in the things that his father David had dedicated, and he put the silver and the gold and all the utensils in the treasuries of the house of God.

²Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the fathers' *households* of the Israelites, in Jerusalem to bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD up from the City of David, which is Zion.

³All the men of Israel gathered before the king at the feast in the seventh month.

⁴And all the elders of Israel came, and the Levites took up the ark.

⁵The Levitical priests brought up the ark, the Tent of Meeting, and all the holy utensils that were in the Tent.

⁶And King Solomon and all the assembly of Israel who gathered together with him before the ark were sacrificing so many sheep and oxen that they could not be counted or numbered.

⁷Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, to the inner sanctuary of the house, into the Holy of Holies, under the wings of the cherubim;

⁸for the cherubim spread out their wings over the place of the ark, making a covering above the ark and its carrying poles.

⁹The poles were so long that the ends of the poles of the ark were visible from the front of the Holy of Holies (inner sanctuary), but were not visible from the outside. They are there to this day.

¹⁰There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets [of the Ten Commandments] which Moses put there at Mount Horeb, when the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites, when they came out of Egypt. [Ex 31:18]

¹¹When the priests came out of the Holy Place (for all the priests who were present had sanctified themselves [separating

themselves from everything unclean], without regard to their assigned divisions),

¹²and all of the Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, with their sons and relatives, clothed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps, and lyres were standing at the east end of the altar, and with them a hundred and twenty priests blowing trumpets

¹³in unison when the trumpeters and singers were to make themselves heard with one voice praising and thanking the LORD, and when they raised their voices accompanied by the trumpets and cymbals and [other] instruments of music, and when they praised the LORD, *saying*, “For *He* is good, for His mercy *and* lovingkindness endure forever,” then the house of the LORD was filled with a cloud,

POWERPOINT

In 2 Chronicles 5:14, the glory of God so filled the house of God that the priests could not stand. Today, believers in Jesus Christ are God's temple (see 1 Cor. 6:19). God wants to display His power and glory in us and through us—our actions and words—so that others will look at us and say, “Wow, what a great God you serve!” His goodness will be visibly evident in us.



¹⁴so that the priests could not remain standing to minister because of the cloud; for the glory *and* brilliance of the LORD filled the house of God.

6 THEN SOLOMON said,

“The LORD has said that He would dwell in the thick cloud.

²“I have built You a lofty house,
A place for You to dwell forever.”

³Then the king turned around and blessed the entire assembly of Israel, while they were all standing.

⁴And he said, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who spoke with His mouth to my father David and has fulfilled with His hands *what He promised*, saying,

⁵“Since the day that I brought My people out of the land of Egypt, I did not choose a city among all the tribes of Israel *in which* to build a house so that My Name (Presence) might be there, nor did I choose any man to be a leader over My people Israel;

⁶but I have chosen Jerusalem that My Name might be there, and I have chosen David to be over My people Israel.’

⁷“Now it was in the heart of my father David to build a house for the Name of the LORD, the God of Israel.

⁸“But the LORD said to my father David, ‘Because it was in your heart to build a house for My Name, you did well that it was in your heart.

⁹‘Nevertheless you shall not build the house, but your son who will be born to you, he shall build the house for My Name.’

¹⁰“Now the LORD has fulfilled His word which He spoke; for I have risen in place of my father David and I sit on the throne of Israel, just as the LORD promised, and have built the house for the Name of the LORD, the God of Israel.

¹¹“There I have placed the ark [the symbol of His Presence] in which is the covenant of the LORD [the Ten Commandments],

which He made with the people (descendants) of Israel.”

¹²Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of the entire assembly of Israel and spread out his hands.

¹³For Solomon had made a bronze platform, five cubits square and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the courtyard; and he stood on it, and he knelt down on his knees in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven,

¹⁴and he said, “O LORD, God of Israel, there is no god like You in heaven or on the earth, keeping covenant and *showing* mercy *and* lovingkindness to Your servants who walk before You [in obedience] with all their heart,

¹⁵[You] who have kept Your promise to Your servant David, my father, that which You told him; You have spoken with Your mouth and have fulfilled it with Your hand, as it is today.

¹⁶“Now therefore, O LORD, the God of Israel, keep with Your servant David, my father, that which You promised him, saying, ‘You shall not fail to have a man to sit on the throne of Israel, provided your sons are careful to walk in My law as you, [David,] have walked before Me.’

¹⁷“Now then, O LORD, the God of Israel, let Your word which You have spoken to Your servant David be confirmed (verified).

¹⁸“But will God actually dwell with mankind on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You; how much less this house which I have built!

¹⁹“Yet have regard for the prayer of Your servant and for his supplication, O LORD my God, to listen to the cry and to the

prayer which Your servant prays before You,

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Lord, I ask that You would have regard for my prayers and supplications, that Your eyes may be open toward me day and night, to listen to my prayers.

• adapted from 2 Chronicles 6:19–
20

²⁰that Your eyes may be open toward this house day and night, toward the place in which You have said that *You would* put Your Name (Presence), to listen to the prayer which Your servant shall pray toward this place.

²¹“So listen to the requests of Your servant and Your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from Your dwelling place, from heaven; and *when You* hear, forgive.

²²“If a man sins against his neighbor, and he is required to

take an oath, and he comes and takes the oath before Your altar in this house,

²³then hear from heaven and act and judge Your servants, punishing the wicked by bringing his conduct on his own head, and providing justice to the righteous by giving to him in accordance with his righteousness (innocence).

²⁴“If Your people Israel have been defeated by an enemy because they have sinned against You, and they return *to You* and confess Your name, and pray and make supplication before You in this house,

²⁵then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of Your people Israel, and bring them again to the land which You gave to them and to their fathers.

²⁶“When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because Your people have sinned against You, and they pray toward this place and confess Your name, and turn from their sin when You afflict *and* humble them;

²⁷then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of Your servants and Your people Israel, indeed, teach them the good way in which they should walk. And send rain on Your land which You have given to Your people as an inheritance.

²⁸“If there is famine in the land, if there is pestilence, if there is blight or mildew, if there are [migratory] locusts or grasshoppers, if their enemies besiege them in the land of their cities, whatever plague or whatever sickness *there is*,

²⁹then whatever prayer or request is made by any man or all of Your people Israel, each knowing his own suffering and his own pain, and stretching out his hands toward this house,

³⁰then hear from heaven, Your dwelling place, and forgive,

and render to each in accordance with all his ways, whose heart You know; for You alone know the hearts of the sons of men,

³¹so that they may fear You, to walk in Your ways [in obedience to You] as long as they live in the land which You have given to our fathers.

³²“Also in regard to the foreigner who is not from Your people Israel, but has come from a far country for the sake of Your great name and Your mighty power and Your outstretched arm—when they come and pray toward this house,

³³then hear from heaven, from Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, so that all the peoples of the earth may know Your name, and fear You [reverently and worshipfully], as *do* Your people Israel, and that they may know that this house which I have built is called by Your Name.

³⁴“When Your people go out to war against their enemies, by the way that You send them, and they pray to You facing this city [Jerusalem] which You have chosen and the house which I have built for Your Name,

³⁵then hear from heaven their prayer and their request, and maintain their cause *and* do justice.

³⁶“When they sin against You (for there is no man who does not sin) and You are angry with them and hand them over to an enemy, so that they take them away captive to a land far away or near,

³⁷if they take it to heart in the land where they have been taken captive, and repent and pray to You in the land of their captivity, saying, ‘We have sinned, we have done wrong and

have acted wickedly’;

³⁸if they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, and pray facing their land which You have given to their fathers and toward the city which You have chosen, and toward the house which I have built for Your Name;

³⁹then hear from heaven, from Your dwelling place, their prayer and requests, and maintain their cause *and* do justice and forgive Your people who have sinned against You.

⁴⁰“Now, O my God, I pray, let Your eyes be open and Your ears attentive to the prayer *offered* in this place.

⁴¹“Now then arise, O LORD God, [and come] to Your resting place, You and the ark of Your strength *and* power. Let Your priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation and let Your godly ones rejoice in [Your] goodness.

⁴²“O LORD God, do not turn away *and* reject the face of Your anointed; remember *Your* lovingkindness *and* faithfulness to Your servant David.”

7 WHEN SOLOMON had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the [Shekinah] glory *and* brilliance of the LORD filled the house. [Lev 9:24]

²The priests could not enter the house of the LORD because the glory *and* brilliance of the LORD had filled the LORD’s house.

³When all the people of Israel saw how the fire came down and *saw* the glory *and* brilliance of the LORD upon the house,

they bowed down on the stone pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and praised the LORD, *saying*, “For He is good, for His mercy *and* lovingkindness endure forever.”

⁴Then the king and all the people offered a sacrifice before the LORD.

⁵King Solomon offered a sacrifice of 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. In this way the king and all the people dedicated God’s house.

⁶The priests stood at their posts [ready for service], and the Levites also, with the musical instruments of the LORD which King David had made to praise the LORD, *saying*, “For His lovingkindness *and* mercy endure forever,” whenever David offered praise through their ministry. The priests were opposite the Levites blowing the trumpets and all Israel was standing.

⁷Moreover, Solomon consecrated the middle of the courtyard that was in front of the house of the LORD, for it was there that he offered burnt offerings and the fat of the peace offerings because the bronze altar which he had made was not sufficient to hold the burnt offerings, the grain offerings, and the fat [all together].

⁸At that time Solomon observed the feast for seven days, and all Israel with him, a very large assembly, from the entrance of Hamath to the Brook of Egypt.

⁹On the eighth day they held a celebration, for they had observed the dedication of the altar for seven days, and the feast for seven days.

¹⁰And on the twenty-third day of the seventh month

Solomon sent the people to their tents, rejoicing and happy in heart because of the goodness that the LORD had shown to David, to Solomon, and to His people Israel.

¹¹And so Solomon finished the house (temple) of the LORD and the palace of the king. He successfully accomplished all that he had planned to do in the house of the LORD and in his palace.

¹²Then the LORD appeared to Solomon by night and said to him: “I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice.

¹³“If I shut up the heavens so that no rain falls, or if I command locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence *and* plague among My people,

¹⁴and My people, who are called by My Name, humble themselves, and pray and seek (crave, require as a necessity) My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear [them] from heaven, and forgive their sin and heal their land.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that when I
humble myself, and pray and*

*seek Your face and turn from
my wicked ways, You will
hear me from heaven, and
forgive my sin and heal me.*

• adapted from 2 Chronicles 7:14

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Humble Yourself and Cast Your Care

After Solomon concluded the dedication of the temple, the glory of the Lord filled the house and God spoke to him the remarkable promise: “If... My people, who are called by My Name, humble themselves, and pray and seek (crave, require as a necessity) My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear [them] from heaven, and forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chr. 7:13–14).

It is important that we learn to humble ourselves, to do as Peter says, “[set aside self-righteous pride],... casting all your cares [all your anxieties, all your worries, and all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares about you” (1 Pet. 5:6–7). The word *casting* refers to throwing, hurling, sending, striking, thrusting, driving out, or expelling—all rather forceful terms. It seems to be difficult for some of us to believe that God considers worry or care a sin, but He does.

It took a long time for me to be set totally free from the

burden of guilt and condemnation. I knew mentally and spiritually that I had been made the righteousness of God in Christ because of what He had done for me on Calvary, and I confessed scriptures, but the enemy kept attacking my mind, making me feel guilty and condemned about my past. I was doing my best to keep my mind set on all that Jesus had sacrificed for me, but I had not experienced complete victory.

I fought against those thoughts for years until one day there arose in me a holy anger that finally set me free from the enemy's attempt to keep me from enjoying all the blessings God intended for me. Too often, we get mad at other people when our anger should be directed to the source of the problem—the devil and his demons. Give the devil notice that you are not going to spend your time worrying, and that you will not believe his lies!

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Dear Lord Jesus, I thank You that even before the problems come, You have told me how to defeat the enemy of my mind. In Your name, Lord Jesus, teach me to humble myself and to cast all my cares and concerns on You. Amen.

¹⁵“Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer *offered* in this place.

¹⁶“For now I have chosen and sanctified *and* set apart for My purpose this house that My Name may be here forever, and My eyes and My heart will be here perpetually.

¹⁷“As for you [Solomon], if you will walk before me as your father David walked, and do everything that I have commanded you, and observe My statutes and My ordinances, [1 Kin 11:1–11]

¹⁸then I will establish your royal throne just as I covenanted with your father David, saying, ‘You will not fail to have a man as ruler in Israel.’

¹⁹“But if you [people] turn away and abandon My statutes and My commandments which I have set before you, and you go and serve other gods and worship them,

²⁰then I will uproot Israel from My land which I have given them; and I will cast this house, which I have consecrated for My Name, out of My sight, and will make it a proverb and an object of scorn among all nations. [Jer 24:9, 10]

²¹“And as for this house, which was so exalted, everyone who passes by it will be astonished *and* appalled and say, ‘Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?’

²²“Then people will say, ‘It is because they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and they adopted other gods, and worshiped them and served them; therefore He has brought all this adversity *and* evil on them.’”

8 NOW IT came about at the end of the twenty years, in which Solomon had built the house of the LORD and his own house (palace),

²that he built *and* fortified the cities which Hiram (Hiram) had given to him, and settled the Israelites there.

³Then Solomon went to Hamath-zobah and captured it.

⁴He built Tadmor in the wilderness, and all his storage cities in Hamath.

⁵He also built upper Beth-horon and lower Beth-horon, fortified cities with walls, gates, and bars [to lock the gates];

⁶and Baalath and all the storage cities that Solomon had, and all the cities for his chariots and the cities for his horsemen, and all that Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land under his rule.

⁷All the people who were left of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, who were not of Israel,

⁸*but were* descendants of those who were left in the land, whom the Israelites had not destroyed—Solomon brought them up as forced laborers to this day.

⁹But Solomon did not make slaves of the Israelites for his work; they were men of war, his chief captains, and commanders of his chariots and his horsemen.

¹⁰These were the chief officers of King Solomon, two hundred and fifty [in authority] who ruled over the people.

¹¹Then Solomon brought the daughter of Pharaoh up from the City of David into the house (palace) he had built for her, for he said, “My wife shall not live in the house of David king

of Israel, because the places where the ark of the LORD has entered are holy.”

¹²Then Solomon offered burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of the LORD which he had built in front of the porch [of the temple],

¹³a certain number every day, offering them up as Moses commanded for the Sabbaths, the New Moons, and the three annual feasts—the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles).

¹⁴Now in accordance with the ordinance of his father David, he appointed the divisions of the priests for their service, and the Levites for their duties of praise and ministering *and* serving before the priests as every day required, and the gatekeepers by their divisions at every gate; for David the man of God had so commanded.

¹⁵And they did not deviate from the commandment of the king to the priests and Levites in any respect or in regard to the storehouses *or* treasuries.

¹⁶Thus all the work of Solomon was carried out from the day the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid until it was finished. So the house of the LORD was completed.

¹⁷Then Solomon went to Ezion-geber and to Eloth on the shore of the [Red] Sea in the land of Edom.

¹⁸And Hiram (Hiram) sent him, by his servants, ships and servants familiar with the sea; and they went with Solomon’s servants to Ophir, and took from there four hundred and fifty talents of gold, and brought them to King Solomon.

9 WHEN THE queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to Jerusalem to test Solomon with riddles. She was accompanied by a very large number of attendants, with camels bearing spices (balsam oil) and a large amount of gold and precious stones. And when she came to Solomon, she talked with him about all that was on her mind.

²Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was hidden from him which he did not make clear to her.

³So when the queen of Sheba saw the [depth of] Solomon's wisdom, and the house which he had built,

⁴and the food of his table, the [vast] seating order of his officials, the attendance *and* service of his ministers and their attire, his cupbearers and their attire, and his stairway by which he went up to the house of the LORD, she was breathless.

⁵She said to the king, "The report which I heard in my own land regarding your [accomplishments and your] words and your wisdom was true,

⁶but I did not believe the reports until I came and saw it with my own eyes. Behold, the half of the greatness of your wisdom was not told to me; you have surpassed the report that I heard.

⁷"Blessed *and* fortunate are your people, how blessed *and* fortunate are these servants of yours who stand before you continually and hear your wisdom!

⁸"Blessed be the LORD your God, who delighted in you, setting you on His throne as king for the LORD your God; because your God loved Israel, establishing them forever, therefore He made you king over them, to do justice and

righteousness.”

⁹Then she gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold, a very large *amount of* spices (balsam oil) and precious stones; there was no such spice [anywhere] like that which the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.

¹⁰The servants of Hiram and those of Solomon, who brought gold from Ophir, also brought almug trees and precious stones.

¹¹From the almug timber the king made stairways for the house of the LORD and for the king’s palace, and lyres and harps for the singers; none like that was seen before in the land of Judah.

¹²King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all [the things] she desired, whatever she asked, besides *a return for* what she had brought to the king. So she returned to her own land with her servants.

¹³Now the weight of gold which came to Solomon in one year was 666 talents,

¹⁴besides what the traders and merchants brought; and all the kings of Arabia and the governors of the country brought gold and silver to Solomon.

¹⁵King Solomon made two hundred large shields of beaten gold, using six hundred *shekels of* beaten gold on each large shield.

¹⁶And *he made* three hundred [smaller] shields of beaten gold, using three hundred shekels of gold on each shield; and the king put them in the house of the Forest of Lebanon.

¹⁷Moreover, the king made a great throne of ivory and overlaid it with pure gold.

¹⁸*There were* six steps to the throne and a golden footstool attached to the throne, and arms on each side of the seat, with two lions standing beside the arms.

¹⁹Also, twelve lions were standing there, one on each side of the six steps. Nothing like it had ever been made for any [other] kingdom.

²⁰All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; silver was not considered valuable in the days of Solomon.

POWERPOINT

Although Solomon's riches were beyond those of all the kings of the earth, the kings of other nations did not come to him for riches but to listen to the wisdom God had given him.

Always remember that obtaining God-given wisdom is far more valuable than wealth.



²¹For the king's ships went to Tarshish with the servants of Hiram; once every three years the ships of Tarshish came bringing gold and silver, ivory and apes and peacocks.

²²So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in wealth and wisdom.

²³And all the kings of the earth were seeking the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put into his heart.

²⁴Each man brought his gift, articles of silver and gold, garments, weapons, spices, horses and mules, so much year by year.

²⁵Now Solomon had 4,000 stalls for horses and chariots, and 12,000 horsemen, and he stationed them in the chariot cities or with the king at Jerusalem. [Deut 17:16, 17]

²⁶He ruled over all the kings from the Euphrates River to the land of the Philistines, and as far as the border of Egypt.

²⁷The king made silver in Jerusalem *as common* as stones, and cedar wood as plentiful as the sycamore-fig trees that are in the lowland.

²⁸And they were importing horses for Solomon from Egypt and from all [the other] countries.

²⁹Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, from the first to the last, are they not written in the records of Nathan the prophet, and in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of Iddo the seer concerning Jeroboam the son of Nebat?

³⁰Solomon reigned forty years in Jerusalem over all Israel.

³¹And Solomon slept with his fathers [in death]; he was buried in the city of his father David. Rehoboam his son reigned in his place.

10 THEN REHOBOAM went to Shechem, because all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king.

²When Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard *about the new king* (for he was in Egypt, where he had fled from the presence of King Solomon), Jeroboam returned from Egypt. [1 Kin 11:26–40]

³And the people sent *messengers* and summoned him. So when Jeroboam and all Israel came, they spoke to Rehoboam, saying,

⁴“Your father [King Solomon] made our yoke hard (heavy, difficult); so now lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you.”

⁵Rehoboam replied, “Come back to me again in three days.” So the people departed.

⁶Then King Rehoboam consulted with the elders who had served his father Solomon [as advisers] while he was alive, asking, “What advice do you give me in answer to these people?”

⁷They answered him, saying, “If you are kind to these people and please them and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever.”

⁸But the king rejected the advice which the elders gave him, and consulted with the young men who grew up with him and served him [as advisers].

⁹He asked them, “What advice do you give to us regarding the answer to these people, who have spoken to me, saying, ‘Lighten the yoke which your father put on us’?”

¹⁰The young men who grew up with him told him, “Tell the people who said to you, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, but you make it lighter for us’: ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s loins!’

¹¹‘Now my father loaded you with a heavy yoke, but I will add [more weight] to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I *will discipline you* with scorpions (extremely painful scourges).’”

¹²So on the third day Jeroboam and all the people returned to Rehoboam just as the king had directed, saying, “Return to me on the third day.”

¹³The king answered them harshly, for King Rehoboam rejected the counsel of the elders.

¹⁴He spoke to them in accordance with the advice of the young men, saying, “My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to it; my father disciplined you with whips, but I *will discipline you* with scorpions.”

¹⁵So the king did not listen to the people, for the turn of events was from God that the LORD might fulfill His word, which He had spoken through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat. [1 Kin 11:29–39]

¹⁶When all Israel saw that the king did not listen *and* pay attention to them, the people answered him,

“What portion do we have in David?

We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse.

Every man to your tents, O Israel;

Now, [Rehoboam, descendant of] David, see to your own house.”

So all Israel went to their tents.

¹⁷But as for the Israelites who lived in Judah’s cities, Rehoboam ruled over them.

¹⁸Then King Rehoboam sent Hadoram, who was over the forced labor, and the Israelites stoned him and he died. And King Rehoboam hurried to mount his [royal] chariot to escape to Jerusalem.

¹⁹And Israel has rebelled against the house of David to this day.

11 NOW WHEN Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he assembled the house of Judah and Benjamin, 180,000 chosen warriors to fight against [the ten tribes of] Israel to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam.

²But the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying,

³“Say to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin,

⁴“Thus says the LORD: “You shall not go up nor fight against your brothers (countrymen); return, every man to his house, for this thing is from Me.”” And they listened to *and* obeyed the words of the LORD and turned back from going against Jeroboam.

⁵Rehoboam lived in Jerusalem and built [fortified] cities for defense in Judah.

⁶He built Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa,

⁷Beth-zur, Soco, Adullam,

⁸Gath, Mareshah, Ziph,

⁹Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah,

¹⁰Zorah, Aijalon, and Hebron, which are fortified cities in Judah and Benjamin.

¹¹He strengthened the fortresses and put officers in them, with supplies of food, [olive] oil, and wine.

¹²And in each city he put [large] shields and spears, and made them very strong. So he held Judah and Benjamin.

¹³Further, the priests and the Levites who were in all Israel took their stand with Rehoboam from all their districts.

¹⁴For the Levites left their pasture lands and their property and came to Judah and Jerusalem, because Jeroboam and his sons had excluded them from serving as priests to the LORD.

¹⁵Jeroboam appointed his own priests for the high places, for the satyrs (goat demons) and calves (idols) which he had made. [1 Kin 12:28]

¹⁶Those from all the tribes of Israel who set their hearts on seeking the LORD God of Israel followed them to Jerusalem, to sacrifice to the LORD God of their fathers.

¹⁷So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah and supported Rehoboam the son of Solomon for three years; for they walked in the way of David and Solomon for three years.

¹⁸Rehoboam took as his wife Mahalath, the daughter of Jerimoth the son of David, and of Abihail the daughter of Eliab the son of Jesse.

¹⁹She bore him sons: Jeush, Shemariah, and Zaham.

²⁰After her he took Maacah the daughter (granddaughter) of Absalom, and she bore him Abijah, Attai, Ziza, and Shelomith.

²¹Rehoboam loved Maacah the daughter (granddaughter) of Absalom more than all his wives and concubines—for he had taken eighteen wives and sixty concubines, and he fathered twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters.

²²Rehoboam appointed Abijah the son of Maacah the chief leader among his brothers, because he *intended* to make him king.

²³He acted wisely and distributed some of his sons throughout the territories of Judah and Benjamin to all the fortified cities. He gave them abundant provisions, and he

sought many wives *for them*.

12 WHEN THE kingdom of Rehoboam was established and strong, he and all Israel with him abandoned the law of the LORD.

²And it came about in King Rehoboam's fifth year, because they had been unfaithful to the LORD, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem

³with 1,200 chariots and 60,000 horsemen. The people who came with him from Egypt were beyond counting—the Lubim, the Sukkiim, and the Ethiopians.

⁴Shishak took the fortified cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusalem.

⁵Then Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and the leaders of Judah who had gathered at Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said to them, "Thus says the LORD: 'You have abandoned (turned away from) Me, so I have abandoned you into the hands of Shishak.'"

⁶Then the leaders of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, "The LORD is righteous."

⁷When the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, saying, "They have humbled themselves so I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some *measure* of a remnant [that escapes]; and My wrath shall not be poured out on Jerusalem by means of Shishak.

⁸"Nevertheless they will become his slaves, so that they may know [the difference between] My service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries."

⁹So Shishak king of Egypt went up against Jerusalem; he took the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house (palace). He took everything. He even took the shields of gold which Solomon had made.

¹⁰In their place King Rehoboam made shields of bronze and entrusted them to the care of the officers of the guard who guarded the door of the king's house.

¹¹And whenever the king entered the house of the LORD, the guards came and carried the shields and *then* brought them back into the guards' room.

¹²When Rehoboam humbled himself, the wrath of the LORD turned away from him, so as not to destroy him completely; and also conditions were good in Judah.

¹³So King Rehoboam established himself in Jerusalem and reigned. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city in which the LORD had chosen from all the tribes of Israel to put His Name. And his mother was Naamah the Ammonitess.

¹⁴He did evil because he did not set his heart to seek *and* worship *and* honor the LORD.

¹⁵Now the acts of Rehoboam, from the first to the last, are they not written in the records of Shemaiah the prophet and of Iddo the seer, according to genealogical enrollment? *There were* wars between Rehoboam [of Judah] and Jeroboam [of Israel] continually.

¹⁶And Rehoboam slept with his fathers [in death] and was buried in the City of David; and Abijah his son became king in his place.

13 IN THE eighteenth year of King Jeroboam, Abijah became king over Judah.

²He reigned three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Micaiah the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah.

And there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam [of Israel].

³Abijah began the battle with an army of brave soldiers, 400,000 chosen men. Jeroboam drew up in battle formation against him with 800,000 chosen men, valiant men.

⁴Then Abijah stood on Mount Zemaraim, which is in the hill country of Ephraim, and said, "Listen to me, Jeroboam and all Israel:

⁵"Do you not know that the LORD God of Israel, gave rule over Israel forever to David and to his sons by a covenant of salt [a permanent pact, extending to each generation of Israel]? [Num 18:19]

⁶"Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, a servant of Solomon the son of David, rose up and rebelled against his lord [the king],

⁷and worthless (unprincipled, unethical) men gathered around him, useless *and* wicked men, who proved too strong for Rehoboam the son of Solomon when Rehoboam was young and timid, and could not assert himself against them.

⁸"And now you intend to assert yourselves against the kingdom of the LORD which is in the hands of the sons of David, since you are a great multitude and have with you the golden calves (idols) which Jeroboam made for you as gods.

⁹"Have you not driven out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron and the Levites, and made priests for

yourselves like the peoples of *other* lands? So whoever comes to consecrate himself with a young bull and seven rams, even he may become a priest of non-existent gods (idols).

¹⁰“But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not abandoned (turned away from) Him. The sons of Aaron are ministering to the LORD as priests, and the Levites attend to their service.

¹¹“Every morning and every evening they offer the burnt offerings and the fragrant incense to the LORD; and the showbread is set on the clean table [of pure gold], and the golden lampstand with its lamps is ready to light every evening; for we keep the charge of the LORD our God [that is, the obligation we have to Him], but you have abandoned (turned away from) Him.

¹²“Behold, God is with us at our head, and His priests [are here] with their signal trumpets to sound an alarm against you. O sons of Israel, do not fight against the LORD God of your fathers, for you cannot succeed.”

¹³But Jeroboam had set an ambush to come from the rear, so that Israel was in front of Judah and the ambush was behind them.

¹⁴When [the men of] Judah turned around, they were attacked from both front and rear; so they cried out to the LORD [for help], and the priests blew the trumpets.

¹⁵Then the men of Judah raised a war cry; and as they shouted, God struck Jeroboam and all Israel [with defeat] before Abijah and Judah.

¹⁶And the sons of Israel fled before Judah, and God handed over the sons of Israel to them.

¹⁷Abijah and his people inflicted on them a great defeat, so that 500,000 chosen men of Israel fell slain.

¹⁸Thus the sons of Israel were subdued (humbled) at that time, and the sons of Judah prevailed because they relied on the LORD, the God of their fathers.

¹⁹Abijah pursued Jeroboam and captured [several] cities from him: Bethel, Jeshanah, and Ephraim (Ephron), with their villages.

²⁰Jeroboam did not recover strength again during the time of [the reign of] Abijah. And the LORD struck him and he died.

²¹But Abijah became powerful. He took fourteen wives for himself and fathered twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters.

²²Now the rest of the acts of Abijah, and his ways and his sayings, are written in the writing of the prophet Iddo.

14 SO ABIJAH slept with his fathers [in death], and they buried him in the City of David; and Asa his son became king in his place. The land was at peace for ten years during his days.

²Asa did what was good and right in the sight of the LORD his God.

³He removed the foreign altars and high places and tore down the [pagan] pillars (obelisks, memorial stones), and cut to pieces the Asherim [the symbols of the goddess Asherah].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Replacing Worry with Trust

I wonder how many times the statement “I’m worried about...” is spoken each day. What is the point of it? Does worry change anything? No (see Matt. 6:25–34). So why keep worrying?

King Aza looked out upon an enemy army of a million men and, rather than panic, simply called out, “so help us, O LORD our God, for we trust in and rely on You, and in Your name we have come against this multitude” (2 Chr. 14:11). Then he saw the Lord utterly defeat their enemy.

Start listening to yourself, and each time you hear “I’m worried,” learn to say to yourself, Worry is useless, and I refuse to worry. You can replace those negative, useless words with “I trust God.” When you say you trust God, His power is released to work in your life. Study God’s Word, remember His faithfulness to you in past situations, and be determined to stop worrying.

⁴And he commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers [to inquire of and for Him and seek Him as a vital necessity], and to observe the law [given to Moses] and the commandment.

⁵Asa also removed the [idolatrous] high places and the incense altars from all the cities of Judah. The kingdom was at

rest *and* undisturbed under his reign.

⁶He built fortified cities in Judah, since the land was at rest, and there was no one at war with him in those years, because the LORD had given him rest.

⁷So he said to Judah, “Let us build these cities and surround them with walls, towers, gates and bars [to secure the doors]. The land is still ours because we have sought the LORD our God; we have sought Him [longing for Him with all our heart] and He has given us peace on every side.” So they built and prospered.

⁸Now Asa had an army of 300,000 men from Judah, who carried large shields and spears, and 280,000 from Benjamin, who carried shields and drew bows, all courageous men.

⁹Now Zerah the Ethiopian (Cushite) came out against Judah with an army of a million men and three hundred chariots, and he came as far as Mareshah.

¹⁰Then Asa went out against him, and they drew up in battle formation in the Valley of Zephathah at Mareshah.

¹¹Asa called out to the LORD his God, saying, “O LORD, there is no one besides You to help *in the battle* between the powerful and the weak; so help us, O LORD our God, for we trust in *and* rely on You, and in Your name we have come against this multitude. O LORD, You are our God; let not man prevail against You.”

¹²So the LORD struck the Ethiopians [with defeat] before Asa and Judah, and the Ethiopians fled.

¹³Asa and the people who were with him pursued them as far as Gerar; and so many Ethiopians fell that none of them *were found* alive; for they were destroyed before the LORD and

His army. And they carried away a very large amount of spoil.

¹⁴They attacked *and* destroyed all the cities around Gerar, for the dread of the LORD had fallen on them. They plundered all the cities, for there was a large amount of spoil in them.

¹⁵They also struck down the people [living] in tents who had livestock, and took captive large numbers of sheep and camels. Then they returned to Jerusalem.

15 NOW THE Spirit of God came on Azariah the son of Oded,

²and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, “Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: the LORD is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him [inquiring for and of Him, as your soul’s first necessity], He will let you find Him; but if you abandon (turn away from) Him, He will abandon (turn away from) you.

³“Now for a long time Israel was without the true God and without a teaching priest, and without [God’s] law.

⁴“But when they were in their trouble *and* distress they turned to the LORD God of Israel, and [in desperation earnestly] sought Him, and He let them find Him.

⁵“In those times there was no peace for him who went out or for him who came in, for great suffering came on all the inhabitants of the lands.

⁶“Nation was crushed by nation, and city by city, for God troubled them with every kind of distress.

⁷“But as for you, be strong and do not lose courage, for there is reward for your work.”

⁸And when Asa heard these words, the prophecy of Azariah the son of Oded the prophet, he took courage and removed the repulsive idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities which he had captured in the hill country of Ephraim. Then he restored the altar [of burnt offering] of the LORD which was in front of the porch [of the temple] of the LORD.

⁹He gathered all Judah and Benjamin and the strangers who were with them out of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon, for they came over to Asa from Israel in large numbers when they saw that the LORD his God was with him.

¹⁰So they assembled at Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of Asa's reign.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Is God Your First Priority?

King Asa was promised, “If you seek Him [inquiring for and of Him, as your soul’s first necessity], He will let you find Him” (2 Chr. 15:2). The best way to determine if God is first in your life is to slow down and ask yourself: What do I think about the most? When I have a problem, do I run to people, or take it to God? What do I do with my time?

You see, we always make time for what we really want to do—no matter how busy we are. If you want to spend time with God, you are going to make Him a priority.

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you any area of your life where your priorities may be out of line. Then make a change and seek a deeper relationship with Him. Ask for God’s help, because it is He Who gives you the ability to adjust your lifestyle and bring it in line with His Word (see 1 Thess. 5:23).

¹¹They sacrificed to the LORD on that day from the spoil they had brought—700 oxen and 7,000 sheep.

¹²They entered into a covenant (solemn agreement) to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and soul;

¹³and that whoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel, was to be put to death, whether young or old, man or woman.

¹⁴They swore an oath to the LORD with a loud voice, with

[jubilant] shouting, with trumpets, and with horns.

¹⁵All Judah rejoiced over the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart and had sought Him with their whole heart, and He let them find Him. So the LORD gave them rest on every side.

¹⁶He also removed Maacah, King Asa's mother, from *the position of* queen mother, because she had made a repulsive image for [the goddess] Asherah. Asa cut down her idol, crushed it, and burned it at the Brook Kidron.

¹⁷But the high places [of pagan worship] were not removed from Israel. Nevertheless Asa's heart was blameless all his days.

¹⁸He brought the things that his father [Abijah] had dedicated and those things that he had dedicated into the house of God—silver and gold and utensils.

¹⁹And there was no war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign.

16 IN THE thirty-sixth year of Asa's reign Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah and fortified Ramah in order to prevent *anyone* from going out or coming in to [meet with] Asa king of Judah.

²Then Asa brought out silver and gold from the treasuries of the house of the LORD and from the king's house, and sent them to Ben-hadad king of Aram (Syria), who lived in Damascus, saying,

³*“Let there be a treaty between you and me, as there was between my father and your father. Look, I am sending you*

silver and gold; go, break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel, so that he will withdraw from me.”

⁴Ben-hadad listened to King Asa and sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel; and they attacked *and* conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel-maim, and all the storage cities of Naphtali.

⁵When Baasha heard about it, he ceased fortifying Ramah and stopped his work.

⁶Then King Asa brought all Judah, and they carried away the stones of Ramah and its timber with which Baasha had been building, and with them he fortified Geba and Mizpah.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

A Heart That Is His

To have a heart that is “completely His” (2 Chr. 16:9) means to have a heartfelt desire to do right and to please God. People who have a heart that completely belongs to God are people who truly love Him, though they may not be perfect. They may still be dealing with issues of the flesh. Their mouths may still get them into trouble or they may still allow their emotions to rule their lives at times. They may still make mistakes or lose their tempers at times. But when they do, they are quick to repent and make things right with God again. If they have offended someone, they will humble themselves and apologize.

When God looks into our lives, He doesn't look for somebody with a perfect performance but who has a terrible heart attitude. He looks for someone who may not have a perfect performance but who has a right attitude toward Him. If we have a heart that is completely His, He counts us as perfect and works with us as we continue growing and moving toward that ultimate perfection.

⁷At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, “Because you relied on the king of Aram (Syria) and did not rely on the LORD your God, the army of the king of Aram (Syria) has escaped out of your hand.

⁸“Were not the Ethiopians and Lubim a huge army with a great number of chariots and horsemen? Yet because you relied on the LORD, He placed them in your hand.

⁹“For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth so that He may support those whose heart is completely His. You have acted foolishly in this; therefore, from now on you will have wars.”

¹⁰Then Asa was angry with the seer and put him in prison [in the stocks], for he was enraged with him because of this. And at the same time Asa oppressed some of the people.

¹¹Now the acts of Asa, from the first to the last, are written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel.

¹²In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa developed a disease in his feet. His disease was severe, yet even in his illness he did not seek the LORD, but [relied only on] the physicians.

¹³So Asa slept with his fathers [in death], dying in the forty-first year of his reign.

¹⁴They buried him in his own tomb which he had cut out for himself in the City of David, and they laid him on a bier which he had filled with various kinds of spices blended by the perfumers' art; and they made a very great fire in his honor.

17 JEHOSHAPHAT HIS son then became king [of Judah] in Asa's place, and strengthened his position over Israel.

²He placed troops in all the fortified cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah and in the cities of Ephraim which his father Asa had captured.

³The LORD was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the example of his father (ancestor) David. He did not seek [to follow] the Baals [the false gods],

⁴but sought the God of his father, and walked in (obeyed) His commandments, and did not act as Israel did.

⁵Therefore the LORD established the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought tribute to Jehoshaphat, and he had great wealth and honor.

⁶His heart was encouraged *and* he took great pride in the ways of the LORD; moreover, he again removed the high places [of pagan worship] and the Asherim from Judah.

⁷Then in the third year of his reign he sent his officials, Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah;

⁸and with them were the Levites—Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tobadonijah; and with them the priests Elishama and Jehoram.

⁹They taught in Judah *having* the Book of the Law of the LORD with them; they went throughout all the cities of Judah and taught among the people.

¹⁰Now the dread of the LORD was on all the kingdoms of the lands surrounding Judah, so that they did not make war against Jehoshaphat.

¹¹Some of the Philistines brought gifts and silver as tribute to Jehoshaphat; the Arabians also brought him flocks: 7,700 rams and 7,700 male goats.

¹²So Jehoshaphat became greater and greater. He built

fortresses and storage cities in Judah.

¹³He had large supplies in the cities of Judah, and soldiers, courageous men, in Jerusalem.

¹⁴This was the number of them by their fathers' (ancestors') households: of Judah, the commanders of thousands, Adnah the commander, and with him 300,000 courageous men;

¹⁵and next to him was Jehohanan the commander, and with him 280,000;

¹⁶and next to him Amasiah the son of Zichri, who volunteered for the LORD, and with him 200,000 courageous men;

¹⁷and of Benjamin: Eliada, a brave man, and with him 200,000 men armed with bow and shield;

¹⁸and next to him was Jehozabad, and with him 180,000 armed *and* ready for military service.

¹⁹These are the ones who were in the service of the king, besides those he had placed in fortified cities throughout Judah.

18 NOW JEHOSEPHAT had great wealth and honor, and was allied by marriage with Ahab.

²Some years later he went down to [visit] Ahab in Samaria. And Ahab slaughtered many sheep and oxen for him and the people who were with him, and induced him to go up against Ramoth-gilead.

³Ahab king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, "Will you go with me to [fight against] Ramoth-gilead?" He

answered, "I am as you are, and my people as your people [your hopes and concerns are ours]; *we will be* with you in the battle."

⁴Further, Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "Please inquire first for the word of the LORD."

⁵Then the king of Israel assembled the prophets, four hundred men, and said to them, "Shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I refrain?" And they said, "Go up, for God will hand it over to the king."

⁶But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there no prophet of the LORD still here by whom we may inquire?"

⁷The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "There is still one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD, but I hate him, for he never prophesies [anything] good for me, but always evil. He is Micaiah the son of Imla" And Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say so [perhaps this time it will be different]."

⁸Then the king of Israel called for an officer and said, "Bring Micaiah the son of Imla quickly."

⁹Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah were sitting, each on his throne, arrayed in their robes; they were sitting at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them.

¹⁰Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made horns of iron for himself; and said, "Thus says the LORD: 'With these you shall gore the Arameans (Syrians) until they are destroyed.'"

¹¹All the prophets prophesied this, saying, "Go up to Ramoth-gilead and succeed; the LORD will hand it over to the king."

¹²The messenger who went to call Micaiah said to him,

“Listen, the words of the prophets are of one accord, *foretelling a favorable outcome* for the king. So just let your word be like one of them and speak favorably.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Think and Speak on Purpose

The prophet Micaiah made this commitment: “As the LORD lives, I will [only] speak what my God says” (2 Chr. 18:13). It would be a good idea for all of us to make a similar commitment. We can start by purposefully thinking in agreement with the Word of God and speaking those thoughts out loud. You might start with one or more of these:

“This is the day the Lord has made; I will rejoice and be glad.”

“The words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart shall be acceptable to God.”

“I have the mind of Christ.”

“I am the righteousness of God in Christ.”

“I am expecting God to do something great in my life.”

Decide to think and speak on purpose every day!

¹³But Micaiah said, “As the LORD lives, I will [only] speak what my God says.”

¹⁴When he came to the king, the king said to him, “Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I refrain?” And he said, “Go up and succeed, for they will be handed over to you.”

¹⁵Then the king said to him, “How many times must I warn you (make you swear an oath) to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?”

¹⁶Then Micaiah said,

“I saw all [the people of] Israel

Scattered on the mountains,

As sheep that have no shepherd;

And the LORD said,

‘These have no master.

Let each one return to his house in peace.’”

¹⁷Then the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good in regard to me, but [only] evil?”

¹⁸So Micaiah said, “Therefore, hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host (army) of heaven standing on His right and on His left.

¹⁹“Then the LORD said, ‘Who will entice Ahab king of Israel to go up and fall [defeated] at Ramoth-gilead?’ And one said this and another said that.

²⁰“Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD and said, ‘I will entice him.’ The LORD said to him, ‘By what means?’

²¹“He said, ‘I will go out and be a deceptive spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ Then the LORD said, ‘You are to entice him and also succeed. Go and do so.’

²²“Now, you see, the LORD put a deceptive spirit in the mouth of these prophets of yours; and the LORD has [actually]

proclaimed disaster against you.”

²³Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came up and struck Micaiah on the cheek and said, “Which way did the Spirit of the LORD go [when he departed] from me to speak to you?”

²⁴Micaiah said, “Behold, you will see on that day when you go into an inner room [desperately trying] to hide yourself.”

²⁵Then the king of Israel said, “Take Micaiah and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king’s son,

²⁶and say, ‘Thus says the king: “Put this man in prison and feed him just enough bread and water to survive until I return in peace (safely).”’”

²⁷But Micaiah said, “If you actually return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me.” And he added, “Listen [to what I have said], you people, all of you.”

²⁸So [Ahab] the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah went up against Ramoth-gilead.

²⁹The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “I will disguise myself and will go into battle, but you put on your [royal] robes.” So the king of Israel disguised himself, and they went into the battle.

³⁰Now the king of Aram (Syria) had commanded the captains of his chariots, saying, “Do not fight with the small or the great, but only with the king of Israel.”

³¹So when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat [of Judah], they said, “It is the king of Israel!” So they turned to fight against him, but Jehoshaphat called out [for God’s help], and the LORD helped him; and God diverted them away

from him.

³²When the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him.

³³Then a certain man drew his bow at random and struck [Ahab] the king of Israel between the scales of *his* armor. So Ahab said to his chariot driver, “Turn around and take me out of the battle, because I am seriously wounded.”

³⁴The battle raged that day, and the king of Israel propped himself up in his chariot in front of the Arameans (Syrians) until the evening, and at sunset he died.

19 JEHOSEPHAT THE king of Judah returned safely to his house (palace) in Jerusalem.

²Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, “Should you help the ungodly and love those who hate the LORD and in doing so *bring* wrath from the LORD on yourself?”

³“But there are *some* good things found in you, for you have removed the Asherim (idols) from the land and you have set your heart to seek God [with all your soul’s desire].”

⁴So Jehoshaphat lived in Jerusalem, and he went out again among the people from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim and brought them back to the LORD, the God of their fathers.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Making Right Spiritual Decisions

Some people make decisions too quickly; others make them too slowly; some make them unwisely, and some don't make them at all. Life is filled with decisions. We decide each day what we will eat, what we will wear, and what we will do with our time. We make employment decisions, relationship decisions, financial decisions, and, most importantly, we make spiritual decisions. Even people who won't make decisions are still making a decision not to decide.

When King Jehoshaphat appointed judges in the land, he told them, "So now let the fear (reverent awe) of the LORD be on you [to keep you from making unjust decisions]; be careful in what you do" (2 Chr. 19:7). If we make right spiritual decisions—deciding to put God first in all things—the rest of our decisions will be easier. Making decisions in a wise and timely manner is vital to our peace and success in life.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Wait, Focus, Worship, and Give Thanks

The people in 2 Chronicles 20:12 had come to realize three things for certain: (1) They had no might against their enemies; (2) they did not know what to do, and (3) they needed to have their eyes focused on God.

Once they came to these realizations and freely acknowledged them to Him, the Lord said to them: “Be not afraid or dismayed at this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God’s.... You need not fight in this battle; take your positions, stand and witness the salvation of the LORD who is with you” (2 Chr. 20:15, 17).

Your position should be one of waiting on the Lord, with your eyes focused on Him, worshiping and giving thanks, while He works all things out for your good.

⁵He appointed judges in the land in all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city,

⁶and he said to the judges, “Be careful what you do, for you do not judge for man, but for the LORD who is with you in the matter of judgment.

⁷“So now let the fear (reverent awe) of the LORD be on you [to keep you from making unjust decisions]; be careful in what you do, for there is no injustice with the LORD our God, or

partiality, or acceptance of a bribe.”

⁸In Jerusalem also Jehoshaphat appointed some of the Levites, priests, and heads of the fathers’ *households* of Israel to *render* the judgment of the LORD and to judge disputes among the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

⁹Then the king commanded them, “Do this in the fear of the LORD, faithfully and wholeheartedly.

¹⁰“Whenever any dispute comes to you from your brothers (relatives) who live in their cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, or between statutes and judgments, you are to warn [and instruct] them so that they may not be guilty before the LORD; otherwise [God’s] wrath will come on you and your brothers. Do this and you will not be guilty.

¹¹“Behold, Amariah the chief priest will be over you in all matters of the LORD, and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the governor of the house of Judah, in all the king’s matters; and the Levites will serve you as officers. Deal courageously, and may the LORD be with the upright.”

20 NOW IT happened after this that the Moabites and the Ammonites, together with some of the Meunites, came to make war against Jehoshaphat.

²Then it was reported to Jehoshaphat, “A great multitude has come against you from beyond the [Dead] Sea, out of Aram (Syria); and behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar (that is, Engedi).”

³Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set himself

[determinedly, as his vital need] to seek the LORD; and he proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.

⁴So [the people of] Judah gathered together to seek help from the LORD; indeed they came from all the cities of Judah to seek the LORD [longing for Him with all their heart].

⁵Then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD in front of the new courtyard,

⁶and said, “O LORD, God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven? And do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Your hand, there is no one able to take a stand against You.

⁷“O our God, did You not drive out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Your friend Abraham?

⁸“They have lived in it, and have built You a sanctuary in it for Your Name, saying,

⁹‘If evil comes on us, or the sword of judgment, or plague, or famine, we will stand before this house and before You (for Your Name *and* Your Presence is in this house) and we will cry out to You in our distress, and You will hear and save us.’

¹⁰“Now behold, the sons of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom You would not allow Israel to invade when they came from the land of Egypt (for they turned away from them and did not destroy them), [Deut 2:9]

¹¹here they are, rewarding us by coming to drive us out of Your possession which You have given us as an inheritance.

¹²“O our God, will You not judge them? For we are powerless against this great multitude which is coming against

us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You.”

¹³So all Judah stood before the LORD, with their infants, their wives, and their children.

¹⁴Then in the midst of the assembly the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph.

¹⁵He said, “Listen carefully, all [you people of] Judah, and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and King Jehoshaphat. The LORD says this to you: ‘Be not afraid or dismayed at this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God’s.

¹⁶‘Go down against them tomorrow. Behold, they will come up by the ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the river valley, in front of the Wilderness of Jeruel.

¹⁷‘You *need* not fight in this *battle*; take your positions, stand and witness the salvation of the LORD who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD is with you.’”

¹⁸Jehoshaphat bowed with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the LORD, worshipping Him.

POWERPOINT

All of us face various kinds of battles in our lives. No one escapes problems and challenges, which we often call “the storms of life.” The good news is that God already knows what He will do when we face difficulties; He has a plan to bring us to victory. Second Chronicles 20:17 tells us that we do not need to fight our own battles because our battles belong to the Lord, not to us. All we need to do is take our position of abiding in and worshiping God and remain in it until our breakthrough comes.



¹⁹The Levites, from the sons of the Kohathites and the sons of the Korahites, stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel, with a very loud voice.

²⁰So they got up early in the morning and went out into the Wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Hear me, O Judah, and you inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe *and* trust in the LORD your God and you will be established (secure). Believe *and* trust in His prophets and succeed.”

²¹When he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who sang to the LORD and those who praised Him in their holy (priestly) attire, as they went out before the army and said, “Praise *and* give thanks to the LORD, for His mercy *and* lovingkindness endure forever.”

²²When they began singing and praising, the LORD set ambushes against the sons of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; so they were struck down [in defeat].

²³For the sons of Ammon and Moab [suspecting betrayal] rose up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, completely destroying them; and when they had finished with the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another.

²⁴When [the men of] Judah came to the lookout tower of the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude, and behold, they were dead bodies lying on the ground, and no one had escaped.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Acknowledge Fear, but Don't Stop There

When the surrounding nations united against the small kingdom of Judah, the odds were overwhelming (see 2 Chr. 20:1). The “sensible” thing would have been to surrender. In the context of seemingly undefeatable enemies, we read that King Jehoshaphat was afraid, but he didn’t stop with fear. He moved beyond it.

To feel fear isn’t sinful, nor does it represent disobedience or failure. In fact, we do well to think of fear as a warning to us. It’s a shout of danger. Once we feel it, we then need to decide what to do with it. We can act; we can cringe; we can ignore it. King Jehoshaphat did the right thing: He “set himself [determinedly, as his vital need] to seek the LORD” (v. 3). He didn’t have answers, and he recognized the enemies’ strength, which is an important lesson for us to learn in our battles against Satan. If we think we can defeat him by ourselves, we’re badly mistaken.

The king also proclaimed a fast and stood in the midst of the people and prayed for deliverance: “For we are powerless. ... We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You” (v. 12). That is the prayer God wanted to hear. They realized and confessed that their only hope was in God’s deliverance.

Just then, the Holy Spirit came upon a man named Jahaziel, who said, “The LORD says this to you: ‘Be not afraid or dismayed at this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God’s’” (v. 15). He went on to say, “You *need* not fight in this *battle*; take your positions, stand and witness the salvation of the LORD who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not fear or be dismayed” (v. 17). The account goes on to say that the people began to sing praises to God, and when they did that, God brought deliverance.

That’s the biggest secret of winning the battles against your enemy. You acknowledge your fear and let it push you to seek God. When you do, Isaiah says it this way: “For He will come in like a narrow, rushing stream which the breath of the LORD drives [overwhelming the enemy]” (Isa. 59:19). God hears and runs to your rescue. That’s His promise.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God, I’ve known fear, and too often I’ve concentrated on the fear and forgotten that it’s an opportunity to call on You so I can see Your hand of deliverance in my life. I declare with King David, “When I am afraid, I will put my trust and faith in You” (Ps. 56:3). Amen.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Praise and Prayer

Two spiritual weapons available to you are praise and prayer. Praise and prayer both should be filled with the Word of God.

Jesus used the weapon of the Word in the wilderness to defeat the devil (see Luke 4:1–13). Each time the devil lied to Him, Jesus responded with, “It is written,” and quoted the Word. Likewise, you can use the Word to tear down the strongholds in your mind and defeat the devil.

In 2 Chronicles 20:21–22, King Jehoshaphat sent the singers out before his army to “Praise and give thanks to the LORD, for His mercy and lovingkindness endure forever,” and the enemy was routed. Learn to fill your prayers and praise with the Word of God by abiding (staying, continuing) in God’s Word. Pray, speak, sing, and study the Word, and you can experience victory in all areas of your life.

²⁵When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take their spoil, they found much among them, *including* equipment, garments, and valuable things which they took for themselves, more than they could carry away; so much that they spent three days gathering the spoil.

²⁶Then on the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Beracah, for it was there that they blessed the LORD. For that reason they named that place “The Valley of Beracah

(blessing)” until today.

²⁷Then they returned to Jerusalem with joy, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, led by Jehoshaphat, for the LORD had made them rejoice over their enemies.

²⁸They came to Jerusalem with harps, lyres, and trumpets to the house (temple) of the LORD.

²⁹And the fear of God came on all the kingdoms of those countries when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel.

³⁰So the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest on all sides.

³¹Now Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah. He was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for twenty-five-years. His mother’s name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi.

³²He walked in the way of his father Asa and did not depart from it, doing what was right in the sight of the LORD.

³³Only the high places [for pagan sacrifices] were not removed, for the people had not yet set their hearts firmly on the God of their fathers.

³⁴Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, from the first to the last, behold, they are written in the records of Jehu the son of Hanani, which are recorded in the Book of the Kings of Israel.

³⁵After [all] this Jehoshaphat king of Judah made an alliance with Ahaziah king of Israel, and he acted wickedly in doing so.

³⁶He joined him in building ships to go to Tarshish [for trade], and they built them in Ezion-geber.

³⁷Then Eliezer the son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, “Because you have allied yourself with Ahaziah, the LORD has broken down what you have built.” So the ships were wrecked and were unable to go to Tarshish.

21 JEHOSEPHAT SLEPT with his fathers [in death] and was buried with them in the City of David; and his son Jehoram became king in his place.

²He had brothers, the sons of Jehoshaphat: Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azaryahu, Michael, and Shephatiah. All of these were the sons of Jehoshaphat king of Israel.

³Their father gave them many gifts of silver, gold, and valuable things, in addition to fortified cities in Judah; but he gave the kingdom to Jehoram because he was the firstborn.

⁴When Jehoram had ascended over the kingdom of his father and made himself secure, he killed all his brothers with the sword [to eliminate any rivals], and some of the leaders of Israel as well.

⁵Jehoram was thirty-two years of age when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem.

⁶He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done (for he married the daughter of Ahab), and he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD.

⁷Yet the LORD would not destroy the house of David because of the covenant which He had made with David, and because He had promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons forever. [2 Sam 7:12–17; 1 Kin 11:36; Ps 132:17]

⁸In the days of Jehoram Edom revolted against the rule of Judah and set up a king over themselves.

⁹Then Jehoram crossed over [the Jordan River] with his commanders and all his chariots, and rose up by night and struck down the Edomites who were surrounding him and the commanders of the chariots.

¹⁰So Edom revolted against the rule of Judah to this day. Then Libnah revolted at the same time against Jehoram's rule, because he had abandoned (turned away from) the LORD God of his fathers.

¹¹Moreover, he made [idolatrous] high places in the hill country of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to be unfaithful [to God], and he led Judah astray [compelling the people's cooperation].

¹²Then a letter came to Jehoram from Elijah the prophet, saying, "Thus says the LORD God of David your father (ancestor): 'Because you have not walked in the ways of your father Jehoshaphat nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah,

¹³but have walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and caused Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to be unfaithful [to God] as the house of Ahab was unfaithful, and you have also murdered your brothers, your father's house (your own family), who were better than you,

¹⁴behold, the LORD is going to strike your people, your sons, your wives, and all your possessions with a great disaster;

¹⁵and you will suffer a severe illness, an intestinal disease, until your intestines come out because of the sickness, day after day.'"

¹⁶Then the LORD stirred up against Jehoram the spirit (anger) of the Philistines and of the Arabs who bordered the Ethiopians.

¹⁷They came against Judah and invaded it, and carried away all the possessions found in the king's house (palace), together with his sons and his wives; so there was not a son left to him except Jehoahaz, the youngest of his sons.

¹⁸After all this, the LORD struck Jehoram with an incurable intestinal disease.

¹⁹Now it came about in the course of time, at the end of two years, that his intestines came out because of his disease and he died in excruciating pain. And his people did not make a funeral fire *to honor* him, like the fire for his fathers.

²⁰Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years; and he departed with no one's regret (sorrow). They buried him in the City of David, but not in the tombs of the kings.

22 THEN THE inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah, his youngest son, king in his place, because the band of men (raiders) who came with the Arabs to the camp had killed all the older *sons*. So Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah began to reign.

²Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah, a granddaughter of Omri. [2 Kin 8:26]

³He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother was his adviser [and she encouraged him] to act

wickedly.

⁴So he did evil in the sight of the LORD like the house of Ahab, for they were his advisers after the death of his father, resulting in his destruction.

⁵He also walked in accordance with their advice, and he went with Jehoram the son of Ahab king of Israel to wage war against Hazael king of Aram (Syria) at Ramoth-gilead. And the Arameans wounded Joram (Jehoram). [2 Kin 8:28ff]

⁶Then he returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds they had inflicted on him at Ramah when he fought against Hazael king of Aram. And Ahaziah, the son of Jehoram king of Judah, went down to see Jehoram the son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was sick.

⁷But the downfall of Ahaziah was ordained by God, in that he went to Joram (Jehoram). For when he arrived there he went out [as an ally] with Jehoram against Jehu the son of Nimshi, whom the LORD had anointed to destroy the house of Ahab.

⁸It came about that when Jehu was executing judgment on the house of Ahab, he found the leaders of Judah and the sons of Ahaziah's [murdered] brothers ministering to Ahaziah, and he killed them.

⁹Jehu also searched for Ahaziah, who was hiding in Samaria; he was captured, brought to Jehu, and put to death. They buried him, for they said, "*After all*, he is the grandson of Jehoshaphat, who sought the LORD with all his heart." So the house of Ahaziah had no one *left* to retain the power to rule over the kingdom.

¹⁰Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she rose and destroyed all the royal family of

the house of Judah.

¹¹But Jehoshabeath, the king's daughter, took Joash the [infant] son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the king's sons who were being put to death, and she placed him and his nurse in the bedroom. So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of King Jehoram [of Judah] and wife of Jehoiada the priest, hid Joash from [his grandmother] Athaliah so that she did not murder him (for Jehoshabeath was the sister of Ahaziah).

¹²Joash was hidden with them in the house (temple) of God for six years, and Athaliah reigned over the land.

23 IN THE seventh year Jehoiada [the priest] summoned his courage and took the captains of hundreds: Azariah the son of Jeroham, Ishmael the son of Johanan, Azariah the son of Obed, Maaseiah the son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat the son of Zichri, *and they entered* into a covenant with him.

²They went throughout Judah and gathered the Levites out of all the cities of Judah, and the heads of the *households of the fathers* (ancestors) in Israel, and they came to Jerusalem.

³Then all the assembly made a covenant in the house of God with the king [that is, with the child Joash, to overthrow Athaliah by proclaiming his sovereignty]. And Jehoiada [the priest] said to them, "Behold, the king's son [Joash] shall reign, as the LORD has said in regard to the sons of David.

⁴"This is what you shall do: a third of you, of the priests and Levites who are resuming service on the Sabbath, shall be gatekeepers,

⁵a [second] third *shall be* at the king's house (palace), and

a [final] third at the Gate of the Foundation; and all the people shall be in the courtyards of the house of the LORD.

⁶“But let no one enter the house (temple) of the LORD except the priests and the Levites who minister; they may enter, for they are holy. And let all the people carefully observe the law of the LORD.

⁷“The Levites shall surround the [young] king, every man with his weapons in his hand; and whoever comes into the temple [breaking through the ranks of the guard to get near Joash] is to be killed. You are to be with the king when he comes in [from the temple chamber where he is hiding] and when he goes out.”

⁸So the Levites and all Judah acted in accordance with everything that Jehoiada the priest had commanded; and every man took his men who were to resume duty on the Sabbath, with those who were to go off duty on the Sabbath, for Jehoiada the priest did not dismiss [any of] the divisions [from their duties].

⁹Then Jehoiada the priest gave to the captains of hundreds the spears and the large and small shields which had been King David's, which were in the house of God.

¹⁰He stationed all the people around the king [as guards for him], every man with his weapon in his hand, from the right side to the left side of the house (temple), by the altar and by the house.

¹¹Then they brought out the king's son and put the crown on him, and *gave him* the testimony [a copy of the Mosaic Law] and made him king. And Jehoiada and his sons anointed him and said, “*Long live the king!*” [Ex 25:16, 21]

¹²When Athaliah heard the sound of the people running and praising the king, she went into the house of the LORD to [see what] the people [were doing].

¹³She looked, and there was the [young] king, standing by his pillar at the entrance, and the captains and the trumpeters were beside him. And all the people of the land were rejoicing and blowing trumpets, and the singers with their musical instruments were directing the [singing of] praise. Then Athaliah tore her clothes and cried, “Treason! Treason!”

¹⁴So Jehoiada the priest brought out the captains of hundreds who were appointed over the army and said to them, “Bring her out between the ranks [of soldiers]; and whoever follows her shall be put to death with the sword.” For the priest had said, “Do not let her be put to death in the temple of the LORD.”

¹⁵So they seized Athaliah, and when she arrived at the entrance of the Horse Gate of the king’s house (palace), they put her to death there.

¹⁶Then Jehoiada made a covenant between himself, all the people, and the king, that they would be the LORD’s people.

¹⁷Then all the people went to the house of Baal and tore it down, and they smashed its altars and its images to pieces, and killed Mattan, the priest of Baal, in front of the altars.

¹⁸Also Jehoiada placed the offices *and* officers of the house of the LORD under the authority of the Levitical priests, whom David had [previously] assigned over the house of the LORD, to offer the burnt offerings of the LORD, as it is written in the Law of Moses, with rejoicing and singing in accordance with the order of David.

¹⁹Jehoiada stationed the gatekeepers [at the gates] of the house of the LORD, so that no one would enter *who was* in any way unclean.

²⁰He took the captains of hundreds, the nobles, the rulers of the people, and all the people of the land, and brought the king down from the house of the LORD; and they came through the upper gate to the king's house (palace) and set the king on the throne of the kingdom.

²¹So all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet after Athaliah had been put to death with the sword.

24 JOASH WAS seven years old when he became king, and he reigned for forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zibiah from Beersheba.

²Joash did what was right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest [his uncle].

³Jehoiada took two wives for him, and he fathered sons and daughters.

⁴Now it came about after this that Joash decided to restore the house (temple) of the LORD.

⁵He gathered the priests and the Levites and said to them, "Go out to the cities of Judah and collect money from all Israel to repair the house of your God from year to year; and see that you do it quickly." But the Levites did not act quickly.

⁶So the king called for Jehoiada the high *priest* and said to him, "Why have you not required the Levites to bring in from Judah and Jerusalem the tax for the tent of the testimony which

was *authorized by* Moses, the servant of the LORD and *the servant of* the assembly of Israel?”

⁷For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken into the house of God and also had used all the holy *and* dedicated things of the house of the LORD for the Baals.

⁸So at the king’s command they made a chest and set it outside by the gate of the house of the LORD.

⁹Then they made a proclamation in Judah and Jerusalem to bring in for the LORD the tax that Moses the servant of God imposed on Israel in the wilderness.

¹⁰All the officers and all the people rejoiced and brought their tax and dropped it into the chest until they had finished [and the chest was full].

¹¹It came about that whenever the Levites brought the chest to the king’s official, and whenever they saw that there was a large amount of money, the king’s secretary and the chief priest’s representative would come and empty the chest, and take it, and return it to its place. They did this day after day and collected a large amount of money.

¹²The king and Jehoiada gave it to those who did the work of the service of the house of the LORD; and they would hire masons and carpenters (craftsmen) and also those who worked in iron and bronze to repair *and* restore the house of the LORD.

¹³So the workmen labored, and the repair work progressed in their hands; and they restored *and* organized the house of God in accordance with its specifications and strengthened it.

¹⁴When they had finished, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada; and it was [melted down and] made into utensils for the house of the LORD, utensils for

ministering and for burnt offerings, and bowls and utensils of gold and silver. And they offered burnt offerings in the house of the LORD continually all the days of Jehoiada.

¹⁵Now when Jehoiada grew old and was full of days, he died. He was a hundred and thirty years old at his death.

¹⁶They buried him in the City of David among the kings, because he had done good [things] in Israel and toward God and His house.

¹⁷Now after the death of Jehoiada [the priest, who had hidden Joash], the officials of Judah came and bowed down to King Joash; then the king listened to them.

¹⁸They abandoned the house of the LORD, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherim and the idols; so [God's] wrath came on Judah and Jerusalem for their sin *and* guilt.

¹⁹Yet God sent prophets among them to bring them back to the LORD; these prophets testified against them, but they would not listen.

²⁰Then the Spirit of God came over Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, and he stood above the people and said to them, "This is what God has said: 'Why do you transgress the commandments of the LORD so that you cannot prosper? Because you have abandoned (turned away from) the LORD, He has also abandoned (turned away from) you.'"

²¹So they conspired against Zechariah and stoned him [to death] at the command of the king, in the courtyard of the house of the LORD.

²²Thus Joash the king did not remember the kindness which Jehoiada, Zechariah's father, had shown him, but he murdered his son. And when Zechariah was dying, he said,

“May the LORD see this and require an accounting!”

²³Now it happened at the end of the year, that the army of Aram (Syria) went up against Joash. They came to Judah and Jerusalem and killed all the leaders among the people and sent all their spoil to the king of Damascus.

²⁴Though the army of the Arameans came with a small company of men, the LORD handed over a very large army into their hands, because Joash and Judah had abandoned (turned away from) the LORD, the God of their fathers. So the Arameans executed judgment against Joash.

²⁵When they left Joash (for they left him very ill), his own servants conspired against him because of the blood of the son of Jehoiada the priest, and they murdered him on his bed. So he died, and they buried him in the City of David, but they did not bury him in the tombs of the kings.

²⁶The conspirators against Joash were Zabad the son of Shimeath the Ammonitess, and Jehozabad the son of Shimrith the Moabitess.

²⁷Now as to his sons and the many prophecies uttered against him and the rebuilding of the house of God, they are written in the commentary on the Book of Kings. Then his son Amaziah became king in his place.

25 AMAZIAH WAS twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned for twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem.

²He did right in the sight of the LORD, yet not wholeheartedly.

³When his kingdom was firmly established, he killed his servants who had struck down his father the king.

⁴But he did not kill their children; for *he did* as it is written in the Law, in the Book of Moses, where the LORD commanded, “The fathers shall not die for the children, nor the children die for the fathers, but each shall be put to death for his own sin.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Have a Whole Heart

There are many conditions of the heart. Some are positive, and others are negative. King Amaziah is noted for having a negative condition of heart (2 Chr. 25:1–2). He did all the right things outwardly, but inwardly his heart was not right. “He did right in the sight of the LORD, yet not wholeheartedly” (2 Chr. 25:2). Therefore, God was not pleased with him. That’s a scary thing. We can do the right thing, and yet have it not be acceptable to God because we do it with a wrong heart attitude.

The heart is the real person, not the person everybody sees. The heart is also the most important aspect of our spiritual life, and heart attitudes are of the utmost importance to every believer (see Prov. 4:23). It is not lack of ability or potential that prevents people from making progress and enjoying fulfillment in life; it is heart attitudes that negatively affect our thoughts and attitudes. When God asks for our heart, He is asking for our entire life—our whole personality, character, body, mind, and emotions. He wants us to love and seek Him with our whole heart!

God is more concerned about your heart than He is about every little mistake that you make, because if your heart is right and whole, your actions will eventually catch up with it. Who you are in your heart is reflected in your thoughts and attitudes.

⁵Amaziah assembled [the men of] Judah and appointed them in accordance with *their* fathers' (ancestors') households under commanders of thousands and of hundreds throughout Judah and Benjamin. He numbered them from twenty years old and above and found there to be 300,000 choice men fit for war and *able to* handle spear and shield.

⁶He also hired 100,000 brave warriors from Israel for a hundred talents of silver.

⁷But a man of God came to him, saying, "O king, do not let this army of Israel go with you, for the LORD is not with Israel *nor with* any of the sons of Ephraim.

⁸"But if you do go [in spite of this warning], be strong *and* courageous for battle; yet God will cause you to stumble *and* fall before the enemy, for God has power to help and to cause *people* to stumble."

⁹Amaziah said to the man of God, "But what *shall* we do about the hundred talents which I gave to the troops of Israel?" The man of God answered, "The LORD is able to give you much more than this."

¹⁰So Amaziah dismissed the troops that came to him from Ephraim, to go home. So their anger was kindled *and* burned greatly against Judah, and they returned home in the heat of anger.

¹¹Now Amaziah took courage and led his people out to the Valley of Salt, and he struck down 10,000 of the men of Seir (Edom).

¹²The sons of Judah also captured 10,000 alive and brought them to the top of the cliff. They threw them down

from the top of the cliff and they were all crushed to pieces.

¹³But the troops whom Amaziah sent back, *those* not allowed to go with him to battle, attacked *and* raided the cities of Judah, from Samaria to Beth-horon, and struck down 3,000 men and took a large amount of spoil.

¹⁴After Amaziah came back from the slaughter of the Edomites, he brought the gods of the sons of Seir, and set them up to be his gods, bowed before them, and burned incense to them.

¹⁵So the anger of the LORD burned against Amaziah, and He sent him a prophet who said to him, “Why have you desired the gods of the people who did not save their own people from your hand?”

¹⁶As he was talking, the king said to him, “Have we made you the king’s counselor? Stop! Why should you be put to death?” Then the prophet stopped and said, “I know that God has decided to destroy you because you have done this and have ignored my advice.”

¹⁷Then Amaziah king of Judah took counsel and sent *word* to Joash the son of Jehoahaz the son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, “Come [to battle], let us face each other.” [2 Kin 14:8–20]

¹⁸Then Joash king of Israel sent *word* to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, “The [little] thorn bush in Lebanon sent *word* to the [great] cedar in Lebanon, saying, ‘Give your daughter to my son in marriage.’ But a wild beast in Lebanon passed by and trampled down the thorn bush.

¹⁹“You say, ‘See, I have struck down *and* defeated Edom.’ Your heart lifts you up to boast [about your victory]. Now stay

at home; why should you meddle *and* court disaster so that you, even you, will fall and Judah with you?"

²⁰But Amaziah would not listen, for it was from God, so that He might hand Judah over *to Joash* because they had desired the gods of Edom.

²¹So Joash king of Israel went up; and he and Amaziah king of Judah faced one another at Beth-shemesh, which belonged to Judah.

²²And Judah was defeated by Israel, and they fled, every man to his tent.

²³Then Joash king of Israel captured Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Joash the son of Jehoahaz (Ahaziah), at Beth-shemesh, and brought him to Jerusalem and broke down the wall of Jerusalem from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate, 400 cubits.

²⁴*He took* all the gold and silver and all the utensils which were found in the house of God with [the doorkeeper] Obed-edom, and the treasures of the king's house (palace), and the hostages, and returned to Samaria.

²⁵And Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah lived fifteen years after the death of Joash the son of Jehoahaz king of Israel.

²⁶Now the rest of the acts of Amaziah, from the first to the last, are they not written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel?

²⁷Now from the time that Amaziah turned away from following the LORD, they conspired against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish; but they sent *men* after him to Lachish and killed him there.

²⁸Then they brought him on horses and buried him with his fathers in the City of [David in] Judah.

26 THEN ALL the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in place of his father Amaziah.

²He built Eloth and restored it to Judah after the king [Amaziah] slept with his fathers [in death].

³Uzziah was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jechiliah of Jerusalem.

⁴He did right in the sight of the LORD, in accordance with everything that his father Amaziah had done.

⁵He continued to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding through the vision of God; and as long as he sought (inquired of, longing for) the LORD, God caused him to prosper.

⁶He went out and made war against the Philistines, and broke through the wall of Gath, the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod; and he built cities near Ashdod and [elsewhere] among the Philistines.

⁷God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabs who lived in Gur-baal, and the Meunites.

⁸The Ammonites paid tribute (money) to Uzziah, and his fame spread abroad, even as far as the border of Egypt, for he became very strong.

⁹Uzziah also built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate,

the Valley Gate, and at the corner buttress [of the wall], and fortified them.

¹⁰He also built towers in the wilderness and dug many cisterns, for he had a great deal of livestock, both in the lowlands and in the plain. *He also had* farmers and vinedressers in the hill country and in the fertile fields, for he loved the soil.

¹¹Moreover, Uzziah had an army ready for battle, which went into combat by divisions according to the number of their muster as recorded by Jeiel the scribe and Maaseiah the official, under the direction of Hananiah, one of the king's commanders.

¹²The total number of the heads of the fathers' households, of valiant men, was 2,600.

¹³Under their command was an army of 307,500, who could wage war with great power, to help the king against the enemy.

¹⁴Moreover, Uzziah prepared shields, spears, helmets, body armor, bows, and sling stones for the entire army.

¹⁵In Jerusalem he made machines of war invented by skillful men to be put on the towers and on the [corner] battlements for the purpose of shooting arrows and large stones. And his fame spread far, for he was marvelously helped until he was strong.

¹⁶But when Uzziah became strong, he became so proud [of himself and his accomplishments] that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful *and* sinned against the LORD his God, for he went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. [Num 3:38]

¹⁷Then Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him

eighty priests of the LORD, men of courage.

¹⁸They opposed King Uzziah and said to him, “It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron who have been consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful and will have no honor from the LORD God.”

¹⁹Then Uzziah, with a censer in his hand to burn incense, was enraged; and while he was enraged with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, beside the incense altar.

²⁰As Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked toward him, behold, he was leprous on his forehead; and they hurried him out of there, and he also hurried to get out because the LORD had stricken him.

²¹King Uzziah was a leper to the day of his death; and, being a leper, he lived in a separate house, for he was excluded from the house of the LORD. And his son Jotham took charge of the king’s household, judging *and* governing the people of the land.

²²Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, from the first to the last, Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, has written. [Is 1:1]

²³So Uzziah slept with his fathers [in death], and they buried him with his fathers in the burial field of the kings [outside the royal tombs], for they said, “He is a leper.” And his son Jotham became king in his place.

27 JOTHAM WAS twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned for sixteen years in Jerusalem. His

mother's name was Jerushah the daughter of Zadok.

²He did right in the sight of the LORD, in accordance with everything that his father Uzziah had done; however, he did not enter the temple of the LORD. But the people continued behaving corruptly.

³He built the upper gate of the house of the LORD, and did extensive building on the wall of Ophel.

⁴Moreover, he built cities in the hill country of Judah, and in the forests he built fortresses and towers.

⁵He also fought with the king of the Ammonites and prevailed over them. As a result the Ammonites gave him during that year a hundred talents of silver and ten thousand measures each of wheat and of barley. The Ammonites also paid him that much in the second year and third year.

⁶So Jotham grew powerful, because he directed his ways before the LORD his God.

⁷Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all his wars and his ways, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah.

⁸He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned for sixteen years in Jerusalem.

⁹And Jotham slept with his fathers [in death], and they buried him in the City of David. Ahaz his son became king in his place.

28 AHAZ WAS twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned for sixteen years in Jerusalem. He did not do right in the sight of the LORD, as his father (forefather) David *had*

done.

²Instead he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and even made cast images for the Baals.

³And he burned incense in the Valley of Ben-hinnom and burned his sons [as an offering], in accordance with the repulsive acts of the [pagan] nations whom the LORD had driven out before the sons (descendants) of Israel.

⁴He also sacrificed and burned incense on the high places [of pagan worship], on the hills and under every green tree.

⁵Therefore the LORD his God handed over Ahaz to the king of Aram (Syria), who defeated him and led away a great number [of the people] as captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was also handed over to the king of Israel, who struck Judah with a great slaughter.

⁶For Pekah son of Remaliah killed 120,000 in Judah in one day, all courageous men, because they had abandoned (turned away from) the LORD God of their fathers.

⁷And Zichri, a warrior of Ephraim, killed Maaseiah the king's son, and Azrikam the governor of the house, and Elkanah, who was second [in power] to the king.

⁸And the sons of Israel led away captive 200,000 of their kinsmen [of Judah]—women, sons, and daughters—and they also took a great quantity of spoil from them and brought it to Samaria.

⁹But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name was Oded; and he went out to meet the army that was returning to Samaria and said to them, “Behold, because the LORD, the God of your fathers, was angry with Judah, He handed them over to you; but you have killed them in a rage that has reached as far

as heaven.

¹⁰“And now you intend to subjugate the people of Judah and Jerusalem as male and female slaves for yourselves. But are you yourselves not guilty *of transgressions* against the LORD your God?

¹¹“Now therefore, hear me and return the captives whom you have captured from your brothers (fellow descendants of Israel, *i.e.* Jacob), for the burning anger of the LORD is against you.”

¹²Then some of the heads of the Ephraimites (Israel)—Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshillemoth, Jehizkiah the son of Shallum, and Amasa the son of Hadlai—took a stand against those who were returning from the battle,

¹³and said to them, “You must not bring the captives in here; for we are guilty before the LORD *already*, and *what* you intend to *do will* add more to our sins and our guilt. For our guilt is so great that His burning anger is against Israel.”

¹⁴So the armed men [of Israel] left the captives and the spoil [of Judah] before the officers and all the assembly.

¹⁵Then the men who were designated by name rose up and took the captives, and from the spoil they clothed all those who were naked; they clothed them and gave them sandals, and fed them and gave them [something to] drink, anointed them [with oil, as was a host’s duty], and led all the feeble ones on donkeys, and they brought them to Jericho, the City of Palm Trees, to their brothers (fellow descendants of Israel, *i.e.* Jacob). Then they returned to Samaria. [Luke 10:25–37]

¹⁶At that time King Ahaz sent *word* to the king of Assyria

[to ask him] for help.

¹⁷For the Edomites had come again and attacked Judah and led away captives.

¹⁸The Philistines had also invaded the cities of the low country and of the Negev (the South country) of Judah, and had taken Beth-shemesh, Aijalon, Gederoth, and Soco with their villages, and also Timnah with its villages, and Gimzo with its villages, and they settled there.

¹⁹For the LORD humbled Judah because of Ahaz king of Israel, for Ahaz had allowed unrestrained *and* undisciplined behavior in Judah and had been very unfaithful to the LORD.

²⁰So Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria came against him and harassed him instead of strengthening *and* supporting him.

²¹Although Ahaz took a portion [of treasure] from the house of the LORD and from the house (palace) of the king and from the leaders, and gave it [as tribute] to the king of Assyria, it did not help Ahaz.

²²In the time of his distress, this same King Ahaz became yet more unfaithful to the LORD.

²³For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus, which had defeated him, and he said, "Since the gods of the kings of Aram (Syria) helped them, I will sacrifice to them so that they may help me." But they became the ruin *and* downfall of him and all of Israel.

²⁴Then Ahaz collected the utensils of the house of God and he cut them in pieces; and he shut the doors of the house of the LORD and made altars for himself in every corner of Jerusalem.

²⁵In every city of Judah he made high places to burn

incense to other gods, provoking to anger the LORD, the God of his fathers.

²⁶Now the rest of his acts and of all his ways, from the first to the last, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel.

²⁷And Ahaz slept with his fathers [in death], and they buried him in the city, in Jerusalem, but they did not bring him into the tombs of the kings of Israel. And his son Hezekiah reigned in his place.

29 HEZEKIAH BECAME king when he was twenty-five years old, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abijah the daughter of Zechariah.

²He did right in the sight of the LORD, in accordance with everything that David his father (forefather) had done.

³In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the LORD [which his father had closed] and repaired them [and replaced the gold overlay]. [2 Kin 18:16]

⁴He brought in the priests and Levites and gathered them into the square on the east.

⁵Then he said to them, "Levites, listen to me! Now consecrate (dedicate) yourselves and consecrate the house of the LORD, the God of your fathers, and get the filth [of idol worship] out of the Holy Place.

⁶"For our fathers have been unfaithful and have done evil in the sight of the LORD our God, and they have abandoned Him and have turned their faces away from the dwelling place

of the LORD, and have turned their backs [toward Him].

⁷“They have also closed the doors of the [temple] porch and put out the lamps, and they have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the Holy Place to the God of Israel. [2 Kin 16:10–16]

⁸“Therefore the wrath of the LORD has been against Judah and Jerusalem, and He has made them an object of terror, of horror, and of hissing, just as you see with your own eyes.

⁹“For behold, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity because of this.

¹⁰“Now it is in my heart to make a covenant (solemn agreement) with the LORD God of Israel, so that His burning anger will turn away from us.

¹¹“My sons, do not be negligent *and* careless now, for the LORD has chosen you to stand in His presence, to attend to His service, and to be His ministers and burn incense.”

¹²Then the Levites arose: Mahath the son of Amasai and Joel the son of Azariah, from the sons of the Kohathites; from the sons of Merari: Kish the son of Abdi, Azariah the son of Jehallelel; from the Gershonites: Joah the son of Zimmah and Eden the son of Joah;

¹³from the sons of Elizaphan: Shimri and Jeiel; from the sons of Asaph: Zechariah, and Mattaniah;

¹⁴from the sons of Heman: Jehiel and Shimei; and from the sons of Jeduthun: Shemaiah and Uzziel.

¹⁵They gathered their brothers (fellow Levites) together, consecrated themselves, and went in to cleanse the house of the LORD, as the king had commanded by the words of the

LORD.

¹⁶The priests went into the inner part of the house of the LORD to cleanse it, and every unclean thing they found in the temple of the LORD they brought out to the courtyard of the LORD's house. Then the Levites received it to take out to the Kidron Valley [for disposal].

¹⁷Now they began the consecration on the first [day] of the first month, and on the eighth day of the month they came to the porch of the LORD. Then for eight days they consecrated the house of the LORD, and on the sixteenth day of the first month they finished.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Releasing Joy

The more I ponder 2 Chronicles 29:30, the more amazed I am that I can immediately increase or decrease my joy and the joy of others by simply choosing to say good things. King Hezekiah “ordered the Levites to exclaim praises to the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. And they exclaimed praises with joy.”

Joy is vital! Nehemiah 8:10 tells us that joy is our strength. No wonder the enemy works overtime trying to do anything he can to diminish our joy. Don't sit by and let it happen to you. Fight the good fight with faith-filled words, releasing joy everywhere you go.

Jesus came to bring good news and glad tidings of great joy, to overcome evil with good. He wants you to be as committed as He is to finding and magnifying the good in everything. Do yourself a favor and say something good!

¹⁸Then they went inside to King Hezekiah and said, “We have cleansed the entire house (temple) of the LORD, the altar of burnt offering with all of its utensils, and the table of showbread with all its utensils.

¹⁹“Moreover, we have prepared and consecrated all the utensils which King Ahaz had discarded during his reign in his unfaithfulness; and behold, they are in front of the altar of the

LORD.”

²⁰Then King Hezekiah arose early and assembled the officials of the city, and went up to the house of the LORD.

²¹They brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats for a sin offering for the kingdom, the sanctuary, and Judah. He commanded the priests, the sons of Aaron, to offer them on the altar of the LORD.

²²So they slaughtered the bulls, and the priests took the blood and sprinkled it on the altar. They also slaughtered the rams and sprinkled the blood on the altar; then they slaughtered the lambs and sprinkled the blood on the altar.

²³Then they brought the male goats for the sin offering before the king and the assembly, and they laid their hands on them [to symbolize the transference of their sin].

²⁴The priests slaughtered them and cleansed the altar from sin with their blood to atone for all Israel, because the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering *be made* for all Israel.

²⁵Hezekiah stationed the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with harps, and with lyres, in accordance with the command of David [his ancestor] and of Gad the king’s seer, and of Nathan the prophet; for the command was from the LORD through His prophets.

²⁶The Levites stood with the *musical* instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets.

²⁷Then Hezekiah gave the order to offer the burnt offering on the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song to the LORD also began with the trumpets *accompanied* by the instruments of David, king of Israel.

²⁸The entire congregation worshiped, the singers also sang, and the trumpets sounded; all this *continued* until the burnt offering was finished.

²⁹When the burnt offerings were completed, the king and all who were present with him bowed down and worshiped [God].

³⁰Also King Hezekiah and the officials ordered the Levites to exclaim praises to the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. And they exclaimed praises with joy, and bowed down and worshiped.

³¹Then Hezekiah said, “Now you have consecrated yourselves to the LORD; approach and bring sacrifices and thank offerings into the house of the LORD.” And the assembly brought in sacrifices and thank offerings, and all those who were willing *brought* burnt offerings. [Ex 35:5, 22]

³²The number of the burnt offerings which the assembly brought was 70 bulls, 100 rams, and 200 lambs. All these were for a burnt offering to the LORD.

³³The consecrated things were 600 bulls and 3,000 sheep.

³⁴But there were too few priests and they were unable to skin all the burnt offerings; so until the *other* priests had consecrated themselves, their brothers, the Levites, helped them until the work was done. For the Levites were more upright in heart *and* more conscientious than the priests in consecrating themselves.

³⁵There were also many burnt offerings with the fat of the peace offerings and with the drink offerings for the burnt offerings. So the service of the house of the LORD was established again.

³⁶Then Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced because of what God had prepared for the people, for the thing came about suddenly.

30 HEZEKIAH SENT *word* to all Israel and to Judah and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh to come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover *Feast* to the LORD God of Israel.

²For the king and his officials and all the assembly in Jerusalem had decided to celebrate the Passover in the second month, [Num 9:10, 11]

³since they could not celebrate it at that time because a sufficient number of priests had not consecrated themselves, nor had the people assembled at Jerusalem.

⁴Thus the [decision to set a] new time pleased the king and the entire assembly.

⁵So they decided to circulate a proclamation throughout Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, that the people were to come to celebrate the Passover to the LORD God of Israel, at Jerusalem. For they had not celebrated it in great numbers as it was prescribed [for a long time].

Speak God's Word

*I know that the Lord my God
is gracious and merciful, and
He will not turn His face
away from me if I return to
Him.*

| *adapted from* 2 CHRONICLES
30:9 |

⁶So the runners went throughout Israel and Judah with the letters from the hand of the king and his officials, in accordance with the command of the king, saying, “O sons (descendants) of Israel, return to the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel (Jacob), so that He will return to those of you who escaped and are left from the hand (power) of the kings of Assyria.

⁷“Do not be like your fathers and your brothers, who were unfaithful to the LORD God of their fathers, so that He made them a horror (lifeless, desolate), just as you see.

⁸“Now do not stiffen your neck [becoming obstinate] like your fathers, but yield to the LORD and come to His sanctuary which He has sanctified *and* set apart forever, and serve the LORD your God, so that His burning anger will turn away from you.

⁹“For if you return to the LORD, your brothers (relatives) and your children will find compassion in the presence of those who led them away captive and will return to this land. For the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and He will not turn His face away from you if you return to Him.”

¹⁰So the runners (couriers) passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, as far as Zebulun; but the people laughed at them with scorn and mocked them.

¹¹Yet *some of* the men of Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem.

¹²Also the hand of God was on Judah to give them one heart to do that which the king and the officials had commanded by the word of the LORD.

¹³Now many people were gathered at Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month; it was a very large assembly.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Recognize and Receive Mercy

What types of thoughts do you have when your behavior is less than perfect? If you make a mistake, do you think, *I am not what I should be* or *I am a bad person*? Or do you think, *I am sorry I made a mistake, but I am grateful for God's mercy that is new every morning*?

God doesn't want us to live under the tyranny of unrealistic expectations, but He desires that we receive mercy for our failures. As human beings, we will make mistakes every day. Jesus came for those who are needy, imperfect, and weak. He came to extend mercy, to help, to rescue, to deliver, and to save (see Matt. 12:7).

In 2 Chronicles 30, after the Israelites had failed to keep the Passover celebration for a long time, King Hezekiah had runners pass from city to city with the wonderful declaration to return to the Lord, "for the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and He will not turn His face away from you if you return to Him" (2 Chr. 30:9). That is great mercy!

How often do we become upset with ourselves, and

ultimately with other people, because our performance is less than stellar? Do you demand sacrifices from yourself or others as payment for past mistakes? I spent years sacrificing my joy to pay for my mistakes. I was often angry with myself for something I felt I was doing or wasn't doing. I thought I had no right to enjoy life because of my faults, but thankfully, I finally learned that Jesus offers me good things I don't deserve, and I don't have to pay for my sins because He has satisfied the debt I owed through offering Himself. When I stopped trying to make myself pay for my mistakes, I found it much easier to stop trying to make others pay for their mistakes.

Once I began to recognize and receive the mercy of God, I became a much happier person. My relationships improved because people want to be in a relationship with someone who loves and accepts them without pressuring them to be something they don't know how to be.

Let's be merciful with others, and ourselves, in the same way God is merciful with us.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Merciful Father, forgive me for the many times I've tried to pay for my own mistakes and sins when Jesus has fully paid my debt. I receive Your great mercy and freedom and will extend the same to others. In Jesus' name. Amen.

¹⁴They took action and removed the [pagan] altars which were in Jerusalem; they also removed all the incense altars and threw them into the Brook Kidron [the dumping place for the ashes of such repulsive things].

¹⁵Then they slaughtered the Passover *lambs* on the fourteenth day of the second month. And the priests and the Levites were ashamed of themselves, and consecrated themselves and brought burnt offerings to the house of the LORD.

¹⁶They stood at their accustomed stations, in accordance with the Law of Moses, the man of God. The priests sprinkled the blood [which they received] from the hand of the Levites [on the altar].

¹⁷For there were many in the assembly who had not consecrated themselves [that is, become ceremonially clean and free from all sin]; so the Levites had to slaughter the Passover *lambs* for everyone who was not clean, in order to make them holy for the LORD.

¹⁸For the majority of the people, many from Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, had not purified themselves, and yet they ate the Passover contrary to what had been prescribed. For Hezekiah had prayed for them, saying, “May the good LORD pardon

¹⁹everyone who sets his heart to seek God—the LORD God of his fathers—even though it is not in accordance with the [ceremonial] purification [rules] of the sanctuary.”

²⁰So the LORD listened to Hezekiah and healed the people [of their uncleanness].

²¹The Israelites who were present in Jerusalem celebrated the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days with great joy. The Levites and priests praised the LORD day after day, *singing* to the LORD with loud instruments.

²²Hezekiah spoke encouragingly to all the Levites who showed good understanding *in the things* of the LORD. So the people ate for the appointed seven days, sacrificing peace offerings and giving thanks to the LORD God of their fathers.

²³Then the whole assembly decided to celebrate [the feast] for another seven days; and they celebrated it *another* seven days with joy.

²⁴For Hezekiah king of Judah gave to the assembly 1,000 bulls and 7,000 sheep, and the officials gave the assembly 1,000 bulls and 10,000 sheep. And a large number of priests consecrated themselves [for service].

²⁵All the assembly of Judah rejoiced, with the priests and the Levites and all the assembly that came from Israel, both the sojourners (resident aliens, foreigners) who came from the land of Israel and those living in Judah.

²⁶So there was great joy in Jerusalem, because there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem since the time of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel.

²⁷Then the priests and Levites stood and blessed the people; and their voice was heard and their prayer came up to His holy dwelling place, to heaven.

31 NOW WHEN all of this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah, and smashed the

[pagan] pillars (obelisks, memorial stones) in pieces, cut down the Asherim (wooden symbols of a female deity), and tore down the high places and the altars [of idolatry] throughout all Judah and Benjamin, as well as in Ephraim and Manasseh, until they had destroyed them all. Then all the sons (descendants) of Israel returned to their own cities, each to his own property.

²And Hezekiah appointed the divisions of the priests, and the Levites by their divisions, each in accordance with his service, both the priests and Levites, for burnt offerings and for peace offerings, to minister and to give thanks and to praise in the gates of the camp of the LORD.

³Hezekiah also *appointed* the king's [personal] portion of his goods: for the morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the Sabbaths and for the New Moons and for the appointed feasts, as it is written in the Law of the LORD.

⁴He also told (ordered) the people living in Jerusalem to give the portion that was due to the priests and Levites, so that they might [be free to] devote themselves to the Law of the LORD.

⁵As soon as the *king's* order spread, the Israelites gave in abundance the first fruits of grain, new wine, [olive] oil, honey, and of all the produce of the field; and they brought in the tithe of everything abundantly.

⁶The sons of Israel and Judah who lived in the cities of Judah also brought in the tithe of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of sacred gifts which were consecrated to the LORD their God, and placed them in heaps.

⁷In the third month [at the end of wheat harvest] they

began to make the heaps, and they finished them in the seventh month.

⁸When Hezekiah and the rulers came and saw the heaps, they blessed the LORD and His people Israel.

⁹Then Hezekiah questioned the priests and Levites about the heaps.

¹⁰Azariah the high priest of the house of Zadok answered him, “Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat with plenty left over, for the LORD has blessed His people, and this great quantity is left over.”

¹¹Then Hezekiah told them to prepare rooms [for storage] in the house of the LORD, and they prepared them.

¹²They faithfully brought in the contributions, the tithes, and the sacred (dedicated) things. Conaniah the Levite was in charge of them, and Shimei his brother was second [in authority].

¹³Jehiel, Azariah, Nahath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismachiah, Mahath, and Benaiah were overseers directed by Conaniah and Shimei his brother by the appointment of King Hezekiah, and Azariah was the *chief* officer of the house of God.

¹⁴Kore the son of Imnah the Levite, keeper of the East Gate, was in charge of the voluntary offerings to God, to apportion the contributions for the LORD and the most holy things.

¹⁵Under his authority were Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah in the cities of the priests, to distribute faithfully *their portions* to their brothers (relatives) by divisions, whether great or small,

¹⁶without regard to their genealogical registration, to the males from thirty years old and upward—everyone who entered the house of the LORD for his daily obligations—for their service in accordance with their duties by their divisions;

¹⁷as well as the priests who were registered genealogically according to their fathers' households, and the Levites from twenty years old and upward, by their duties and by their divisions.

¹⁸The genealogical registration *included* all their little children, their wives, and their sons and daughters, for the whole assembly, because they consecrated themselves faithfully in holiness.

¹⁹Also for the sons of Aaron, the priests, who were in the pasture lands of their cities or in each and every city, there were men who were designated by name to give portions to every male among the priests and to everyone genealogically registered among the Levites.

²⁰This is what Hezekiah did throughout Judah; and he did what was good, right, and true before the LORD his God.

²¹Every work which he began in the service of the house of God in keeping with the law and the commandment, seeking *and* inquiring of his God [and longing for Him], he did with all his heart and prospered.

32 AFTER THESE things and this faithfulness, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah and besieged the fortified cities, intending to take them for himself.

²When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and that

he intended to go to war against Jerusalem,

³he decided, together with his officers and his soldiers, to stop up the water [supply] from the springs which were outside the city [by enclosing them with masonry and concealing them], and they helped him.

⁴So many people came together, and they stopped up all the springs and the brook which flowed [underground] through the region, saying, “Why should the kings of Assyria come and find an abundance of water?”

⁵Also Hezekiah resolutely set to work and rebuilt all the wall that had been broken down, and erected towers on it, and *he built* another wall outside and strengthened the Millo (fortification) in the City of David, and made a great number of weapons and shields.

⁶He also appointed military officers over the people and gathered them to him in the square at the city gate, and spoke encouragingly to them, saying,

⁷“Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be dismayed because of the king of Assyria, nor because of all the army that is with him; for the One with us is greater than the one with him.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

You Can Do It

Colossians 3:2 tells us to “set your mind and keep focused habitually on the things above.” To “set your mind” means you make a firm decision about how to handle a situation and you keep your mind set in that direction. It means to be single-minded, not double-minded. In the face of imminent danger, for King Hezekiah it meant to “resolutely set to work” and to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem rather than surrender (2 Chr. 32:5).

We can prepare ourselves to handle difficult situations properly by setting our minds ahead of time—telling ourselves that no matter what comes, we can do it. If you’re in a less than desirable situation, but you know it is where God wants you to be, don’t drift off into thinking that it can weaken you. Instead, think, I am strong in Christ, and I can do whatever He leads me to do.

⁸“With him there is only an arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles.” And the people relied on the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

⁹After this, Sennacherib king of Assyria, while he was at Lachish [besieging it] with all his forces, sent his servants to Jerusalem, to Hezekiah king of Judah, and to all Judah who were at Jerusalem, saying,

¹⁰“Thus says Sennacherib king of Assyria, ‘In what do you trust that you are remaining in Jerusalem under siege?

¹¹‘Is not Hezekiah misleading you in order to let you die by famine and thirst, *while* saying, “The LORD our God will rescue us from the hand of the king of Assyria?”

¹²‘Has the same Hezekiah not taken away his [Baal’s] high places and his altars, and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, “You shall worship before [only] one altar and burn incense on it”?

¹³‘Do you not know what I and my fathers (ancestors) have done to all the peoples of the [other] lands? Were the gods of the nations of those lands able to rescue their lands from my hand at all?

¹⁴‘Who [was there] among all the gods of those nations that my fathers utterly destroyed who was able to rescue his people from my hand, that your God should be able to rescue you from my hand?

¹⁵‘So now, do not let Hezekiah deceive or mislead you like this, and do not believe him, for no god of any nation or kingdom has been able to rescue his people from my hand or the hand of my fathers. How much less will your God rescue you from my hand!”

¹⁶And his servants said *even* more against the LORD God and against His servant Hezekiah.

¹⁷The Assyrian king also wrote letters insulting *and* taunting the LORD God of Israel, and speaking against Him, saying, “As the gods of the nations of other lands have not rescued their people from my hand, so the God of Hezekiah will not rescue His people from my hand.”

¹⁸They shouted it loudly in the language of Judah to the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall, to frighten and terrify them, so that they might take the city [without a long siege].

¹⁹They spoke of the God of Jerusalem as [they spoke of] the gods of the peoples of the earth, [which are only] the work of the hands of men.

²⁰But Hezekiah the king and the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz prayed about this and cried out to heaven [for help].

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

With You Is the Lord Your God

We cannot succeed in life by trusting in our own human knowledge, wisdom, strength, and ability. We can succeed only as we trust in God (see 2 Chr. 32:8).

We should do what we know to do and are able to do, and trust God to do the rest. Ephesians 6:13 says to do all that the crisis demands and then to stand firmly in your place. I often say, “Do what you can do and God will do what you cannot do.” For example, “Look for a job and God will help you find one.” Or, “Take better care of your body and you will feel better.” “I ask God to give me more energy, and He led me to start walking a few miles each day.”

I am finding more and more that when I pray about a situation, especially in my own life, God often shows me something I can do, and when I do it, I receive a breakthrough. That is not always the case, of course, because there are many things that only God can do and He always does them when we trust Him.

The Bible teaches that God helps those who *cannot* help

themselves in the sense that we are not to depend on our own energies and plans to solve our problems; instead, we are to depend on Him. God wants us to “work,” but not to get into “works of the flesh,” which is frustratingly trying to do what only God can do. When we ask God to help us, He may send help through another person, give us the ability to do what we could not have done without His help, or intervene supernaturally. But we often forfeit any help at all because we don’t lean on Him.

King Jehoshaphat (2 Chr. 20) and King Hezekiah both realized they were totally dependent on God for victory over their enemies. You and I need to have the same attitude they had and look to the Lord in the face of big problems. When we encounter difficulties, rather than look at our past failures, our present frailties, or our future fears, we should trust in God’s wisdom, strength, and power. No matter how many problems we may face, the One Who is with us is greater than all those who oppose us.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Thank You, Lord, that I know You as the Lord my God and that You are always with me. Amen.

²¹And the LORD sent an angel who destroyed every brave warrior, commander, and officer in the camp of the king of Assyria. So the king returned to his own land in shame. And when he entered the house (temple) of his god, some of his own children killed him there with the sword. [2 Kin 19:35–37]

²²Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria and from the hand of all *others*, and He gave them rest on every side.?

²³And many brought gifts to the LORD at Jerusalem and valuable presents to Hezekiah king of Judah; so from then on he was exalted in the sight of all nations.

²⁴In those days Hezekiah became terminally ill; and he prayed to the LORD, and He answered him and gave him a [miraculous] sign.

²⁵But Hezekiah did nothing [for the LORD] in return for the benefit *bestowed* on him, because his heart had become proud; therefore *God's* wrath came on him and on Judah and Jerusalem.

²⁶However, Hezekiah humbled his proud heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did not come on them during the days of Hezekiah.

²⁷Now Hezekiah had immense wealth and honor; and he made for himself treasuries for silver, gold, precious stones, spices, shields, and all kinds of delightful articles,

²⁸and storehouses for the produce of grain, new wine, and [olive] oil, and stalls for all kinds of cattle, and sheepfolds for

the flocks.

²⁹Moreover, he made cities for himself and *acquired* an abundance of flocks and herds, for God gave him very many possessions.

³⁰This same Hezekiah also stopped up the upper outlet of the waters of Gihon and channeled them down to the west side of the City of David. Hezekiah succeeded in everything that he did.

³¹And so *in the matter of* the envoys of the rulers of Babylon, who were sent to him to inquire about the wonder that had happened in the land, God left him *alone only* to test him, in order to know everything that was in his heart. [Is 39:1–7]

³²Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah and his godly achievements, behold, they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel.

³³So Hezekiah slept with his fathers [in death] and they buried him in the upper section of the tombs of the descendants of David; and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem honored him at his death. And his son Manasseh became king in his place.

33 MANASSEH WAS twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned for fifty-five years in Jerusalem.

²But he did evil in the sight of the LORD, like the repulsive acts of the [pagan] nations whom the LORD dispossessed before the sons (descendants) of Israel.

³For he rebuilt the [idolatrous] high places which his father Hezekiah had torn down; and he set up altars for the Baals and made the Asherim, and worshiped all the host of heaven [the sun, the moon, stars and planets] and served them. [Deut 4:19]

⁴He built [pagan] altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, “My Name shall be in Jerusalem forever.”

⁵He built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.

⁶He made his sons pass through the fire [as an offering to his gods] in the Valley of Ben-hinnom; and he practiced witchcraft, used divination, and practiced sorcery, and dealt with mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger.

⁷Then he set the carved image of the idol which he had made in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his son, “In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel, I will put My Name [and the symbol of my Presence] forever;

⁸and I will not again remove Israel from the land which I appointed for your fathers, if they will only be careful to do everything that I have commanded them in regard to all the law, the statutes, and the ordinances *given* through Moses.”

⁹So Manasseh caused Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to sin, by doing more evil than the [pagan] nations whom the LORD had destroyed before the sons of Israel.

¹⁰Now the LORD spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they paid no attention.

¹¹So the LORD brought the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria against them, and they captured Manasseh

with hooks [through his nose or cheeks] and bound him with bronze [chains] and took him to Babylon.

¹²But when he was in distress, he sought the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers.

¹³When he prayed to Him, He was moved by his entreaty and heard his pleading, and brought him back to Jerusalem to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God.

¹⁴After this he built an outer wall for the City of David on the west side of Gihon, in the river valley, to the entrance of the Fish Gate; and he encircled the Ophel *with it* and made it very high. Then he put military commanders in all the fortified cities of Judah.

¹⁵He also removed the foreign gods and the idol from the house of the LORD, as well as all the altars which he had built on the mountain of the house of the LORD and in Jerusalem; and he threw them outside the city.

¹⁶Then he set up the altar of the LORD and sacrificed peace offerings and thank offerings on it; and he ordered Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel. [Ex 35:5, 22]

¹⁷Yet the people still sacrificed on the high places, *but* only to the LORD their God.

¹⁸Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer to his God, and the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, behold, they are among the records of the kings of Israel.

¹⁹His prayer also and how God heard him, and all his sin, his unfaithfulness, and the sites on which he built high places and set up the Asherim and the carved images, before he humbled himself, behold, they are written in the records of the

Hozai.

²⁰So Manasseh slept with his fathers [in death], and they buried him in [the garden of] his own house. And his son Amon became king in his place.

²¹Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned for two years in Jerusalem.

²²But he did evil in the sight of the LORD, just as his father Manasseh had done. Amon sacrificed to all the carved images which his father Manasseh had made, and he served them.

²³Further, he did not humble himself before the LORD as his father Manasseh [finally] had done, but Amon multiplied his guilt *and* his sin.

²⁴And his servants conspired against him and killed him in his own house (palace).

²⁵But the people of the land struck down all those who had conspired against King Amon, and they made his son Josiah king in his place.

34 JOSIAH WAS eight years old when he became king, and he reigned for thirty-one years in Jerusalem.

²He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father (forefather) and did not turn aside either to the right or to the left.

³For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young (sixteen), he began to seek after *and* inquire of the God of his father David; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the Asherim, and the carved and cast images.

⁴They tore down the altars of the Baals in his presence; he cut to pieces the incense altars that were high above them; he also smashed the Asherim and the carved images and the cast images to pieces, and ground them to dust and scattered it on the graves of those who had sacrificed to them.

⁵Then Josiah burned the bones of the [pagan] priests on their altars and purged *and* cleansed Judah and Jerusalem.

⁶In the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon, and as far as Naphtali, in their surrounding ruins,

⁷he tore down the altars and beat *and* crushed the Asherim and the carved images into powder, and cut to pieces all the incense altars throughout the land of Israel. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

⁸In the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, when he had purged the land and the [LORD's] house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder (secretary), to repair the house of the LORD his God.

⁹When they came to Hilkiah the high priest, they delivered the money that had been brought into the house of God, which the Levites, who guarded the doors, had collected from Manasseh and Ephraim, and from all the remnant of Israel, and from all Judah and Benjamin, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

A Gentle and Penitent Heart

Having a gentle and penitent heart (2 Chr. 34:27) is equivalent to having a tender conscience, and tenderness of conscience is vital to our relationship with God (see Eph. 4:32). It is dangerous to become hard-hearted and to develop a seared conscience so that we can't really tell if we are following God or if we are doing something that would displease Him (see 1 Tim. 4:1–2). The key is learning to quickly repent whenever God convicts us of something and to not make excuses.

King Josiah is the perfect example of someone who had a gentle and penitent heart. When God shows you that you have done something wrong, simply say, "You're right, Lord, I'm wrong. I have no excuse, so please forgive me and help me to not do it again."

It is amazing how much that will help us keep a tender conscience toward God and a positive mind. When we try to reason things out and make excuses for our wrongs, we begin to get calloused in our conscience, and it becomes just a little bit harder for us to sense conviction as we did the times before.

If we intentionally cultivate a willing, stirred-up, wise, perfect, and tender heart, the enemy may as well get out of our way because nothing can stop us from being positive toward God.

¹⁰Then they gave it to the workmen who were appointed over the house of the LORD, and the workmen who were working in the house of the LORD gave it [to others] to repair and restore the house (temple).

¹¹They in turn gave it to the carpenters and builders to buy quarried stone and timber for couplings (trusses, braces) and to make beams for the houses which the kings of Judah had let go to ruin.

¹²The men did the work faithfully with foremen over them to supervise *and* inspect [their work]: Jahath and Obadiah, the Levites of the sons of Merari, and Zechariah and Meshullam of the sons of the Kohathites, and the Levites, all who were skillful with musical instruments.

¹³*They were* also in charge of the burden bearers [who carried heavy loads], and supervised all the workmen in any kind of service; and some of the Levites were scribes and officials and gatekeepers.

¹⁴When they were bringing out the money which had been brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law of the LORD *given* by Moses.

¹⁵Hilkiah told Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD." And he gave the book to Shaphan.

¹⁶Shaphan brought the book to the king, but [first] reported further to him, "Your servants are doing everything that was entrusted to them.

¹⁷"They have emptied out the money that was found in the house of the LORD, and have delivered it into the hands of the overseers and the workmen."

¹⁸Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, “Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.” And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king.

¹⁹When the king heard the words of the Law, he tore his clothes.

²⁰Then the king commanded Hilkiah, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Abdon the son of Micah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king, saying,

²¹“Go, inquire of the LORD for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah in regard to the words of the book which has been found; for great is the wrath of the LORD which has been poured out on us because our fathers have not kept *and* obeyed the word of the LORD, to act in accordance with everything that is written in this book.”

²²So Hilkiah and those whom the king had told went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tokhath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe (now she lived in Jerusalem, in the Second Quarter); and they spoke to her about this.

²³And she answered them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: ‘Tell the man who sent you to me,

²⁴thus says the LORD: “Behold, I am bringing evil on this place and on its inhabitants, all the curses that are written in the book which they have read in the presence of the king of Judah.

²⁵“Because they have abandoned (rejected) Me and have burned incense to other gods, in order to provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands, My wrath will be poured out on this place and it will not be extinguished.” ’

²⁶“But you shall say the following to King Josiah of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD: ‘Thus says the LORD God of Israel, *concerning* the words which you have heard,

²⁷“Because your heart was gentle *and* penitent and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and its inhabitants, and humbled yourself before Me, and tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you,” declares the LORD.

²⁸“Behold, I will gather you to your fathers [in death], and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes shall not see all the evil which I am going to bring on this place and on its inhabitants.’”” So they brought back word to the king.

²⁹Then the king sent *word* and gathered all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem.

³⁰And the king went up to the house of the LORD with all the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests, the Levites, and all the people, from the greatest to the least; and he read aloud so they could hear all the words of the Book of the Covenant which was found in the house of the LORD.

³¹Then the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the LORD—to walk after (obey) the LORD, and to keep His commandments, His testimonies, and His statutes with all his heart and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant written in this book.

³²Further, he made all who were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin stand [with him, in confirmation of it]. So the inhabitants of Jerusalem acted in accordance with the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.

³³Josiah removed all the [pagan] repulsive things from all the lands belonging to the sons (descendants) of Israel, and made all who were present in Israel serve the LORD their God. Throughout his lifetime they did not turn from following the LORD God of their fathers.

35 JOSIAH CELEBRATED the Passover to the LORD in Jerusalem; they slaughtered the Passover *lambs* on the fourteenth *day* of the first month.

²He appointed the priests to their positions and encouraged them in the service of the house of the LORD.

³To the Levites who taught all Israel and were holy to the LORD he said, "Put the holy ark in the house (temple) which Solomon the son of David king of Israel built; it shall not be a burden [carried] on your shoulders any longer. Now serve the LORD your God and His people Israel.

⁴"Prepare *yourselves* according to your fathers' (ancestors') households by your divisions, in accordance with the instructions of David king of Israel, and the instructions of his son Solomon.

⁵"And stand in the holy place [of the priests] according to the sections of the fathers' households of your fellow kinsmen the lay people, and according to the Levites, by division of [the families of] a father's household.

⁶"Slaughter the Passover *lambs* and consecrate yourselves, and prepare for your fellow countrymen to carry out (obey) the word of the LORD *given* by Moses."

⁷Then Josiah contributed to the lay people, to all who were

present, flocks of lambs and young goats numbering 30,000, all as Passover offerings, and 3,000 bulls—these were from the king's property.

⁸His officers also contributed a voluntary offering to the people, the priests and the Levites. Hilkiah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, the officials of the house of God, gave to the priests for the Passover offerings 2,600 *from the flocks* [of lambs and young goats], and 300 bulls.

⁹Conaniah also, and Shemaiah and Nethanel, his brothers, and Hashabiah and Jeiel and Jozabad, officers of the Levites, contributed to the Levites for the Passover offerings 5,000 *from the flocks* [of lambs and young goats], and 500 bulls.

¹⁰When the service was ready, the priests stood in their [assigned] places and the Levites by their divisions, in accordance with the king's command.

¹¹They slaughtered the Passover *lambs*, and while the priests sprinkled the blood *received* from their hand, the Levites skinned *the animals*.

¹²Then they removed the burnt offerings, to distribute them to the sections of the fathers' households of the lay people to offer to the LORD, as it is written in the Book of Moses. *They did* the same with the bulls.

¹³So they roasted the Passover *lambs* on the fire according to the ordinance; and they cooked the holy offerings in pots, in kettles, and in pans, and quickly brought them to all the lay people.

¹⁴Afterward the Levites prepared for themselves and for the priests, because the priests, the sons of Aaron, *were busy* offering the burnt offerings and the fat until night; so the

Levites prepared for themselves and for the priests, the sons of Aaron.

¹⁵The singers, the sons of Asaph, were also in their places in accordance with the command of David, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun the king's seer; and the gatekeepers at each gate did not need to leave their service, because their kinsmen the Levites prepared for them.

¹⁶So all the service of the LORD was prepared on that day to celebrate the Passover, and to offer burnt offerings on the altar of the LORD, in accordance with the command of King Josiah.

¹⁷Thus the sons of Israel who were present celebrated the Passover at that time, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days.

¹⁸No Passover like it had been celebrated in Israel since the days of Samuel the prophet; nor had any of the kings of Israel celebrated such a Passover as Josiah did with the priests, the Levites, all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

¹⁹In the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign this Passover was celebrated.

²⁰After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Neco king of Egypt came up to make war at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah went out to meet him.

²¹But Neco sent messengers to Josiah, saying, "What business do we have with each other, O King of Judah? *I am not coming* against you today, but against the house with which I am at war, and God has ordered me to hurry. Stop for your own sake from *interfering with* God who is with me, so

that He will not destroy you.”

²²Yet Josiah would not turn away from him, but disguised himself in order to fight against him. He did not listen to the words of Neco from the mouth of God, but came to fight against him on the plain of Megiddo.

²³The archers shot King Josiah, and the king said to his servants, “Take me away, for I am badly wounded.”

²⁴So his servants took him out of the chariot and carried him in the second chariot which he had, and brought him to Jerusalem where he died and was buried in the tombs of his fathers. All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah.

²⁵Then Jeremiah sung a lament (funeral song) for Josiah, and all the male and female singers have spoken about Josiah in their laments to this day. They made the songs an ordinance in Israel; behold, they are written in the Lamentations. [Lam 4:20]

²⁶Now the rest of the acts of Josiah and his deeds of devotion *and* godly achievements as written in the Law of the LORD,

²⁷and his acts, from the first to the last, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah.

36 THEN THE people of the land took Joahaz the son of Josiah, and made him king in Jerusalem in place of his father.

²Joahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned [only] three months in Jerusalem.

³Then the king of Egypt deposed him at Jerusalem, and imposed a fine on the land of a hundred talents of silver and

one talent of gold.

⁴The king of Egypt made Eliakim, the brother of *Joahaz*, king over Judah and Jerusalem, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. But Neco took Joahaz his brother, and brought him to Egypt.

⁵Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned for eleven years in Jerusalem; and he did evil in the sight of the LORD his God.

⁶Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against him and bound him with bronze [chains] to take him to Babylon.

⁷Nebuchadnezzar also brought some of the articles of the house (temple) of the LORD to Babylon and put them in his temple there.

⁸Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim and the repulsive acts which he committed, and what was found against him, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah. And his son Jehoiachin became king in his place.

⁹Jehoiachin was eight[teen] years old when he became king, and he reigned for three months and ten days in Jerusalem, and he did evil in the sight of the LORD. [2 Kin 24:8]

¹⁰Now at the turn of the year [in the spring], King Nebuchadnezzar sent *word* and had him brought to Babylon with the valuable articles of the house of the LORD, and made his brother Zedekiah king over Judah and Jerusalem.

¹¹Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned for eleven years in Jerusalem.

¹²He did evil in the sight of the LORD his God; he did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, *who spoke* for the LORD.

¹³He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar who had made him swear *allegiance* by God. He stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD God of Israel.

¹⁴Also, all the officials of the priests and the people were very unfaithful, *following* all the repulsive acts of the [pagan] nations; and they defiled the house of the LORD which He had sanctified in Jerusalem.

¹⁵The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent *word* to them again and again by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place.

¹⁶But they kept mocking the messengers of God and despising His words and scoffing at His prophets until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, until there was no remedy *or* healing.

¹⁷Therefore He brought the king of the Chaldeans against them, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or infirm; He gave them all into his hand.

¹⁸And as for all the articles of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his officials, he brought them all to Babylon.

¹⁹Then they burned the house of God and tore down the wall of Jerusalem, and burned all its fortified buildings with fire, and destroyed all its valuable articles.

²⁰He deported to Babylon those who had escaped from the sword; and they were servants to him and to his sons until the kingdom of Persia was established there,

²¹to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah,

until the land had restored its Sabbaths; for as long as the land lay desolate it kept Sabbath until seventy years were complete. [Lev 25:4; 26:43; Jer 25:11; 29:10]

²²Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia—in order to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah—the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout his kingdom, and also *put it* in writing, saying,

²³“Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up [to Jerusalem]!’”

Ezra

Author: | Probably
Ezra

Date: | 538 BC–457
BC

The book of Ezra covers a period of approximately eighty years of Israel's history, recounting the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem after the Jews returned from their nearly sixty-year captivity in Babylon. As God's people worked to rebuild His house, they encountered mocking and opposition. They may have thought it would be easier to just give up, but they pressed through to victory as they stayed humble and sought the Lord, worshiped Him, fasted, and prayed.

The same strategies that brought the Israelites victory and success in their efforts to rebuild the temple are still effective today. Whenever God calls you to do something, you too may face opposition from the enemy, but as you walk in humility, seek the Lord, worship, fast, and pray, you can be assured that you will accomplish the assignment God has

given you.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM EZRA:

Whatever God asks you to do, do it diligently and enthusiastically (see Ezra 7:23).

When you are doing something God has called you to do, you can trust Him to strengthen and encourage you (see Ezra 7:28).

Fasting and prayer are powerful, effective ways to defeat the enemy (see Ezra 8:21–23).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM EZRA:

They sang [responsively], praising and giving thanks to the LORD, saying, "For He is good, for His lovingkindness (mercy) toward Israel endures forever." And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the LORD because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. | Ezra 3:11

Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done diligently and with enthusiasm for the house of the God of heaven, so that there will not be wrath against the kingdom of the king and his sons. | Ezra 7:23

So we fasted and sought [help from] our God concerning this [matter], and He heard our plea. | Ezra 8:23

THE BOOK OF

EZRA

1 NOW IN the first year of Cyrus king of Persia [that is, the first year he ruled Babylon], in order to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah [the prophet], the LORD stirred up (put in motion) the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also *put it* in writing, saying: [Jer 29:10–14]

²“Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build Him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

³‘Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel; He is God who is in Jerusalem.

⁴‘In any place where a survivor (Jewish exile) may live, let the men (Gentiles) of that place support him with silver and gold, with goods and cattle, together with freewill offerings for the house of God in Jerusalem.”

⁵Then the heads of the fathers’ *households* of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites, all those whose spirits God had stirred up, arose to go up and rebuild the house of the

LORD which is in Jerusalem.

⁶All those who were around them encouraged them with articles of silver, with gold, with goods, with cattle, and with valuable things, in addition to all that was given as a freewill offering.

⁷Also King Cyrus brought out the articles of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem [when he captured that city] and had put in the house of his gods.

⁸And Cyrus, king of Persia, had Mithredath the treasurer bring them out, and he counted them out to Sheshbazzar, the governor (leader) of Judah.

⁹And they counted: 30 dishes (basins) of gold, 1,000 dishes of silver, 29 duplicates;

¹⁰30 [small] gold bowls, 410 [small] silver bowls of a second kind, and 1,000 other articles.

¹¹All the articles of gold and of silver *totaled* 5,400. All these Sheshbazzar [the governor] brought up with the exiles who went from Babylon up to Jerusalem.

2 NOW THESE are the people of the province [of Judah] who came up from the captivity of the exiles, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had deported to Babylon, and who returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own city.

²These came with Zerubbabel: Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah.

The number of the men of the people of Israel:

³the sons (descendants) of Parosh, 2,172;

- ⁴the sons of Shephatiah, 372;
- ⁵the sons of Arah, 775;
- ⁶the sons of Pahath-moab of the sons of Jeshua and Joab, 2,812;
- ⁷the sons of Elam, 1,254;
- ⁸the sons of Zattu, 945;
- ⁹the sons of Zaccai, 760;
- ¹⁰the sons of Bani, 642;
- ¹¹the sons of Bebai, 623;
- ¹²the sons of Azgad, 1,222;
- ¹³the sons of Adonikam, 666;
- ¹⁴the sons of Bigvai, 2,056;
- ¹⁵the sons of Adin, 454;
- ¹⁶the sons of Ater of Hezekiah, 98;
- ¹⁷the sons of Bezai, 323;
- ¹⁸the sons of Jorah, 112;
- ¹⁹the sons of Hashum, 223;
- ²⁰the sons of Gibbar, 95;
- ²¹the men of Bethlehem, 123;
- ²²the men of Netophah, 56;
- ²³the men of Anathoth, 128;
- ²⁴the sons of Azmaveth, 42;
- ²⁵the sons of Kiriath-arim, Chephirah and Beeroth, 743;
- ²⁶the sons of Ramah and Geba, 621;
- ²⁷the men of Michmas, 122;
- ²⁸the men of Bethel and Ai, 223;

- ²⁹the sons of Nebo, 52;
³⁰the sons of Magbish, 156;
³¹the sons of the other Elam, 1,254;
³²the sons of Harim, 320;
³³the sons of Lod, Hadid and Ono, 725;
³⁴the men of Jericho, 345;
³⁵the sons of Senaah, 3,630.
³⁶The priests: the sons of Jedaiah of the house of Jeshua, 973;
³⁷the sons of Immer, 1,052;
³⁸the sons of Pashhur, 1,247;
³⁹the sons of Harim, 1,017.
⁴⁰The Levites: the sons of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the sons of Hodaviah, 74.
⁴¹The singers: the sons of Asaph, 128.
⁴²The sons of the gatekeepers: of Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita, and Shobai, in all 139.
⁴³The temple servants: the sons of Ziha, Hasupha, Tabbaoth,
⁴⁴the sons of Keros, Siaha, Padon,
⁴⁵the sons of Lebanah, Hagabah, Akkub,
⁴⁶the sons of Hagab, Shalmai, Hanan,
⁴⁷the sons of Giddel, Gahar, Reaiah,
⁴⁸the sons of Rezin, Nekoda, Gazzam,
⁴⁹the sons of Uzza, Paseah, Besai,
⁵⁰the sons of Asnah, Meunim, Nephisim,

⁵¹the sons of Bakbuk, Hakupha, Harhur,

⁵²the sons of Bazluth, Mehida, Harsha,

⁵³the sons of Barkos, Sisera, Temah,

⁵⁴the sons of Neziah, Hatipha.

⁵⁵The sons of [King] Solomon's servants: the sons of Sotai, Hassophereth (Sophereth), Peruda,

⁵⁶the sons of Jaalah, Darkon, Giddel,

⁵⁷the sons of Shephatiah, Hattil, Pochereth-hazzebaim, Ami.

⁵⁸All the temple servants and the sons of Solomon's servants totaled 392.

⁵⁹Now these are the ones who came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addan, and Immer, but they could not provide evidence of their fathers' households and their descendants, whether they were of Israel:

⁶⁰the sons of Delaiah, Tobiah, and Nekoda, 652.

⁶¹Of the sons of the priests: the sons of Hobaiah, of Hakkoz, and of Barzillai, who took a wife from the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and he was known by their name. [2 Sam 17:27, 28; 19:31–39]

⁶²These searched [for their names] among those registered in the genealogies, but they were not found; so they *were excluded* from the priesthood as [ceremonially] unclean.

⁶³The governor told them that they should not eat of the most holy things [the priests' food] until a priest stood up with Urim and Thummim [who by consulting these articles in his breastplate could determine God's will in the matter].

⁶⁴The whole assembly totaled 42,360,

⁶⁵besides their male and female servants who numbered 7,337; and [among them] they had 200 male and female singers.

⁶⁶Their horses totaled 736; their mules, 245;

⁶⁷their camels totaled 435; their donkeys, 6,720.

⁶⁸Some of the heads of the fathers' *households* (extended families), when they arrived at the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, made voluntary contributions for the house of God to rebuild it on its [old] foundation.

⁶⁹They gave according to their ability to the treasury for the work, 61,000 drachmas of gold, 5,000 minas of silver, and 100 priestly [linen] garments.

⁷⁰So the priests, the Levites, some of the people, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants settled in their [own] cities, and all Israel [gradually settled] into their cities.

3 WHEN THE seventh month came and the sons of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem.

²Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brothers the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and his brothers arose, and they built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the Law of Moses, the man of God.

³So they set up the altar on its [old] foundation, for they were terrified because of the peoples of the lands; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, morning and evening.

⁴They celebrated the Feast of Booths, as it is written, and offered the fixed number of daily burnt offerings, in accordance with the ordinances, as each day required;

⁵and afterward, there was the continual burnt offering, the offering at the New Moons, and at all the appointed festivals of the LORD that were consecrated, and the offerings of everyone who made a voluntary offering to the LORD.

POWERPOINT

The Israelites who returned from captivity were very vulnerable to the people surrounding them. Causing them to feel terrified was simply the enemy's attempt to distract them from God. When we feel frightened, as they did, we would do well to follow their example and focus on God, worshiping Him with all our hearts. God moves on our behalf when we focus on Him instead of on our fears.



⁶From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, but the foundation of the temple of the LORD had not been laid.

⁷They gave money to the masons and to the carpenters, and gave food, drink, and [olive] oil to the people from Sidon and Tyre, to bring cedar wood from Lebanon to the seaport of

Joppa, in accordance with the authorization they had from Cyrus king of Persia.

⁸In the second year of their coming to God's house at Jerusalem, in the second month, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak began [the work], with the rest of their brothers—the priests and Levites and all who came to Jerusalem from the captivity. They appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to oversee the work of the house of the LORD.

⁹Then Jeshua with his sons and brothers stood united with Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah and the sons of Henadad with their sons and brothers the Levites, to oversee the workmen in the house of God.

¹⁰Now when the builders had laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with their cymbals, to praise the LORD in accordance with the directions of David king of Israel.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Help me never to forget, Lord,

*that Your lovingkindness and
mercy toward me endure
forever.*

• *adapted from Ezra 3:11*

¹¹They sang [responsively], praising and giving thanks to the LORD, *saying*, “For He is good, for His lovingkindness (mercy) toward Israel *endures* forever.” And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the LORD because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

¹²But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers’ *households*, the old men who had seen the first house (temple), wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, while many shouted aloud for joy,

¹³so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the shout of joy from the sound of the weeping of the people, for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the sound was heard far away.

4 NOW WHEN [the Samaritans] the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles from the captivity were building a temple to the LORD God of Israel,

²they came to Zerubbabel [who was now governor] and to the heads of the fathers’ *households* and said to them, “Let us build with you, for we seek your God [and worship] just as you do; and we have sacrificed to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us up here.” [2 Kin

17:24–29]

³But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of fathers' *households* of Israel said to them, "You have nothing in common with us in building a house to our God; but we ourselves will together build to the LORD God of Israel, just as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, has commanded us."

⁴Then [the Samaritans and others of] the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah, and frightened them [to deter them] from building,

⁵and hired advisers [to work] against them to frustrate their plans during the entire time that Cyrus king of Persia reigned, [and this lasted] even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

The Power of Choice

When the foundation for the second temple had been laid, and the people gave a great celebratory shout of joy and praise to God, we also read that “the old men who had seen the first house (temple), wept with a loud voice,” because it was smaller and inferior to Solomon’s temple (Ezra 3:12). One group looked back with regret; the others looked forward to good things to come.

That scene speaks to me of the amazing power of choice that we have toward our circumstances in life. Hopefully, each of us will choose to live with a good, godly, positive, loving attitude. We should not bounce back and forth between good and bad, godly and ungodly, positive and negative, and peace and turmoil. As God’s Word says, “Choose life” (Deut. 30:19). Choose what will produce life for you and for all those you influence.

It is exciting to me to know that I can choose my attitude, and that good thoughts always precede good attitudes. A good attitude makes life seem good even if it is difficult. If you

are experiencing a serious problem and yet keep a good attitude, people may wonder how you could possibly be happy in the midst of your troubles. Your secret is simply your hope in God—an attitude that says things will be made right in the end, an attitude that believes God has a good plan for your future.

You may be thinking, *Well, that sounds nice, but it is very hard to do.* Actually, it is harder on us to have a bad attitude than a good one. I watched a person close to me have a bad attitude all his life, and he was one of the unhappiest human beings I have ever known. Not everyone with an ungodly attitude is as negative as he was, but to have one at all is never productive.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s statement is so true: "Hate is too great a burden to bear." How much better the world would be if more people adopted an attitude of love. We have opportunities on a regular basis to be angry or even hate, but we may also choose to love. This ability to choose is what makes us free. One wrong choice can bring pain, tragedy, and untold misery, and likewise one right choice can bring multiplied blessings and joy to countless numbers of people.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Dear Father, You are the giver of life, and I thank You for giving me the power to choose life. In the precious name of Jesus, forgive me for when I've allowed a bad attitude to control my life. Amen.

⁶Now in the reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes), in the beginning of his reign, the Samaritans wrote [to him] an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem [who had returned from exile].

⁷Later, in the days of [King] Artaxerxes, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel and the rest of their associates wrote to Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the text of the letter was written in Aramaic and translated *from* Aramaic.

⁸Rehum the [Persian] commander [of the Samaritans] and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king as follows—

⁹then *wrote* Rehum the [Persian] commander, Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their associates, the judges, the lesser governors, the officials, the secretaries, the men of Erech, the Babylonians, the men of Susa, that is, the Elamites,

¹⁰and the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Osnappar deported and settled in the city of Samaria, and in the rest of the region west of the [Euphrates] River. Now

¹¹this is a copy of the letter which they sent to him:

“To King Artaxerxes from your servants, the men in the region west of the [Euphrates] River; and now:

¹²Let it be known to the king that the Jews who came up from you have come to us at Jerusalem. They are rebuilding this rebellious and evil city and are finishing its walls and repairing the foundations.

¹³“Now let it be known to the king, that if that city is rebuilt and the walls are finished, then they will not pay tax, custom, or toll, and the revenue of the kings will be diminished.

¹⁴“Now because we are in the service of the palace, and it is not proper for us to witness the king’s dishonor, for that reason we have sent *word* and informed the king,

¹⁵in order that a search may be made in the record books of your fathers. And you will discover in the record books and learn that this is a rebellious city, damaging to kings and provinces, and that in the past they have incited rebellion within it. That is why that city was laid waste (destroyed).

¹⁶“We are informing the king that if that city is rebuilt and its walls finished, it will mean that you will have no possession in *the province* west of the [Euphrates] River.”

¹⁷*Then* the king sent an answer to Rehum the [Persian] commander, to Shimshai the scribe, and to the rest of their colleagues who live in Samaria and in the rest of *the provinces* west of the River: “Peace (Greetings). And now,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Has a Way Out

In Ezra 4, the people of Judah were surrounded by enemies and allowed discouragement and fear to halt their work toward rebuilding the temple. After several idle years, the words of encouragement from the prophets Haggai and Zechariah restored their faith and courage to continue the work.

Some of the challenges we face in life may be very difficult ones, but God never allows more to come upon us than we can bear. In fact, with every temptation, He always provides a way out and gives us the strength to bear up under trials with patience (see 1 Cor. 10:13). That means we can go through them with a good attitude! Maintaining a good attitude in the midst of something unpleasant is the key to victory. Even though you might not see the way out right now, one does exist, and God will reveal it as you trust Him.

¹⁸The document which you sent to us has been translated and read before me.

¹⁹“I have issued a command and a search has been made, and it has been discovered that this city [Jerusalem] in earlier times has revolted against the kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been perpetrated in it.

²⁰“There have also been mighty kings over Jerusalem who

have ruled over all *the provinces* west of the [Euphrates] River, and tax, custom, and toll were paid to them.

²¹“So, now issue a decree to make these men stop [work], so that this city is not rebuilt until a [new] command is issued by me.

²²“Beware of being negligent in carrying out this *matter*. Why should damage increase to the detriment of the kings?”

²³Then as soon as the copy of King Artaxerxes’ document was read before Rehum and Shimshai the scribe, and their colleagues, they went up hurriedly to Jerusalem to the Jews, and made them stop [work] by force of arms.

²⁴Then the work on the house of God in Jerusalem stopped. It was suspended until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

5 NOW WHEN the prophets, Haggai the prophet and Zechariah, the son (grandson) of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, *whose Spirit was* over them,

²then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel [heir to the throne of Judah] and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God [Haggai and Zechariah] were with them, supporting *and* encouraging them. [Hag 1:12–14; Matt 1:12, 13]

³At that time Tattenai, the governor of *the province* on the west side of the [Euphrates] River, and Shethar-bozenai and their colleagues came to them and said, “Who issued you a decree *and* authorized you to rebuild this temple and to restore

this wall (shrine)?”

⁴Then, accordingly, we told them the names of the men who were reconstructing this building.

⁵But the eye of their God was on the elders of the Jews, so they [Tattenai and the others] did not stop them until a report could come before Darius, and then an answer was returned by letter concerning it.

⁶*This is* a copy of the letter that Tattenai, governor of *the province* west of the [Euphrates] River, and Shethar-bozenai and his associates, the officials who were west of the River, sent to Darius the king.

⁷They sent a report to him in which it was written: “To Darius the king, all peace.

⁸“Let it be known to the king that we have gone to the province of Judah, to the house of the great God. It is being built with huge stones, with beams laid in the walls; and this work goes on with diligence *and* care and is succeeding in their hands.

⁹“Then we asked those elders, ‘Who issued you a decree to rebuild this temple and to finish this structure?’

¹⁰“We also asked them their names so that we might notify you, and so that we might record the names of the men in charge.

¹¹“They replied, ‘We are servants of the God of heaven and earth, and are rebuilding the temple which was erected many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and finished.

¹²‘But because our fathers provoked the God of heaven to wrath, He handed them over to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this temple and exiled

the people to Babylon.

¹³‘But in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, [the same] King Cyrus issued a decree to rebuild this house of God.

¹⁴‘Also the gold and silver utensils of the house of God which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem and had brought into the temple of Babylon, King Cyrus took from the temple of Babylon and had them given to a man whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had appointed governor.

¹⁵‘And Cyrus said to him, “Take these utensils, go and deposit them in the temple in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be rebuilt on its site.”

¹⁶‘Then that Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundations of the house of God in Jerusalem; and from then until now it has been under construction and is not yet completed.’

¹⁷“So now, if it pleases the king, let a search be conducted in the king’s treasure house [in the royal archives] there in Babylon to see if it is true that a decree was issued by King Cyrus to rebuild this house of God at Jerusalem; and let the king send us his decision concerning this matter.”

6 THEN KING Darius issued a decree, and a search was conducted in Babylon in the archives where the treasures [and records] were stored.

²In Ecbatana in the fortress (palace) in the province of Media, a scroll was found on which this was recorded: “Memorandum—

³“In the first year of King Cyrus, Cyrus the king issued a

decree: ‘Concerning the house of God in Jerusalem, let the temple (house), the place where sacrifices are offered, be rebuilt and let its foundations be strongly laid, its height and its width each 60 cubits,

⁴with three layers of huge stones and one layer of timbers. Let the cost be paid from the royal treasury.

⁵‘Also let the gold and silver utensils of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be returned and brought back to their [proper] places in the temple in Jerusalem; and you shall put them in the house of God.’

⁶“Now *therefore*, Tattenai, governor of *the province* west of the [Euphrates] River, Shethar-bozenai and your associates, the officials who are west of the River, keep far away from there.

⁷“Leave the work on this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the Jewish elders rebuild this house of God on its site.

⁸“Also, I issue a decree as to what you are to do for these Jewish elders for the rebuilding of this house of God: the full cost is to be paid to these people from the royal treasury out of the taxes of *the provinces* west of the River, and that without delay.

⁹“Whatever is needed, including young bulls, rams, and lambs for the burnt offerings to the God of heaven, and wheat, salt, wine, and anointing oil, according to the request of the priests at Jerusalem, let it all be given to them daily without fail,

¹⁰so that they may offer pleasing (sweet-smelling) sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for the life of the king and his sons.

POWERPOINT

The rebuilding of the temple came amid obstacles and persecution, but the Israelites pressed on and went forward. Many people think that the less effort they have to make, the better life is—but that is a lie!

Effortless *living* is never effective, and we are not made to take the easy way out. Let their story restore diligence in your heart to faithfully serve the Lord.



¹¹“I have also issued a decree that *if there is* any man who violates this edict, a beam of timber shall be pulled from his house [and set up]; then he shall be impaled on it, and his house shall be turned into a refuse heap for this [violation].

¹²“May the God who has caused His Name to dwell there overthrow any king or people who attempts to alter *this command*, so as to destroy this house of God in Jerusalem. I,

Darius, have issued this decree; let it be carried out quickly *and* with due diligence.

¹³Then Tattenai, governor of *the province* west of the [Euphrates] River, with Shethar-bozenai and their associates carried out the decree with due diligence, just as King Darius had sent *and* commanded.

¹⁴And the Jewish elders built and prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. They finished their building as commanded by the God of Israel and in accordance with the decree of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

¹⁵This temple was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

¹⁶And all Israel—the priests, the Levites, and the rest of the [former] exiles—celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy.

¹⁷They offered at the dedication of this house of God 100 bulls, 200 rams, 400 lambs, and, as a sin offering for all Israel, 12 male goats, according to the number of Israel's tribes.

¹⁸Then they appointed the priests to their divisions and the Levites in their orders for the service of God at Jerusalem, as it is written in the book of Moses.

¹⁹The [former] exiles kept the Passover on the fourteenth [day] of the first month.

²⁰For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves together; all of them were [ceremonially] clean. So they slaughtered the Passover *lamb* for all the exiles, for their brothers the priests, and for themselves.

²¹The *Passover* was eaten by the sons (descendants) of

Israel (Jacob) who returned from exile and by all those who had separated themselves from the [ceremonial] uncleanness of the nations of the land to *join* them, *in order* to seek the LORD God of Israel.

²²They observed the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days with joy, for the LORD had caused them to rejoice and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them, so that he encouraged them *and* strengthened their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

7 NOW AFTER this, in the reign of Artaxerxes I [son of Ahasuerus (Xerxes)] king of Persia, Ezra the son (descendant) of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah,

²the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub,

³the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth,

⁴the son of Zerahiah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki,

⁵the son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest—

⁶this Ezra went up from Babylon. He was a scribe skilled in the Law (the five books) of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given; and the king granted him everything that he asked, for the hand of the LORD his God was on him.

⁷Some of the sons of Israel, with some of the priests and Levites, the singers and gatekeepers, and the temple servants also went up [from Babylon] to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes.

⁸Ezra came to Jerusalem in the fifth month of the seventh

year of the king.

⁹For on the first of the first month he started out from Babylon, and on the first of the fifth month he arrived in Jerusalem, because the good hand of his God was on him.

¹⁰For Ezra had set his heart (resolved) to study *and* interpret the Law of the LORD, and to practice it and teach *His* statutes and ordinances in Israel.

¹¹Now this is a copy of the decree that King Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the priest, the scribe [who was] learned in the words of the commandments of the LORD and of His statutes to Israel:

¹²“Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven, perfect *peace* (greetings). And now

¹³I have issued a decree that all of the people of Israel and their priests and the Levites in my kingdom who are willing to go to Jerusalem, may go with you.

¹⁴“For you are sent by the king and his seven advisers to inquire about Judah and Jerusalem in accordance with the Law of your God, which is in your hand,

¹⁵and to bring [with you] the silver and gold which the king and his advisers have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem,

¹⁶and all the silver and gold which you find in the whole province of Babylon, along with the freewill offering of the people and of the priests for the house of their God in Jerusalem.

¹⁷“Therefore with this money, you shall diligently buy bulls, rams, and lambs, with their grain offerings and drink

offerings, and offer them on the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem.

¹⁸“And whatever seems good to you and to your brothers to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, you may do in accordance with the will of your God.

¹⁹“As for the utensils which are given to you for the service of the house of your God, deliver [those] in full before the God of Jerusalem.

²⁰“The rest of the things required for the house of your God, which you may have occasion to provide, provide it from the royal treasury.

²¹“And I, Artaxerxes the king, issue a decree to all the treasurers *in the provinces* west of the [Euphrates] River, that whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven, may require of you, it shall be done diligently *and* at once—

²²*even* up to 100 talents of silver, 100 kors (measures) of wheat, 100 baths of wine, 100 baths of [olive] oil, and salt as needed.

²³“Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done diligently *and* with enthusiasm for the house of the God of heaven, so that there will not be wrath against the kingdom of the king and his sons.

²⁴“We also inform you that it is not authorized to impose tax, tribute, or toll on any of the priests, Levites, singers, doorkeepers, temple servants or *other* servants of this house of God.

²⁵“You, Ezra, are to appoint magistrates and judges in accordance with the wisdom *and* instruction of your God

which is in your hand, so that they may judge all the people who are in *the province* west of the [Euphrates] River; *appoint* those who know the laws of your God; and you may teach anyone who does not know *them*.

²⁶“Whoever does not observe *and* practice the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be executed upon him strictly *and* promptly, whether it be for death or banishment or confiscation of property or imprisonment.”

²⁷Blessed be the LORD, the God of our fathers [said Ezra], who put *such a thing* as this in the king’s heart, to adorn *and* glorify the house of the LORD in Jerusalem,

²⁸and has extended His mercy *and* lovingkindness to me before the king, his advisers, and all the king’s mighty officials. I was strengthened *and* encouraged, for the hand of the LORD my God was upon me, and I gathered together outstanding men of Israel to go up with me [to Jerusalem].

8 THESE ARE the heads of their fathers’ *households* and *this* is the genealogy of those who went up with me from Babylon in the reign of King Artaxerxes:

²of the sons of Phinehas, Gershom; of the sons of Ithamar, Daniel; of the sons of David, Hattush;

³of the sons of Shecaniah *who was* of the sons of Parosh, Zechariah, and with him were registered 150 men by genealogy;

⁴of the sons of Pahath-moab, Eliehoenai son of Zerariah, with 200 men;

⁵of the sons of Zattu, Shecaniah son of Jahaziel, with 300 men;

⁶of the sons of Adin, Ebed son of Jonathan, with 50 men;
⁷of the sons of Elam, Jeshaiah son of Athaliah, with 70 men;

⁸of the sons of Shephatiah, Zebadiah son of Michael, with 80 men;

⁹of the sons of Joab, Obadiah son of Jehiel, with 218 men;

¹⁰of the sons of Bani, Shelomith son of Josiphiah, with 160 men;

¹¹of the sons of Bebai, Zechariah son of Bebai, with 28 men;

¹²of the sons of Azgad, Johanan son of Hakkatan, with 110 men;

¹³of the sons of Adonikam, the last to come, their names are Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah, with 60 men;

¹⁴and of the sons of Bigvai, Uthai and Zabbud, with 70 men.

¹⁵Now I gathered them together at the river that runs to Ahava, where we camped for three days. I observed the people and the priests, and I did not find any Levites there.

¹⁶So I sent for Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam, [who were] leading men, and also for Joiarib and Elnathan, [who were] teachers.

¹⁷And I sent them to Iddo, the leading man at the place Casiphia, telling them what to say to Iddo and his brothers, the temple servants at the place Casiphia, *that is*, to bring us servants (ministers) for the house of our God.

¹⁸And as the good hand of our God was upon us, they

brought us a man of understanding (insight) from the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel, *named* Sherebiah, with his sons and his brothers (relatives), 18 men;

¹⁹and Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiiah of the sons of Merari, with his brothers (relatives) and their sons, 20 men;

²⁰also 220 of the temple servants, whom David and the leaders had set apart [with their descendants] for the service of the Levites. They were all designated by name.

²¹Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river Ahava, so that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from Him a safe journey for us, our children, and all our possessions.

POWERPOINT

These exiled Jews desperately needed guidance and protection, so they humbled themselves before God through fasting. When we seek God, we pursue and go after God with all our might. We need to seek God all the time, not just when we're having problems. One way to humble ourselves before the Lord is to skip a few meals, turn off the electronic devices, and spend time with Him.



²²For I was ashamed to request troops and horsemen from the king to protect us from the enemy along the way, because we had told the king, “The hand of our God is favorable toward all those who seek Him, but His power and His anger are against all those who abandon (turn away from) Him.”

²³So we fasted and sought [help from] our God concerning

this [matter], and He heard our plea.

²⁴Then I set apart twelve leading priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brothers (relatives),

²⁵and I weighed out to them the silver, the gold, and the utensils, the offering for the house of our God which the king, his advisers, his officials, and all Israel who were present there had offered.

²⁶I weighed into their hands 650 talents of silver, and silver utensils *worth* 100 talents, and 100 talents of gold;

²⁷also 20 bowls of gold *worth* 1,000 darics, and two utensils of fine shiny bronze, precious as gold.

²⁸Then I said to them, "You are holy to the LORD, the utensils are holy, and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering to the LORD God of your fathers.

²⁹"Guard and keep them until you weigh them before the leading priests and the Levites and the leaders of the fathers' *households* of Israel in Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the LORD."

³⁰So the priests and the Levites received the weighed out silver and gold, and the utensils, to bring them to Jerusalem to the house of our God.

³¹We set out from the river Ahava on the twelfth [day] of the first month to go to Jerusalem; and the hand of our God was upon us, and He rescued us from the hand of the enemy and those who lay in ambushes along the way.

³²So we came to Jerusalem and remained there for three days.

³³On the fourth day the silver and the gold and the utensils were weighed out in the house of our God into the hand of

Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest, and with him was Eleazar the son of Phinehas; and with them were the Levites—Jozabad the son of Jeshua and Noadiah the son of Binnui.

³⁴Every piece was counted and weighed, and all the weight was recorded at that time.

³⁵Also the [former] exiles who had come from the captivity offered burnt offerings to the God of Israel: 12 bulls for all Israel, 96 rams, 77 lambs, and 12 male goats for a sin offering. All this was a burnt offering to the LORD.

³⁶And they delivered the king's edicts to the king's satraps (lieutenants) and to the governors west of the [Euphrates] River, and they supported the people and God's house.

9 WHEN THESE things were completed, the officials came to me and said, "The people of Israel and the priests and Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, but have committed the repulsive acts of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians, and Amorites.

²"For they have taken some of their daughters *as wives* for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy race has intermingled with the peoples of the lands. Indeed, the officials and chief men have been foremost in this unfaithful act *and* direct violation [of God's will]." [Deut 7:3, 4]

³When I heard this, I tore my clothing and my robe [in grief], I pulled out some of the hair from my head and my beard, and sat down appalled [at the shame of it].

⁴Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of

Israel because of the unfaithfulness of the exiles gathered to me as I sat appalled until the evening offering.

⁵At the evening offering I arose from my [time of] humiliation *and* penitence and having torn my clothing and my robe, I fell on my knees and stretched out my hands to the LORD my God,

⁶and I said, “O my God, I am ashamed and embarrassed to lift up my face to You, my God, for our wrongdoings have risen higher than our heads and our guilt has grown to the heavens.

⁷“Since the days of our fathers to this day we have been exceedingly guilty; and on account of our wrongdoings we, our kings, and our priests have been handed over to the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plundering, and to complete shame, as it is today.

⁸“But now for a brief moment grace has been [shown to us] from the LORD our God, who has left us a surviving remnant and has given us a peg (secure hold) in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and give us a little reviving in our bondage.

⁹“For we are slaves; yet our God has not abandoned us in our bondage, but has extended lovingkindness to us before the kings of Persia, to revive us to rebuild the house of our God, to repair the site of its ruins and to give us a wall [of protection] in Judah and Jerusalem.

¹⁰“Now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have abandoned (turned away from) Your commandments,

¹¹which You have commanded by Your servants the prophets, saying, ‘The land which you are entering to possess is a defiled land with the uncleanness of the peoples of the

lands, through their repulsive acts which have filled it from one end to the other *along* with their impurity.

¹²“So now do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons; and never seek their peace or their prosperity, so that you may be strong and eat the good *things* of the land and leave it as an inheritance to your children forever.’

¹³“And after everything that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great guilt, since You our God have punished us less than our wrongdoings *deserve*, and have given us survivors like these,

¹⁴shall we again break Your commandments and intermarry with the peoples who practice these repulsive acts? Would You not be angry with us to the point of total destruction, so that there would be no remnant nor survivor? [Deut 7:2–4]

¹⁵“O LORD God of Israel, You are [uncompromisingly] just (righteous), for we have been left as survivors, as it is this day. Behold, we are before You in our guilt, for no one can stand before You because of this.”

10 NOW WHILE Ezra was praying and confessing, weeping and laying himself face down before the house of God, a very large group from Israel, of men, women, and children, gathered to him, for the people wept bitterly.

²Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, of the sons of Elam, said to Ezra, “We have been unfaithful to our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope for Israel in spite of this.

³“Therefore let us now make a covenant with our God to send away all the [foreign] wives and their children, in accordance with the advice of my lord and of those who tremble [in reverent obedience] at the commandment of our God; and let it be done in accordance with the Law.

⁴“Stand up, for it is your duty, and we will be with you. Be brave and act.”

⁵Then Ezra stood and made the leaders of the priests, the Levites, and all Israel, take an oath that they would act in accordance with this proposal; so they took the oath.

⁶Then Ezra got up from before the house of God and went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib [and spent the night there]. He did not eat bread nor drink water, for he was mourning over the [former] exiles' faithlessness.

⁷They made a proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem to all the [former] exiles, that they were to assemble at Jerusalem,

⁸and that whoever would not come within three days, by order of the counsel of the leaders and the elders, all his possessions *and* property would be forfeited and he himself would be excluded from the assembly of the exiles.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Talk About What God Says

Ezra 10 marks a critical moment for the Jewish people who had returned from exile. Ezra called upon them to agree with God regarding their unfaithfulness “and do His will” (v. 11), despite how they felt.

We all want God’s promises to come to pass and be a reality in our lives. Yet many of us say and do the opposite of what God says in His Word. Too often we talk about how we feel or what we think when we should be talking about what God’s Word says.

Jesus is the great High Priest of our confession (see Heb. 4:14). Our confession is merely what we say, and Jesus works accordingly based on our words. He works for us to bring God’s will to pass, but He can work only so far as we agree with God in what He says. The power of agreement is amazing when you agree with God.

⁹So all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered at Jerusalem within three days. It was the twentieth [day] of the ninth month, and all the people sat in the open square *in front* of the house of God, trembling because of [the seriousness of] this matter and because of the heavy rain.

¹⁰Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, “You have been unfaithful [to God] and have married foreign (pagan)

women, adding to the guilt of Israel.

¹¹“So now, make confession to the LORD God of your fathers and do His will. Separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from [your] foreign wives.”

¹²Then all the assembly replied with a loud voice, “It is our responsibility to do just as you have said.

¹³“But there are many people and it is the season of heavy rain; so we are unable to stand outside. Nor *can* the task *be done* in a day or two, for we have transgressed greatly in this matter.

¹⁴“Let our leaders stand for *and* represent the entire assembly; let all those in our cities who have married foreign wives come at appointed times, together with the elders and judges of each city, until the burning anger of our God over this matter is turned away from us.”

¹⁵Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahzeiah the son of Tikvah opposed this, and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite supported them.

¹⁶Then the [former] exiles did so. Ezra the priest and men *who were* heads of fathers’ *households* were selected, according to their fathers’ households, each of them by name; and they sat down on the first day of the tenth month to investigate the matter.

¹⁷And by the first day of the first month they finished *investigating* all the men married to foreign wives.

¹⁸Now among the sons of the priests who had married foreign women were found: of the sons of Jeshua [the high priest] the son of Jozadak, and his brothers—Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah.

¹⁹They vowed to send away their [pagan] wives, and being guilty, *they each offered* a ram of the flock for their offense.

²⁰Of the sons of Immer: Hanani and Zebadiah;

²¹and of the sons of Harim: Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel, and Uzziah;

²²and of the sons of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Elasah.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Practice Thinking Right Thoughts

When God begins to deal with us about wrong behavior, as He did at Jerusalem with the Jewish men who had married foreign women (see Ezra 10), it's easy enough to say, "I can't help it." But it takes real courage to say what they said, "It is our responsibility to do just as you have said" (v. 12).

Avoidance, which is not facing issues, is a major problem. Wrong things don't go away just because people refuse to acknowledge them. Issues buried alive never die.

For many years, I refused to deal with the sexual abuse in my childhood. My father had abused me, so when I left home, I thought I was getting away from the problem, but the problem was in my thoughts, attitudes, and words. It affected my actions and all my relationships. I had buried my past, but the results remained.

I had a lot of bad behavior and negative attitudes. I also made lots of excuses. I wasn't dealing with anything from the past; I was merely feeling sorry for myself, saying, "I can't help it. I was abused." And it wasn't my fault. But it was my

responsibility to let God help me to overcome all the bondages I was experiencing as a result of the abuse.

God began setting me free by dealing with me about all the wrong thoughts I had accepted and allowed. My mind had to change before my life could change. I learned that God has given us the power to decide—to choose right thinking over wrong. He says, “I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore, you shall choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants” (Deut. 30:19).

Thinking right thoughts takes practice, and focusing only on the good and pushing away evil is not always easy. But we’re moving in the right direction every time we take responsibility and make godly choices. If we know this is the pathway to true life, it’s worth the struggle to learn to think positive thoughts. The more we fill our lives with studying God’s Word the easier it becomes to choose right thoughts.

APRAYER FOR VICTORY

Powerful God, remind me that I can and do make choices every day. Please help me to be aware of my thoughts, choosing only those that will help me to defeat the enemy and win the battle for my mind. In Jesus’ name, I pray. Amen.

²³Of the Levites: Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah, that is, Kelita, Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer.

²⁴Of the singers: Eliashib; and of the gatekeepers: Shallum, Telem, and Uri.

²⁵Of Israel, of the sons of Parosh: Ramiah, Izziah, Malchijah, Mijamin, Eleazar, Malchijah (Hashabiah), and Benaiah;

²⁶and of the sons of Elam: Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, Jeremoth, and Elijah;

²⁷and of the sons of Zattu: Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zabad, and Aziza;

²⁸and of the sons also of Bebai: Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai;

²⁹and of the sons of Bani: Meshullam, Malluch, Adaiah, Jashub, Sheal, and Jeremoth;

³⁰and of the sons of Pahath-moab: Adna, Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, Binnui, and Manasseh;

³¹and of the sons of Harim: Eliezer, Isshijah, Malchijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon,

³²Benjamin, Malluch, and Shemariah;

³³of the sons of Hashum: Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and Shimei;

³⁴of the sons of Bani: Maadai, Amram, Uel,

³⁵Benaiah, Bedeiah, Cheluhi,

³⁶Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib,

³⁷Mattaniah, Mattenai, Jaasu,

³⁸Bani, Binnui, Shimei,

³⁹Shelemiah, Nathan, Adaiah,

⁴⁰Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai,

⁴¹Azarel, Shelemiah, Shemariah,

⁴²Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph.

⁴³Of the sons of Nebo: Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai, Joel, and Benaiah.

⁴⁴All these had married foreign women, and some of them had wives *by whom* they had children.

Nehemiah

Author: | Nehemiah

Date: |
Approximately 423 BC

The story of Nehemiah begins with a God-ordained thought in the heart of one man, Nehemiah. God impressed upon his mind the need to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, which had been destroyed years earlier. The way God worked in and through Nehemiah is very interesting. He first gave him the burden in his heart to rebuild the wall; He then gave him favor with his boss so he could have time to fulfill God's plan; He then enabled Nehemiah to use his leadership skills to rally the people to build the wall. When the wall was finished, Nehemiah led the people in celebrating their accomplishment and worshiping God.

When God gives you an idea or plants a thought in your mind, He will also provide everything you need in order to carry out that plan, just as He did for Nehemiah.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM NEHEMIAH:

Let Nehemiah's story encourage you to believe God for favor (see Nehemiah 2:8).

When God has called you to do something and the enemy harasses and opposes you, God is always able to frustrate his plan so His own divine purpose will keep moving ahead (see Nehemiah 4:15).

Just as God gave His good Spirit to instruct the Israelites, He gives the Holy Spirit to help and instruct you in any way that you need (see Nehemiah 9:20).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM NEHEMIAH:

I answered them, “The God of heaven [has appointed us for His purpose and] will give us success; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no portion, right, or memorial in Jerusalem.” | Nehemiah 2:20

Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, gather to us there. Our God will fight for us. | Nehemiah 4:20

And do not be worried, for the joy of the LORD is your strength and your stronghold. | Nehemiah 8:10

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

1 THE WORDS of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah:

Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year [of the Persian king], as I was in the capitol of Susa,

²Hanani, one of my brothers, and some men from Judah came; and I asked them about the surviving Jews who had escaped and survived the captivity, and about Jerusalem.

³They said to me, “The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach; the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its [fortified] gates have been burned (destroyed) by fire.”

⁴Now it came about when I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying [constantly] before the God of heaven.

⁵And I said, “Please, O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps the covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments,

⁶please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open to hear the prayer of Your servant which I am praying before You, day and night, on behalf of Your servants, the sons (descendants) of Israel (Jacob), confessing the sins of the sons of Israel which we have committed against You; I and my father’s house

have sinned.

⁷“We have acted very corruptly against You and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses. [Deut 6:1–9]

⁸“Please remember the word which You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful *and* violate your obligations to Me I will scatter you [abroad] among the peoples; [Lev 26:33]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Expect Favor

In Nehemiah 1:11, Nehemiah prays to the Lord, “and make Your servant successful this day and grant him compassion in the sight of this man [the king].” When Nehemiah prayed for the king to have compassion on him, that was the same as praying for the king to give him favor. Nehemiah had a task he felt called to complete, and in order to do it the king would need to grant him favor and allow him to temporarily leave his position as the royal cupbearer.

Let me encourage you to pray for favor, as Nehemiah did. Confess that you have favor with God and that He gives you favor with people. Develop your faith in the area of favor. Live expecting favor all the time. Trust God to choose your friends, to open the right doors in relationships, and to close the wrong ones. Ask the Lord for “divine connections,” friendships that will be perfect for you. God can connect you with people who will add to your life rather than take away from it.

Even though God gives you favor, you will still encounter times when people won't approve of you. Strive to please God and let Him deal with the people.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Talk Yourself into a Better Mood

When Nehemiah heard that the wall of Jerusalem was broken down, he wept and mourned. He was so downcast that even the king noticed his sadness. But Nehemiah soon changed his attitude and became courageous enough to ask the king for a leave of absence to go and rebuild the wall of Jerusalem (see Neh. 2:5).

Robert Schuller said, "The good news is that the bad news can be turned into good news when you change your attitude." When you choose to have a good attitude concerning something you're unhappy about, you are helping yourself and everyone around you.

If you will make a decision to say as little as possible about your problems and disappointments in life, they won't dominate your thoughts or your mood. Talk as much as possible about your blessings and hopeful expectations, and your joy will increase. Be sure to fill each day with words that fuel joy, not anger, depression, bitterness, or fear. Talk yourself into a better mood! Find something positive to say in every situation.

⁹but if you return to Me and keep My commandments and do them, though those of you who have been scattered are in the most remote part of the heavens, I will gather them from

there and will bring them to the place where I have chosen for My Name to dwell.’ [Deut 30:1–5]

¹⁰“Now they are Your servants and Your people whom You have redeemed by Your great power and by Your strong hand.

¹¹“Please, O Lord, let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant and the prayer of Your servants who delight to [reverently] fear Your Name [Your essence, Your nature, Your attributes, with awe]; and make Your servant successful this day and grant him compassion in the sight of this man [the king].”

For I was cupbearer to the king [of Persia].

2 IN THE month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was *placed* before him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not [previously] been sad in his presence.

²So the king said to me, “Why do you look sad when you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of heart.” Then I was very frightened,

³and I said to the king, “Let the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the city, the place of my fathers’ tombs, lies desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?”

⁴The king said to me, “What do you request?” So I prayed to the God of heaven.

⁵I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your presence, [I ask] that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, so that I may

rebuild it.”

⁶The king, beside whom the queen was sitting, asked me, “How long will your journey take, and when will you return?” So it pleased the king to send me, and I gave him a definite time [for my return].

⁷Then I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, let letters be given to me for the governors *of the provinces* beyond the [Euphrates] River, so that they will allow me to pass through until I reach Judah,

⁸and a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king’s forest, so that he will give me timber to construct beams for the gates of the fortress which is by the temple, and for the city wall and for the house which I will occupy.” And the king granted me *what I asked*, for the good hand of my God was upon me.

⁹Then I came to the governors *of the provinces* beyond the [Euphrates] River and gave them the king’s letters. Now the king had sent officers of the army and horsemen with me.

¹⁰When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard this, it caused them great displeasure that someone had come to see about the welfare *and* prosperity of the Israelites.

¹¹So I came to Jerusalem and was there for three days.

¹²Then I got up in the night, I and a few men with me. I did not tell anyone what my God was putting in my heart to do for Jerusalem, and there was no animal with me except the one on which I was riding [so as not to attract attention].

¹³So I went out at night by the Valley Gate toward the Dragon’s Well and to the Refuse Gate and inspected the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were

consumed by fire.

¹⁴Then I passed over to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was no place for the animal that I was riding to pass.

¹⁵So I went up at night by the ravine [of Kidron] and inspected the wall; then I turned back and entered [the city] by the Valley Gate, and returned.

¹⁶The officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; nor had I yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the rest who did the work.

¹⁷Then I said to them, "You see the bad situation that we are in—how Jerusalem is desolate *and* lies in ruins and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, and let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, so that we will no longer be a disgrace."

¹⁸Then I told them how the hand of my God had been favorable to me and also about the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, "Let us rise up and build." So they thoroughly supported the good *work*.

¹⁹But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked us and regarded us with contempt and said, "What is this thing you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?"

²⁰I answered them, "The God of heaven [has appointed us for His purpose and] will give us success; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no portion, right, or memorial in Jerusalem."

3 THEN ELIASHIB the high priest rose up with his brothers

the priests and built the Sheep Gate. They consecrated it and set up its doors; and they consecrated the wall [westward] to the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Tower of Hananel.

²Next to Eliashib the men of Jericho built, and next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built.

³Now the sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate; they laid its beams and set up its doors with its bolts and its bars.

⁴Next to them Meremoth the son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, made repairs. Next to him Meshullam the son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezabel, made repairs. And next to him Zadok the son of Baana *also* made repairs.

⁵Next to him the men of Tekoa made repairs, but their nobles did not support the work of their overseers.

⁶Joiada the son of Paseah and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah repaired the Old Gate. They laid its beams and set up its doors with its bolts and its bars.

⁷Next to them Melatiah the Gibeonite and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon and of Mizpah, made repairs for the official seat (Jerusalem residence) of the governor [of the province] beyond the [Euphrates] River.

⁸Next to them Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs. Next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, made repairs, and they restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.

⁹Next to them Rephaiah the son of Hur, official of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs.

¹⁰Next to them Jedaiah the son of Harumaph made repairs opposite his own house. And next to him Hattush the son of Hashabneiah made repairs.

¹¹Malchijah the son of Harim and Hasshub the son of Pahath-moab repaired another section and the Tower of the Furnaces.

¹²Next to him Shallum the son of Hallohesh, the official of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs, he and his daughters.

¹³Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate. They built it and set up its doors with its bolts and its bars, and *repaired* a thousand cubits (1,500 ft.) of the wall as far as the Refuse Gate.

¹⁴Malchijah the son of Rechab, the official of the district of Beth-haccherem repaired the Refuse Gate. He rebuilt it and set its doors with its bolts and its bars.

¹⁵Shallum the son of Col-hozeh, official of the district of Mizpah repaired the Fountain Gate. He rebuilt it and covered it [with a roof], and set up its doors with its bolts and its bars, and [he rebuilt] the wall of the Pool of Shelah (Siloam) by the King's Garden as far as the stairs that descend [the eastern slope] from [the section of Jerusalem known as] the City of David.

¹⁶After him Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, official of half the district of Beth-zur, repaired [the wall] as far as [a point] in front of the tombs of David, and as far as the artificial pool and the house of the guards.

¹⁷After him the Levites carried out repairs *under* Rehum the son of Bani. Next to him Hashabiah, official of half the district of Keilah, carried out repairs for his district.

¹⁸After him their brothers carried out repairs *under* Bavvai the son of Henadad, official of [the other] half of the district of

Keilah.

¹⁹Next to him Ezer the son of Jeshua, the official of Mizpah, repaired another section [northward] in front of the ascent to the armory at the Angle [in the wall].

²⁰After him Baruch son of Zabbai zealously repaired another section [toward the hill], from the Angle [in the wall] to the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest.

²¹After him Meremoth the son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, repaired another [eastern] section, from the door of Eliashib's house as far as the end of his house.

²²After him the priests, the men of the [lower Jordan] valley, carried out repairs.

²³After them Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs in front of their house. After them Azariah the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ananiah, carried out repairs beside his own house.

²⁴After him Binnui the son of Henadad repaired another section [of the wall], from the house of Azariah to the Angle [in the wall] and to the corner.

²⁵Palal the son of Uzai *made repairs* in front of the Angle [in the wall] and the tower projecting from the upper house (palace) of the king, which is by the courtyard of the guard. After him Pedaiah the son of Parosh *made repairs*.

²⁶The temple servants were living in Ophel [the hill south of the temple], and they *made repairs* as far as the front of the Water Gate on the east and the projecting tower.

²⁷After them the Tekoites repaired another section in front of the great projecting tower and as far as the wall of Ophel.

²⁸Above the Horse Gate the priests made repairs, each one in front of his own house.

²⁹After them Zadok the son of Immer carried out repairs in front of his house. After him Shemaiah the son of Shecaniah, keeper of the East Gate, repaired *the wall*.

³⁰After him Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. After him Meshullam the son of Berechiah carried out repairs in front of his own quarters.

³¹After him Malchijah, one of the goldsmiths, carried out repairs as far as the house of the temple servants and of the merchants, in front of the Inspection Gate and as far as the upper room of the corner.

³²Between the upper room of the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and merchants carried out repairs.

4 BUT WHEN Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became furious, completely enraged, and he ridiculed the Jews.

²He spoke before his brothers and the army of Samaria, “What are these feeble Jews doing? Can they restore it for themselves? Can they offer sacrifices? Can they finish in a day? Can they revive the stones from the heaps of dust *and* rubbish, even the ones that have been burned?”

³Now Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, “Even what they are building—if a fox should get up on it, he would break down their stone wall.”

⁴[And Nehemiah prayed] Hear, O our God, how we are despised! Return their taunts on their own heads. Give them up as prey in a land of captivity.

⁵Do not forgive their wrongdoing and do not let their sin be wiped out before You, for they have offended the builders [and provoked You].

⁶So we built the wall and the entire wall was joined together to half its *height*, for the people had a heart to work.

⁷But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the repair of the walls of Jerusalem went on, and that the breaches were being closed, they were very angry.

⁸They all conspired together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to cause a disturbance in it.

⁹But we prayed to our God, and because of them we set up a guard against them day and night.

¹⁰Then [the leaders of] Judah said,

“The strength of the burden bearers is failing,
And there is much rubble;
We ourselves are unable
To rebuild the wall.”

¹¹Our enemies said, “They will not know or see us until we are among them, kill them and put a stop to the work.”

¹²When the Jews who lived near them came, they said to us ten times (repeatedly), “From every place you turn, they will come up against us.”

¹³So I stationed *armed men* behind the wall in the lowest places, at the open positions [where it was least protected]; and I stationed the people in families with their swords, spears, and bows.

¹⁴When I saw *their fear*, I stood and said to the nobles and

officials and the rest of the people: “Do not be afraid of them; [confidently] remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and [with courage from Him] fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and for your homes.”

¹⁵Now when our enemies heard that we knew about *their plot against us*, and that God had frustrated their plan, we all returned to the wall, each one to his work.

¹⁶From that day on, half of my servants carried on the work while the other half held the spears, shields, bows, and breastplates; and the captains were behind the whole house of Judah.

Speak God's Word

*I will not be afraid of those
who oppose me; I confidently
remember the Lord who is
great and awesome, and with
courage from Him I fight for
my family and for our home.*

| adapted from NEHEMIAH 4:14 |

¹⁷Those who were rebuilding the wall and those who carried burdens loaded themselves *so that everyone* worked with one hand and held a weapon with the other.

¹⁸Every builder *had* his sword secured at his side as he built. And the one who sounded the trumpet [to summon the troops] stood at my side.

¹⁹I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “The work is great and extensive, and we are separated on the wall, far from one another.

²⁰“Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, gather to us there. Our God will fight for us.”

²¹So we carried on with the work with half of them holding spears from dawn until the stars came out.

²²At that time I also said to the people, “Let each man with

his servant spend the night inside Jerusalem so that they may serve as a guard for us at night and a laborer during the day.”

²³So neither I, my brothers (relatives), my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us took off our clothes; each took his weapon [even] to the water.

5 NOW THERE was a great outcry of the [poorer] people and their wives against their Jewish brothers [to whom they were deeply in debt].

²For there were some who were saying, “We, *along with* our sons and our daughters, are many; therefore allow us to get grain, so that we may eat and survive.”

³There were *others* who were saying, “We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards, and our houses to buy grain because of the famine.”

⁴There were also *others* who were saying, “We have borrowed money on our fields and vineyards for the [Persian] king’s [heavy] tax.

⁵“Now our flesh (skin) is the same as that of our brothers (relatives), and our children are like their children, yet here we are forcing (selling) our sons and our daughters to be slaves; and some of our daughters are forced into bondage *already*, and we are powerless [to redeem them] because our fields and vineyards belong to others.”

⁶Then I was very angry when I heard their outcry and these words [of accusation].

⁷I thought it over and then challenged the nobles and the rulers. I said to them, “You are exacting usury (excessive

interest) from your own brother (relative).” So I held a great assembly to confront them.

⁸I said to them, “According to our ability we have redeemed (purchased back) our Jewish brothers who were sold to the [Gentile] nations; now would you even sell your brothers, that they might be sold to us?” Then they were silent and could not find a [single] word *to say*.

⁹So I said, “What you are doing is not good. Should you not walk in the fear of our God to prevent the taunting by the [pagan] nations, our enemies?

¹⁰“And likewise I, my brothers, and my servants are lending them money and grain. Please, let us stop [charging] this interest. [Ex22:25]

¹¹“Please, give back to them this very day their fields, their vineyards, their olive groves, and their houses, and also a hundredth part of the money, the grain, the new wine, and the oil that you are lending them.”

¹²Then they said, “We will give it back and not require anything from them. We will do exactly as you say.” Then I called the priests and took an oath from them that they would act in accordance with this promise.

¹³I also shook out the front of my garment and said, “So may God shake out every man from his house and from his possessions who does not keep this promise; like this may he be shaken out and emptied.” And all the assembly said, “Amen!” And they praised the LORD. Then the people acted in accordance with this promise.

¹⁴Moreover, from the day that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year to the

thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes, for twelve years, neither I nor my relatives have eaten the governor's food *allowance*.

¹⁵But the former governors who were [in office] before me put heavy burdens on the people and took food and wine from them in addition to forty shekels of silver [as an excessive monthly salary]; even their servants assumed authority over the people. But I did not do so because of the [reverent] fear of God.

¹⁶I also applied myself to the work on this wall; we did not buy any land, and all my servants were gathered together there for the work.

¹⁷Moreover, there were at my table a hundred and fifty Jews and officials, besides those who came to us from the nations that were around us.

¹⁸Now the following were prepared for each day: one ox and six choice sheep; also fowls (poultry) were prepared for me; and in intervals of ten days all sorts of wine *was provided* in abundance. Yet for all this, I did not demand the governor's food *allowance*, because the servitude was heavy on this people.

¹⁹Remember me, O my God, for good, *according to* all I have done for this people. [Heb 6:10]

6 NOW WHEN Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall, and that there was no breach left in it, although at that time I had not set up doors in the gates,

²Sanballat and Geshem sent *word* to me, saying, "Come, let

us meet together at Chephirim in the plain of Ono.” But they were planning to harm me.

³So I sent messengers to them, saying, “I am doing a great work and cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave to come down to [meet with] you?”

⁴They sent *word* to me four times in this way, and I answered them in the same way.

⁵Then Sanballat sent his servant to me in the same way the fifth time, with an open letter in his hand.

⁶In it was written, “It is reported among the [neighboring] nations, and Gashmu is saying that you and the Jews are planning to revolt, and that is the reason you are rebuilding the wall. And according to these reports, you are to be their king.

Speak God's Word

*When others try to frighten
me and think they can
discourage me from doing the
work and will of God, I will
say, "But now, O God,
strengthen my hands."*

| adapted from NEHEMIAH 6:9 |

⁷“Also [it is reported that] you have appointed prophets to make a proclamation concerning you in Jerusalem, saying, ‘There is a king in Judah!’ And now these things will be reported to the [Persian] king. So come now, and let us consult together.”

⁸I sent *a message* to him, saying, “Such things as you are saying have not been done; you are inventing them in your own mind.”

⁹For they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, “They will become discouraged with the work and it will not be done.” But now, [O God,] strengthen my hands.

¹⁰When I went into the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabel, who was confined at home, he said, “Let us meet [and take refuge] together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple,

because they are coming to kill you, and they are coming to kill you at night.”

¹¹But I said, “Should a man like me flee [in fear and hide]? Should someone like me enter the temple [for sanctuary] to save his life? I will not go.”

¹²Then I realized that God had not sent him, but he spoke this prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.

¹³He was hired for this reason, that I would be frightened and do as he said and sin, so that they would have [grounds to make] a malicious report in order to censure *and* disgrace me.

¹⁴Remember, O My God, Tobiah and Sanballat in regard to these actions of theirs, and also [remember] the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who were *trying to* frighten me.

¹⁵So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth [day] of [the month] Elul, in fifty-two days.

¹⁶When all our enemies heard *about it*, and all the [Gentile] nations around us saw it, they lost their confidence; for they recognized that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.

¹⁷Moreover, in those days many letters went from the nobles of Judah to Tobiah, and Tobiah’s *letters* came to them.

¹⁸For many in Judah were bound by oath to him because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah the son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah.

¹⁹Also, they were speaking about Tobiah’s good deeds in my presence, and reporting to him what I said. Then Tobiah

sent letters to frighten me.

7 NOW WHEN the wall had been rebuilt and I had set up the doors, and the gatekeepers, singers, and Levites had been appointed,

²I put my brother Hanani, with Hananiah the commander of the fortress, in charge of Jerusalem, for Hananiah was a more faithful and God-fearing man than many [of the others].

³I said to them, “Do not let the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot; and while the watchmen are still standing *guard*, have them shut and bar the doors. Appoint guards from the residents of Jerusalem, each at his post [on the wall], and each in front of his own house.”

⁴Now the city was spacious and large, but there were few people in it and the houses had not [yet] been built.

⁵Then my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles, the officials, and the people to be registered by genealogy. Then I found the register of the genealogy of those who came [from Babylon] first, and I found the following record:

⁶These are the sons (descendants, people) of the province who came up from the captivity of the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had deported [to Babylon]; they returned to Jerusalem and to Judah, each to his city,

⁷the ones who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, and Baanah.

The men of the people of Israel numbered:

- ⁸the sons of Parosh, 2,172;
- ⁹the sons of Shephatiah, 372;
- ¹⁰the sons of Arah, 652;
- ¹¹the sons of Pahath-moab of the sons of Jeshua and Joab,
2,818;
- ¹²the sons of Elam, 1,254;
- ¹³the sons of Zattu, 845;
- ¹⁴the sons of Zaccai, 760;
- ¹⁵the sons of Binnui, 648;
- ¹⁶the sons of Bebai, 628;
- ¹⁷the sons of Azgad, 2,322;
- ¹⁸the sons of Adonikam, 667;
- ¹⁹the sons of Bigvai, 2,067;
- ²⁰the sons of Adin, 655;
- ²¹the sons of Ater, of Hezekiah, 98;
- ²²the sons of Hashum, 328;
- ²³the sons of Bezai, 324;
- ²⁴the sons of Hariph, 112;
- ²⁵the sons of Gibeon, 95;
- ²⁶the men of Bethlehem and Netophah, 188;
- ²⁷the men of Anathoth, 128;
- ²⁸the men of Beth-azmaveth, 42;
- ²⁹the men of Kiriath-jearim, Chephirah and Beeroth, 743;
- ³⁰the men of Ramah and Geba, 621;
- ³¹the men of Michmas, 122;
- ³²the men of Bethel and Ai, 123;

³³the men of the other Nebo, 52;

³⁴the sons of the other Elam, 1,254;

³⁵the sons of Harim, 320;

³⁶the sons of Jericho, 345;

³⁷the sons of Lod, Hadid and Ono, 721;

³⁸the sons of Senaah, 3,930.

³⁹*These are* the priests: the sons of Jedaiah of the house of Jeshua, 973;

⁴⁰the sons of Immer, 1,052;

⁴¹the sons of Pashhur, 1,247;

⁴²the sons of Harim, 1,017.

⁴³*These are* the Levites: the sons of Jeshua, of Kadmiel, of the sons of Hodevah, 74.

⁴⁴The singers: the sons of Asaph, 148.

⁴⁵The gatekeepers: the sons of Shallum, the sons of Ater, the sons of Talmon, the sons of Akkub, the sons of Hatita, and the sons of Shobai, 138.

⁴⁶The temple servants: the sons of Ziha, the sons of Hasupha, the sons of Tabbaoth,

⁴⁷the sons of Keros, the sons of Sia, the sons of Padon,

⁴⁸the sons of Lebana, the sons of Hagaba, the sons of Shalmai,

⁴⁹the sons of Hanan, the sons of Giddel, the sons of Gahar,

⁵⁰the sons of Reaiah, the sons of Rezin, the sons of Nekoda,

⁵¹the sons of Gazzam, the sons of Uzza, the sons of Paseah,

⁵²the sons of Besai, the sons of Meunim, the sons of

Nephushesim,

⁵³the sons of Bakbuk, the sons of Hakupha, the sons of Harhur,

⁵⁴the sons of Bazlith, the sons of Mehida, the sons of Harsha,

⁵⁵the sons of Barkos, the sons of Sisera, the sons of Temah,

⁵⁶the sons of Neziah, the sons of Hatipha.

⁵⁷The sons of Solomon's servants: the sons of Sotai, the sons of Sophereth, the sons of Perida,

⁵⁸the sons of Jaala, the sons of Darkon, the sons of Giddel,

⁵⁹the sons of Shephatiah, the sons of Hattil, the sons of Pochereth-hazzebaim, the sons of Amon.

⁶⁰All the temple servants and the sons of Solomon's servants, *totaled* 392.

⁶¹And these were the ones who came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addon and Immer; but they [had no birth records and] could not prove their fathers' houses or their descent, whether they were of Israel:

⁶²the sons of Delaiah, the sons of Tobiah, the sons of Nekoda, 642.

⁶³Of the priests: the sons of Hobaiah, the sons of Hakkoz, and the sons of Barzillai, who [was so named because he had] married one of the daughters of Barzillai, the [well-known] Gileadite, and was named after them.

⁶⁴These men searched for their ancestral registration *among* those recorded in the genealogies, but it was not located; so they were *excluded* from the priesthood as

[ceremonially] unclean.

⁶⁵The governor told them that they should not eat any of the most holy food until a priest arose with Urim and Thummim [to determine God's will in the matter].

⁶⁶The entire assembly together was 42,360,

⁶⁷besides their male and their female servants, of whom *there were* 7,337; and they had 245 male and female singers.

⁶⁸Their horses were 736; their mules, 245;

⁶⁹*their* camels, 435; *their* donkeys, 6,720.

⁷⁰Some from among the heads of fathers' *households* gave to the work. The governor gave to the treasury 1,000 gold drachmas, 50 basins, 530 priests' garments.

⁷¹Some of the heads of fathers' *households* gave to the treasury for the work 20,000 gold drachmas and 2,200 silver minas.

⁷²And what the rest of the people gave was 20,000 gold drachmas, 2,000 silver minas, and 67 priests' garments.

⁷³So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the temple servants, along with all Israel, lived in their cities.

And when the seventh month came, the sons (descendants) of Israel (Jacob) were in their cities.

8 THEN ALL the people gathered together as one man at the open square in front of the Water Gate; and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel.

²So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men, women and all who *could* listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month.

³Then he read from it, in front of the open square which was in front of the Water Gate, from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and women, those who could understand; and all the people listened carefully to the Book of the Law.

⁴Ezra the scribe stood on a [large] wooden platform which they had constructed for this purpose. And beside him [on the platform] stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right; and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, I will not be worried
about anything, for Your joy
is my strength and my
stronghold.*

• adapted from Nehemiah 8:10

⁵Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above them; and when he opened it, all the people stood up.

⁶Then Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, “Amen, Amen!” while lifting up their hands; and they knelt down and worshiped the LORD with *their* faces toward the ground.

⁷Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, explained the Law to the people, and the people *remained* in their places.

⁸So they read from the Book of the Law of God, translating and explaining it so that the people understood the reading.

⁹Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, “This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.” For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the Law.

¹⁰Then Ezra said to them, “Go [your way], eat the rich festival food, drink the sweet *drink*, and send portions to him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be worried, for the joy of the LORD is your strength *and* your stronghold.”

¹¹So the Levites quieted all the people, saying, “Be still, for the day is holy; do not be worried.”

¹²Then all the people went on their way to eat, to drink, to send portions [of food to others] and to celebrate a great festival, because they understood the words which had been communicated to them.

¹³On the second day, all of the heads of fathers' *households* of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, were gathered before Ezra the scribe to gain insight into the words of the Law (divine instruction).

¹⁴They found written in the Law how the LORD had commanded through Moses that the Israelites should live in booths (huts) during the feast of the seventh month.

¹⁵So they proclaimed and published an announcement in all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, "Go out to the hills and bring olive branches, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy branches to make booths, as it is written." [Lev 23:39, 40]

¹⁶So the people went out and brought them and made booths for themselves, each on the roof *of his house*, and in their courtyards and the courtyards of God's house, and in the open square of the Water Gate and in the square of the Gate of Ephraim.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Prime the Pump of Joy

When we don't feel joyful, we need to take some kind of action to release joy before we start slipping into depression. Sometimes we must start to rejoice whether we feel like it or not, like priming a pump by repeatedly moving the handle up and down until the pump kicks in and the water begins to flow.

My grandparents had an old-time pump. I recall standing at the sink as a small child moving the pump handle up and down and sometimes feeling as though it would never take hold and start to supply water. But if I didn't give up, as I kept moving the handle up and down, I could feel it becoming more and more difficult. That was the signal that water would start flowing shortly.

This is how it is with joy. We have a well of joy on the inside of our spirit (see Neh. 8:10). The pump handle to bring it up is remembering the good things in our life, and we all have some good things to remember! Focusing only on the bad things steals our joy, but if we put our focus (thoughts) on the good, I can promise that we will feel much happier. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, and the Spirit is in us, so joy is in you (see Gal. 5:22). Practice it, release it, and share it everywhere you go.

¹⁷The entire assembly of those who had returned from the

captivity made booths and lived in them. Indeed since the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that *very* day, the Israelites had not done so. And there was great rejoicing *and* celebration.

¹⁸Every day, from the first day to the last, Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God. They celebrated the feast for seven days; on the eighth day *there was* a [closing] solemn assembly in accordance with the ordinance.

9 NOW ON the twenty-fourth day of this month the Israelites assembled with fasting and in sackcloth and with dirt on their heads.

²The descendants of Israel (Jacob) separated themselves from all foreigners, and stood and confessed their sins and the wrongdoings of their fathers.

³While they stood in their places, they read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a fourth of the day and for *another* fourth [of it] they confessed [their sins] and worshiped the LORD their God.

⁴On the platform of the Levites stood Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani, and they called out with a loud voice to the LORD their God.

⁵Then the Levites—Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah—said, “Stand up and bless (praise, honor) the LORD your God from everlasting to everlasting.

May Your glorious name be blessed
And exalted above all blessing and praise.”

⁶[And Ezra said],

“You are the LORD, You alone;

You have made the heavens,

The heaven of heavens with all their host (the heavenly
bodies),

The earth and everything that is on it,

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Focus on Joy

Joy is extremely valuable on the battlefield of the mind. The Bible states that the joy of the Lord is our strength (see Neh. 8:10)! That is foundational.

We could avoid a great deal of sadness if we would learn to think the way God instructs us to think. Most of us have thought ourselves out of happiness countless times, so why not start thinking ourselves into happiness and joy? If we choose to worry and imagine the worst that might happen, we lose the opportunity for happiness. I've heard that children are happy because they don't consider all the things that could go wrong.

The statement "Perception is everything" is true to a large degree. How we see things affects our moods and determines whether we will be sad or joyful, not how things truly are. If someone doesn't like me, but I believe they do, then I am affected by what I believe, not by their opinion of me.

I am not suggesting we never face reality. Facts are facts, but the truth, which God reveals to us through His Word, can

change facts. We can choose to follow God's advice and believe the best about our current reality. By doing so we will remain happy and joyful while God is working all things out for our good (see Rom. 8:28).

Jesus said that He left us *His joy*, "so that they may experience My joy made full *and* complete *and* perfect within them [filling their hearts with My delight]" (John 17:13).

We have joy in us as a gift from Jesus, but we don't always appropriate and use all that we have. Can joy be blocked and hindered by life's difficulties? It can be, but it doesn't have to be. It all depends on what we choose to focus on.

"In the world you have tribulation *and* distress *and* suffering," Jesus said, "but be courageous [be confident, be undaunted, be filled with joy]; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Difficulty is never enjoyable, but right thinking in the midst of it will cheer us up. We can face trials with courage, being confident of God's love and His promise to help us. Joy and happiness (which is a part of joy) come more from what we believe than from what is happening to us.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God of joy, thank You that Jesus has overcome the world and made it possible for me to experience His joy fully and completely. I receive Your joy as my strength to overcome the enemy. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The seas and everything that is in them.
You give life to all of them,
And the heavenly host is bowing down [in worship] to You.

7“You are the LORD God,
Who chose Abram
And brought him out of Ur of the Chaldees,
And gave him the name Abraham.

8“You found his heart to be faithful before You,
And You made a covenant with him
To give him the land of the Canaanite,
Of the Hittite, of the Amorite,
Of the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite—
To give it to his descendants.
And You have fulfilled Your promise,
For You are righteous *and* just.

9“You saw our fathers’ affliction in Egypt,
And You heard their cry by the Red Sea (Sea of Reeds).

10“Then You performed signs and wonders against Pharaoh,
Against all his servants and all the people of his land;
For You knew that they behaved arrogantly toward them
(the Israelites),
And You made a name for Yourself, as it is to this day.

11“You divided the sea before them,
So that they passed through the midst of the sea on dry
land;
You hurled their pursuers into the depths,

Like a stone into mighty *and* raging waters.

12“And with a pillar of cloud You led them by day,
And with a pillar of fire by night
To light the way for them
In which they were to go.

13“Then You came down on Mount Sinai,
And spoke with them from heaven;
And You gave them fair ordinances and true laws,
Good statutes and commandments.

14“So You made known to them Your holy Sabbath,
And gave them commandments, statutes, and law,
Through Your servant Moses.

15“ You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger,
And brought water for them out of a rock for their thirst,
And You told them to enter and take possession of
The land that You swore to give them. [John 6:31–34]

16“But they, our fathers, acted arrogantly;
They stiffened their necks and would not heed Your
commandments.

17“ They refused to listen *and* obey,
And did not remember Your wondrous acts which You had
performed among them;
So they stiffened their necks and [in their rebellion]
appointed a leader in order to return them to slavery in
Egypt.
But You are a God of forgiveness,
Gracious and merciful *and* compassionate,

Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness;
And You did not abandon them. [Num 14:4]

¹⁸“Even when they had made for themselves
A calf of cast metal
And said, ‘This is your god
Who brought you up from Egypt,’
And committed great [and contemptible] blasphemies,

¹⁹You, in Your great mercy *and* compassion,
Did not abandon them in the wilderness;
The pillar of the cloud did not leave them by day,
To lead them in the way,
Nor the pillar of fire by night, to light for them the way they
should go.

²⁰“You [also] gave Your good Spirit to instruct them,
You did not withhold Your manna from their mouth,
And You gave them water for their thirst.

²¹“Indeed, for forty years You sustained them in the
wilderness; they lacked nothing,
Their clothes did not wear out, and their feet did not swell.

²²“You also gave them kingdoms and peoples,
And You allotted *the kingdoms* to them as a boundary.
So they took possession of the land of Sihon king of
Heshbon
And the land of Og king of Bashan.

²³“You made their children as numerous as the stars of
heaven,
And You brought them into the land
Which You told their fathers to enter and possess.

- 24“So their sons (descendants) went in and took possession of the land;
And You subdued before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites,
And You gave them into their hand, with their kings and the peoples of the land,
To do with them as they pleased.
- 25“They captured fortified cities and a fertile land.
They took possession of houses full of all good things,
Hewn cisterns, vineyards, olive groves,
And fruit trees in abundance.
So they ate and were filled and became fat,
And they reveled *and* were delighted in Your great goodness.
- 26“Yet they were disobedient and rebelled against You,
And cast Your law behind their backs
And killed Your prophets who warned them
To return to You;
And they committed great [and contemptible] blasphemies.
- 27“Therefore You handed them over to their enemies who oppressed them.
But when they cried out to You in the time of their suffering *and* distress,
You heard them from heaven, and according to Your great compassion You gave them people to rescue *them*.
Who rescued them from the hand of their enemies.
- 28“But as soon as they had rest, they again did evil before

You;
Therefore You abandoned them into the hand of their
enemies, so that they ruled over them.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God's Word Is Medicine for the Soul

When someone mistreats me, I initially feel angry, then I spend the next few minutes or hours, depending on the seriousness of the mistreatment, getting my emotions under control by talking to God about it all. When you feel angry, talk to yourself about how foolish it is to let an unkind person ruin your day, and then follow Scripture and pray for the person who hurt you. Decide to believe the best of the person who offended you, and try to get your mind off the offense and onto something more pleasant.

It is helpful to remember that we also do things that hurt people, and yet God is “a God of forgiveness, gracious and merciful and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness” (Neh. 9:17). Obeying and meditating on the Word of God is medicine for our souls. It brings not only instruction, but comfort in every situation.

**A Prayer To
Renew Your
Mind**



*Thank You, Lord, for giving
Your good Spirit to instruct
me. Help me always to follow
as the Spirit leads me.*

• adapted from Nehemiah 9:20

Yet when they turned and cried out again to You, You heard them from heaven,
And You rescued them many times in accordance with Your compassion,

²⁹And You admonished them *and* warned them to turn them back to Your law.

Yet they acted presumptuously *and* arrogantly and did not heed Your commandments, but sinned against Your ordinances,

Which by keeping, a man will live.

But they turned a stubborn shoulder, stiffened their neck, and would not listen.

³⁰“Yet You were patient with them for many years,
And admonished them *and* warned them by Your Spirit through Your prophets;
Still they would not listen.

Therefore You gave them into the hand (power) of the peoples of the lands.

- 31“Yet in Your great compassion You did not utterly destroy them or abandon them,
For You are a gracious and merciful God.
- 32“Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps the covenant and lovingkindness,
Do not let all the hardship seem insignificant before You,
Which has come upon us, our kings, our princes, our priests, our prophets, our fathers and on all Your people,
Since the time of the kings of Assyria to this day.
- 33“However, You are just *and* righteous in everything that has come upon us;
For You have dealt faithfully, but we have acted wickedly.
- 34Our kings, our princes, our priests, and our fathers have not kept Your law
Or paid attention to Your commandments and Your warnings which You have given them.
- 35“But they, in their kingdom,
With Your great goodness which You gave them,
With the broad and rich land which You set before them,
Did not serve You or turn from their wicked deeds.
- 36“Behold, we are slaves today,
And as for the land which You gave our fathers, to eat of its fruit and its goodness,
Behold, we are slaves in it.
- 37“Its abundant produce is for the kings
Whom You have set over us because of our sins;

They also rule over our bodies
And over our cattle as they please,
So we are in great distress.

³⁸“Now because of all this
We are making an agreement in writing;
And on the sealed document *are the names* of our princes,
our Levites, and our priests.”

10 NOW *THESE* were the names on the sealed document:

Nehemiah the governor, the son of Hacaliah. And Zedekiah,

²Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah,

³Pashhur, Amariah, Malchijah,

⁴Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch,

⁵Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah,

⁶Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch,

⁷Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin,

⁸Maaziah, Bilgai, Shemaiah—these were the priests.

⁹And the Levites: Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel,

¹⁰and their brothers: Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan,

¹¹Mica, Rehob, Hashabiah,

¹²Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah,

¹³Hodiah, Bani, Beninu.

¹⁴The leaders of the people: Parosh, Pahath-moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani,

- ¹⁵Bunni, Azgad, Bebai,
¹⁶Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin,
¹⁷Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur,
¹⁸Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai,
¹⁹Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai,
²⁰Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir,
²¹Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua,
²²Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah,
²³Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub,
²⁴Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek,
²⁵Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah,
²⁶Ahiah, Hanan, Anan,
²⁷Malluch, Harim, Baanah.

²⁸Now the rest of the people—the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all those who had separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God, their wives, their sons, their daughters, all those who had knowledge and understanding—

²⁹are joining with their fellow Israelites, their nobles, and are taking on themselves a curse and an oath to walk in God's Law, which was given through Moses the servant of God, and to keep and to observe all the commandments of GOD our Lord, and His ordinances and statutes:

³⁰and that we will not give our daughters [as wives] to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons.

³¹As for the peoples of the land who bring merchandise or any grain on the Sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them

on the Sabbath or on a holy day; and we will give up *raising crops during* the seventh year [leaving the land uncultivated], and *forgive* every debt. [Ex 23:10, 11; Deut 15:1, 2]

³²Also we pledge ourselves to contribute yearly one third of a shekel for the service [expenses] of the house of our God:

³³for the showbread; for the continual grain offerings and the continual burnt offerings; [for the offerings on] the Sabbaths, the New Moons, the [feasts at] appointed times; for the holy things, for the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel; and for all the work of the house of our God.

³⁴We have also cast lots—the priests, the Levites, and the people—for [contributing] the supply of wood, to bring it to the house of our God, according to our fathers' households, at set times annually, to burn on the altar of the LORD our God, as it is written in the Law;

³⁵and [we obligate ourselves] to bring the first fruits of our ground and the first fruits of all the fruit of every tree to the house of the LORD annually,

³⁶as well as the firstborn of our sons and of our cattle, as is written in the Law, and the firstborn of our herds and flocks, to bring to the house of our God, for the priests who minister in the house of our God.

³⁷We will bring the first [and best] of our dough, our contributions, the fruit of every tree, the new wine and the [olive] oil to the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God, and the tithe of our ground to the Levites, for the Levites are the ones who receive the tithes in all the rural towns.

³⁸The priest, the son of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when they receive tithes, and they shall bring one-tenth of the

tithes up to the house of our God, to the chambers of the storehouse.

³⁹For the Israelites and the sons of Levi shall bring the offering of the grain, the new wine, and the oil to the chambers; the utensils of the sanctuary, the priests who are ministering, the gatekeepers, and the singers are there. In this manner, we will not neglect the house of our God.

11 NOW THE leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem; but the rest of the people cast lots to bring one [person] out of ten to live in Jerusalem, the holy city, while nine-tenths *remained* in the *other* cities.

²And the people blessed all the men who volunteered to live in Jerusalem.

³These are the heads of the provinces who lived in Jerusalem, but in the cities of Judah everyone lived on his property in their cities—the Israelites, the priests, the Levites, the temple servants, and the descendants of Solomon's servants.

⁴And some of the sons of Judah and some of the sons of Benjamin lived in Jerusalem. From the sons of Judah: Athaiah the son of Uzziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalalel, of the sons of Perez;

⁵Maaseiah the son of Baruch, the son of Col-hozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiah, the son of Joarib, the son of Zechariah, the son of the Shilonite.

⁶All the sons of Perez who lived at Jerusalem were 468 able

men.

⁷These are the sons of Benjamin: Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, son of Jeshaiiah;

⁸and after him Gabbai and Sallai, 928.

⁹Joel the son of Zichri was their overseer, and Judah the son of Hassenuah was second in command of the city.

¹⁰Of the priests: Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, Jachin,

¹¹Seraiah the son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, the leader of the house of God,

¹²and their brothers (relatives, fellow workers) who did the work of the house, 822; and Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashhur, the son of Malchijah,

¹³and his brothers, heads of fathers' *households*, 242; and Amashsai the son of Azarel, the son of Ahzai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer,

¹⁴and their brothers, brave men, 128. Their overseer was Zabdiel the son of Haggadolim [one of the great men].

¹⁵Now from the Levites: Shemaiah the son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni;

¹⁶and Shabbethai and Jozabad, from the leaders of the Levites, who were in charge of the outside work of the house of God;

¹⁷Mattaniah the son of Mica, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph, who was the leader to begin the thanksgiving in prayer, and Bakbukiah, second among his brothers; and Abda the son

of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun.

¹⁸All the Levites in the holy city *totaled* 284.

¹⁹The gatekeepers: Akkub, Talmon, and their kinsmen, who kept watch at the gates, *totaled* 172.

²⁰Now the rest of Israel, the priests and the Levites, were in all the cities of Judah, each on his own inheritance.

²¹But the temple servants were living in Ophel; Ziha and Gishpa were in charge of the temple servants.

²²The overseer of the Levites in Jerusalem was Uzzi the son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Mica, from Asaph's sons, who were the singers in regard to the work of the house of God.

²³For *there was* a command from the [Persian] king regarding the singers, *as to their* daily task.

²⁴Pethahiah the son of Meshezabel, of the sons of Zerah the son of Judah, was the king's representative in all matters concerning the people.

²⁵As for the villages with their fields, some sons (descendants) of Judah lived in Kiriath-arba and its towns, Dibon and its towns, and Jekabzeel and its villages,

²⁶in Jeshua, in Moladah, in Beth-pelet,

²⁷in Hazar-shual and in Beersheba and its towns,

²⁸in Ziklag and in Meconah and its towns,

²⁹in En-rimmon, in Zorah, and in Jarmuth,

³⁰Zanoah, Adullam, and their villages, Lachish and its fields, and Azekah and its towns. So they camped from Beersheba as far as the Hinnom Valley.

³¹The sons (descendants) of Benjamin also *lived* from

Geba *onward*, at Michmash, Aija, Bethel and its towns,

³²at Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah,

³³Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim,

³⁴Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat,

³⁵Lod, and Ono, the Valley of the Craftsmen.

³⁶And certain divisions of the Levites in Judah belonged to Benjamin.

12 NOW THESE are the priests and Levites who came up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and with Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra,

²Amariah, Malluch, Hattush,

³Shecaniah, Rehum, Meremoth,

⁴Iddo, Ginnethoi, Abijah,

⁵Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah,

⁶Shemaiah, Joiarib, Jedaiah,

⁷Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, and Jedaiah. These were the heads of the priests and their kinsman in the days of Jeshua.

⁸The Levites were Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah who was in charge of the songs of thanksgiving *and* praise, he and his brothers.

⁹Also Bakbukiah and Unni, their brothers, stood opposite them in their divisions of service.

¹⁰Now Jeshua became the father of Joiakim, Joiakim of Eliashib, Eliashib of Joiada,

¹¹and Joiada became the father of Jonathan, and Jonathan

of Jaddua.

¹²And in the days of Joiakim, the priests, the heads of fathers' *households* were: of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah;

¹³of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan;

¹⁴of Malluchi, Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph;

¹⁵of Harim, Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai;

¹⁶of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam;

¹⁷of Abijah, Zichri; of Miniamin and of Moadiah, Piltai;

¹⁸of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan;

¹⁹of Joarib, Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi;

²⁰of Sallai, Kallai; of Amok, Eber;

²¹of Hilkiah, Hashabiah; of Jedaiah, Nethanel.

²²As for the Levites in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua, the heads of fathers' *households* were registered; so were the priests, during the reign of Darius the Persian.

²³The sons of Levi, heads of fathers' *households*, were recorded in the Book of the Chronicles until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib.

²⁴The heads of the Levites were Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, and their brothers opposite them, to praise and to give thanks, as commanded by David the man of God, [one] division [singing] in response to [the men in the opposite] division.

²⁵Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were gatekeepers keeping watch at the storehouses of the gates.

²⁶These men *served* in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor and Ezra the priest and scribe.

²⁷Now at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought out the Levites from all their places in order to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, with hymns of thanksgiving, and with songs *to the accompaniment* of cymbals, harps, and lyres.

²⁸So the sons of the singers gathered together from the district around Jerusalem, and from the villages of the Netophathites,

²⁹from Beth-gilgal and from the fields of Geba and Azmaveth, for the singers had built villages for themselves around Jerusalem.

³⁰The priests and the Levites purified themselves; they also purified the people, the gates, and the wall.

³¹Then I had the leaders of Judah come up on the wall, and I appointed two large thanksgiving choirs, the first one proceeding to the right on top of the wall toward the Refuse Gate.

³²Hoshaiah and half of the leaders of Judah followed them,

³³with Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam,

³⁴Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, and Jeremiah,

³⁵and some of the priests' sons with trumpets, and Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph,

³⁶and his brothers, Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, and Hanani, with the musical instruments of

David the man of God. And Ezra the scribe went in front of them.

³⁷At the Fountain Gate they went directly up the steps of the City of David by the stairway of the wall above David's house to the Water Gate on the east.

³⁸The second choir went to the left; I followed with half of the people on the wall, above the Tower of the Furnaces, to the Broad Wall,

³⁹and above the Gate of Ephraim, and by the Old Gate, by the Fish Gate, by the Tower of Hananel and the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Sheep Gate; and they stopped at the Gate of the Guard.

⁴⁰Then the two choirs stood in the house of God. So did I, and half of the officials with me;

⁴¹and the priests Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah and Hananiah, with trumpets;

⁴²and Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and Ezer. And the singers sang, with Jezrahiah as their leader.

⁴³Also on that day they offered great sacrifices and rejoiced because God had given them great joy; the women and children also rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard from far away.

POWERPOINT

The day written about in Nehemiah 12:43 was one joyful day in Jerusalem! When was the last time you celebrated

God's goodness and faithfulness with thanksgiving and gladness? It is important that we dedicate both our work and accomplishments to the Lord as well as celebrate what the Lord has done for us. Celebrate His goodness often!



⁴⁴On that day men were appointed over the chambers for the stores, the contributions, the first fruits, and the tithes, to gather into them from the fields of the cities the portions required by the law for the priests and the Levites; for Judah rejoiced over the priests and Levites who served.

⁴⁵And they performed the worship of their God and the service of purification; so did the singers and gatekeepers, as David and his son Solomon had commanded.

⁴⁶For in the days of David and Asaph, in ancient times, there were leaders of singers, songs of praise and hymns of thanksgiving to God.

⁴⁷So in the days of Zerubbabel and [later of] Nehemiah, all Israel would give the daily portions for the singers and the gatekeepers; and they set apart the consecrated *portion* for the Levites, and the Levites set apart the consecrated *portion* for the sons of Aaron [the priests].

13 ON THAT day they read aloud from the book of Moses so that the people could hear [its words], and in it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite could ever enter the assembly of God,

²because they did not meet the Israelites with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them. Yet our God turned the curse into a blessing. [Num 22:3–11; Deut 23:5, 6]

³When the Jews heard the law, they separated from Israel all who were of foreign descent.

⁴Now prior to this, Eliashib the priest, who was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God, and was related to Tobiah [our adversary],

⁵had prepared for Tobiah a large room (chamber) where previously they had put the grain offerings, the frankincense, the utensils, and the tithes of grain, new wine, and [olive] oil which were given by commandment for the Levites, the singers, and gatekeepers, and the contributions for the priests.

⁶But during all this *time* I was not at Jerusalem, for in the

thirty-second year of Artaxerxes [Persian] king of Babylon I went to the king. Then after some time I asked for a leave [of absence] from the king,

⁷and I came to Jerusalem. Then I discovered the evil [thing] that Eliashib had done for Tobiah by preparing a room for him in the courtyards of the house of God.

⁸It was very displeasing to me, so I threw all of Tobiah's household furnishings out of the room.

⁹Then I gave an order, and they cleaned the rooms; and I put back there the utensils of the house of God with the grain offerings and the frankincense.

¹⁰I also discovered that the portions due the Levites had not been given *to them*, so that the Levites and the singers who did the work had gone away, each one back to his own field.

¹¹Then I reprimanded the officials and said, "Why is the house of God neglected?" So I gathered the Levites and singers together and restored them at their posts.

¹²Then all Judah brought the tithe of the grain, the new wine, and the oil to the storehouses.

¹³I appointed [as treasurers] over the storehouses: Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah of the Levites; assisting them was Hanan son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah; for they were considered faithful *and* reliable, and their task was to distribute [supplies] to their brothers (fellow Levites).

¹⁴O my God, remember me concerning this and do not wipe out my loyal deeds *and* kindnesses which I have done for the house of my God and for its services.

POWERPOINT

Do you realize the importance of a Sabbath rest? When we get overly tired and out of balance, depression and discouragement quickly try to come upon us as they did upon Elijah when he neglected to rest (see 1 Kin. 19:1–4). There is a time to work and a time to rest. Whatever you do, remember to rest.



¹⁵In those days I saw some in Judah who were treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves *or* sacks of grain and loading them on donkeys, as well as wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of loads, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. So I protested *and* warned them on the day they sold the produce.

¹⁶Also men of Tyre were living there who brought fish and all kinds of merchandise, and they were selling them to the people of Judah on the Sabbath, even in Jerusalem.

¹⁷Then I reprimanded the nobles of Judah, and said to them, “What is this evil thing that you are doing—profaning the Sabbath day?

¹⁸“Did your fathers (ancestors) not do the same, and did our God not bring all this trouble on us and on this city? Yet you are adding to the wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath.”

¹⁹Now when it began to get dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath [began], I commanded that the doors be shut and not be opened until after the Sabbath. Then I stationed some of my servants at the gates so that no load [of merchandise] would enter [Jerusalem] on the Sabbath day.

²⁰So once or twice the merchants and sellers of every kind of merchandise spent the night outside Jerusalem.

²¹But I warned them, saying, “Why do you spend the night by the wall? If you do so again, I will use force against you.” From that time on, they did not come on the Sabbath.

²²And I commanded the Levites to purify themselves and come and guard the gates to keep the Sabbath day holy. O my God, remember me *concerning* this also and have compassion on me according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness.

²³In those days I also saw Jews who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab.

²⁴As for their children, half spoke in the language of Ashdod, and none of them knew how to speak [Hebrew] the language of Judah, but only the language of his own people.

²⁵So I contended with them and cursed them and struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, “You shall not give your daughters [in marriage]

to their sons, nor take [any of] their daughters for your sons or for yourselves.

²⁶“Did not Solomon king of Israel sin [greatly against God] regarding these things? Yet among the many nations there was no king like him. He was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel; nevertheless the foreign women caused even him to sin [by turning to other gods and so, judged by God, he lost his kingdom]. [1 Kin 11:1–11]

²⁷“Do we then hear about you that you have done all this great evil, acting unfaithfully against our God by marrying foreign (pagan) women?”

²⁸One of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was a son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite, so I chased him away from me.

²⁹O my God, remember them, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites.

³⁰Thus I cleansed *and* purified them from everything foreign (pagan), and I defined the duties of the priests and Levites, each one in his task;

³¹and *I provided* for the wood offering at appointed times and for the first fruits. O my God, [please] remember me for good [and imprint me on Your heart].

Esther

Author: | Unknown

Date: | Probably
before the fifth century
BC

Because God had chosen Esther to deliver the Jews from death, He supernaturally placed her in position to do so. He then prepared her and gave her the boldness and favor she needed in order to carry out His plan. Due to her background, Esther could have easily thought, *I'm a Jew. How could I ever be a Persian queen? Or, I'm an orphan. I don't have a royal bloodline. How could I become queen?* But Esther did not fight these battles of the mind. Instead, she knew and trusted God, and she moved forward courageously in God's purpose for her life.

No matter how many reasons you may think of that you cannot do what God has called you to do, do not let them stop you. Stir up your faith and continue in obedience until you fulfill His purpose for your life.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM ESTHER:

When God has a great assignment for your life or responsibility for you to carry out, He will prepare you for it (see Esther 2:12–13).

The favor God gives you may very well be for an important and strategic purpose, just as the favor He gave to Esther from everyone who saw her (see Esther 2:15) and even from the king himself was for a specific and important purpose (see Esther 2:17).

You can make a difference in the world around you. Like Mordecai, you can seek the good of your family, friends, city, or nation, and you can speak peace to them (see Esther 10:3).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM ESTHER:

For if you remain silent at this time, liberation and rescue will arise for the Jews from another place, and you and your father's house will perish [since you did not help when you had the chance]. And who knows whether you have attained royalty for such a time as this [and for this very purpose]? | Esther 4:14

Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, "Go, gather all the Jews that are present in Susa, and observe a fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids also will fast in the same way. Then I will go in to [see] the king [without being summoned], which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish." | Esther 4:15–16

Now in the twelfth month (that is, the month of Adar) on the thirteenth day when the king's command and edict were about to be executed, on the [very] day when the enemies of the Jews had hoped to gain power over them [and slaughter them], it happened the other way around so that the Jews themselves gained power over those who hated them. | Esther 9:1

THE BOOK OF ESTHER

1 IT WAS in the days of Ahasuerus (Xerxes) who reigned from India to Ethiopia (Cush) over 127 provinces,

²in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne which was at the citadel in Susa [the capital of the Persian Empire],

³in the third year of his reign he held a banquet for all his officials and his attendants. The army *officers* of Persia and Media, the nobles and the officials of the provinces were there in his presence.

⁴And he displayed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his great majesty for many days, 180 days *in all*.

⁵When these days were completed, the king held a banquet for all the people who were present at the citadel in Susa [the capital], from the greatest [in importance] to the least, a seven-day feast in the courtyard of the garden of the king's palace.

⁶*There were curtains* (draperies) of fine white and violet linen fastened with cords of fine purple linen to silver rings and marble columns. The couches of gold and silver *rested* on a mosaic floor of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and precious *colored* stones.

⁷Drinks were served in various kinds of golden goblets, and the royal wine was plentiful, in accordance with the generosity of the king.

⁸The drinking was *carried on* in accordance with the law; no one was compelled [to drink], for the king had directed each official of his household to comply with each guest's wishes.

⁹Queen Vāshti also held a [separate] banquet for the women in the palace of King Ahasuerus.

¹⁰On the seventh day, when the king's heart was joyful with wine (in high spirits), he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carkas, the seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus [as his attendants],

¹¹to bring Queen Vāshti before the king, wearing her royal crown (high turban), to display her beauty before the people and the officials, for she was lovely to see.

¹²But Queen Vāshti refused to come at the king's command, which was delivered [to her] by the eunuchs. So the king became extremely angry and burned with rage.

¹³Then the king spoke to the wise men who understood the times [asking for their advice]—for it was the custom of the king *to speak* before all those who were familiar with law and legal matters—

¹⁴and who were close to him [as advisors]: Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven officials of Persia and Media who had access to the king and were ranked highest in the kingdom.

¹⁵[He said,] “According to the law, what is to be done with Queen Vāshti because she did not obey the command of King

Ahasuerus *which was conveyed* by the eunuchs?”

¹⁶And Memucan answered in the presence of the king and the officials, “Vashti the queen has not only wronged the king but [also] all the officials (royal representatives) and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus.

¹⁷“For the queen’s conduct will become known to all women, causing them to look on their husbands with contempt (disrespect), since they will say, ‘King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, but she did not come.’

¹⁸“This [very] day the ladies of Persia and Media who have heard of the queen’s refusal will speak [in the same way] to all the king’s officials, and there will be plenty of contempt and anger.

¹⁹“If it pleases the king, let a royal command be issued by him and let it be written in the laws of the Persians and Medes so that it cannot be repealed *or* modified, that Vashti is no longer to come before King Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal position to another who is better *and* more worthy than she.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Finding Favor

The Bible says that Esther “found favor” in the sight of all who saw her (see Esth. 2:9, 15, 17). God will give you favor with people if you ask Him to do so and then put your trust in Him. He can cause even your enemies to be at peace with you (see Prov. 16:7). He can change someone’s heart toward you the way He changes the course of flowing water (see Prov. 21:1).

When God favors you, He gives you things you do not deserve in the natural realm. But if you try to make things happen by the works of your flesh, God will stand back and wait for you to wear yourself out trying to do what only He can do. If you stop struggling and ask God to take the driver’s seat, you can have favor with God—and He will give you favor with others.

²⁰“So when the king’s great decree is proclaimed throughout his [extensive] kingdom, all women will give honor to their husbands, from the great to the insignificant.”

²¹This statement (advice) pleased the king and the officials, and the king did what Memucan proposed.

²²So he sent letters to all the royal provinces, to each province in its own script and to each people in their own language, saying that every man should be the master *and* rule in his own home and that he should speak [in the household]

in the language of his own people.

2 AFTER THESE things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her.

²Then the king's attendants, who served him, said, "Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king.

³"Let the king appoint administrators in all the provinces of his kingdom, and have them gather all the beautiful young virgins to the citadel in Susa, into the harem, under the custody of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women; and let their beauty preparations be given *to them*.

⁴"Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen in place of Vashti." This pleased the king, and he did accordingly.

⁵There was a certain Jew in the citadel of Susa whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite,

⁶who had been deported from Jerusalem with the captives who had been exiled with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had exiled.

⁷He was the guardian of Hadassah, that is Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had no father or mother. The young woman was beautiful of form and face; and when her father and mother died, Mordecai took her in as his own daughter.

⁸So it came about when the king's command and his decree were proclaimed and when many young women were gathered together in the citadel of Susa into the custody of Hegai, that

Esther was taken to the king's palace [and placed] in the custody of Hegai, who was in charge of the women.

⁹Now the young woman pleased Hegai and found favor with him. So he quickly provided her with beauty preparations and her [portion of] food, and he gave her seven choice maids from the king's palace; then he transferred her and her maids to the best *place* in the harem.

¹⁰Esther did not reveal [the Jewish background of] her people or her family, for Mordecai had instructed her not to do so.

¹¹Every day Mordecai [who was an attendant in the king's court] walked back and forth in front of the courtyard of the harem to learn how Esther was getting along and what was happening to her.

¹²Now when it was each young woman's turn to go before King Ahasuerus, after the end of her twelve months under the regulations for the women—for the days of their beautification were completed as follows: six months with oil of myrrh and six months with [sweet] spices *and* perfumes and the beauty preparations for women—

¹³then the young woman would go before the king in this way: anything that she wanted was given her to take with her from the harem into the king's palace.

¹⁴In the evening she would go in and the next morning she would return to the second harem, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the concubines. She would not return to the king unless he delighted in her and she was summoned by name.

¹⁵Now *as for* Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of

Mordecai who had taken her in as his [own] daughter, when her turn came to go in to the king, she requested nothing except what Hegai the king's eunuch [and attendant] who was in charge of the women, advised. And Esther found favor in the sight of all who saw her.

¹⁶So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, to his royal palace in the tenth month, that is, the month of Tebeth (Dec-Jan), in the seventh year of his reign.

¹⁷Now the king loved Esther more than all the *other* women, and she found favor and kindness with him more than all the [other] virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen in the place of Vashti.

¹⁸Then the king held a great banquet, Esther's banquet, for all his officials and his servants; and he made a festival for the provinces and gave gifts in accordance with the resources of the king.

¹⁹And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate.

²⁰Esther had not revealed her family or her people [that is, her Jewish background], just as Mordecai had instructed her; for Esther did what Mordecai told her just as when she was under his care.

²¹In those days, while Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who guarded the door, became angry and conspired to attack King Ahasuerus.

²²But the plot became known to Mordecai, who informed Queen Esther, and Esther told the king in Mordecai's name.

²³Now when the plot was investigated and found *to be*

true, both men were hanged on the gallows. And it was recorded in the Book of the Chronicles in the king's presence.

3 AFTER THESE things King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) promoted Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and established his authority over all the officials who were with him.

²All the king's servants who were at the king's gate [in royal service] bowed down and honored *and* paid homage to Haman; for this is what the king had commanded in regard to him. But Mordecai [a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin] neither bowed down nor paid homage [to him].

³Then the king's servants who were at the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why are you disregarding the king's command?"

⁴Now it happened when they had spoken to him day after day and he would not listen to them, that they told Haman to see whether Mordecai's reason [for his behavior] would stand [as valid]; for he had told them that he was a Jew.

⁵When Haman saw that Mordecai neither bowed down nor paid homage to him, he was furious.

⁶But he disdained laying hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him *who* the people of Mordecai were (his nationality); so Haman determined to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, who *lived* throughout the kingdom of Ahasuerus.

⁷In the first month, the month of Nisan (Mar-Apr), in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, Haman cast Pur, that is, the

lot, cast before him day after day [to find a lucky day to approach the king], month after month, until the twelfth month, the month of Adar (Feb-Mar).

⁸Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, “There is a certain people scattered [abroad] and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from *those* of all *other* people, and they do not observe the king’s laws. Therefore it is not in the king’s interest to [tolerate them and] let them stay *here*.

⁹“If it pleases the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who carry out the *king’s* business, to put into the king’s treasuries.”

¹⁰Then the king removed his signet ring from his hand [that is, the special ring which was used to seal his letters] and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews.

¹¹The king said to Haman, “The silver is given to you, and the people *also*, to do with them as you please.”

¹²Then the king’s scribes (secretaries) were summoned on the thirteenth day of the first month, and it was written just as Haman commanded to the king’s satraps (chief rulers), and to the governors who were over each province and to the officials of each people, each province according to its script (writing), each people according to their own language; being written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king’s signet ring.

¹³Letters were sent by couriers to all the king’s provinces to destroy, to kill and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth [day] of the

twelfth month, which is the month of Adar (March 7, 473 B.C.), and to seize their belongings as plunder.

¹⁴A copy of the edict to be decreed as law in every province was published to all the peoples, so that they would be ready for this day.

¹⁵The couriers went out hurriedly by order of the king, and the decree was issued at the citadel in Susa. And while the king and Haman sat down to drink, the city of Susa was perplexed [by the unusual and alarming decree].

4 NOW WHEN Mordecai learned of everything that had been done, he tore his clothes [in mourning], and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the center of the city and cried out loudly and bitterly.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Think You Can

“Who knows whether you have attained royalty for such a time as this?” (Esth. 4:14). These inspirational words that Mordecai spoke to Esther in the midst of a life-and-death situation helped her to press on in faith. Mordecai’s words encouraged Esther and kept her focused on God’s will for her life.

God’s Word teaches us to remain stable during every storm of life (see Ps. 91:1). The first mistake we often make, causing us to become unstable, is to listen to the lie of the enemy who says, “This is just too hard.” Satan is a liar, and he will always put thoughts into our minds that tell us we are not capable, we can’t, we won’t, and we will never be able to do what God asks of us. The enemy tries to convince us that the glass of life is halfempty, but God always sees the glass as full and overflowing. Mordecai chose to adopt God’s attitude and be an I-think-I-can person, instead of an I-think-I-can’t person. If you believe the same, you will find God working through your faith and enabling you to do what you believe.

²He went [only] as far as the king’s gate, because no one was to enter the king’s gate dressed in sackcloth.

³In each and every province that the decree and law of the king reached, there was great mourning among the Jews, with

fasting, weeping and wailing; and many lay on sackcloth and ashes.

⁴When Esther's maids and her eunuchs came and told her [what had happened], the queen was seized by great fear. She sent garments to clothe Mordecai so that he would remove his sackcloth, but he did not accept them.

⁵Then Esther summoned Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs, whom the king had appointed to attend her, and ordered him *to go* to Mordecai to find out what this issue was and why it had come about.

⁶So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the [open] square of the city, which was in front of the king's gate.

⁷Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him, and the exact amount of money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews.

⁸Mordecai also gave him a copy of the text of the decree which had been issued in Susa for the Jews' destruction, so that he might show Esther and explain it to her, and order her to go in to the king to seek his favor and plead with him for [the lives of] her people.

⁹Hathach came back and told Esther what Mordecai had said.

¹⁰Then Esther spoke to Hathach and ordered him *to reply* to Mordecai, saying:

¹¹"All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that for any man or woman who comes to the king to the inner court without being summoned, he has but one law, that he is to be put to death, unless the king holds out to him the golden scepter so that he may live. And as for me, I

have not been summoned to come to the king for these [last] thirty days.”

¹²So they told Mordecai what Esther had said.

¹³Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, “Do not imagine that you in the king’s palace can escape any more than all the Jews.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Lord, help me not to remain silent when You are asking me to speak or to not remain still when you are asking me to act. I believe that I am where I am and who I am at such a time as this for Your very purposes.

• adapted from Esther 4:14

¹⁴“For if you remain silent at this time, liberation and rescue will arise for the Jews from another place, and you and your

father's house will perish [since you did not help when you had the chance]. And who knows whether you have attained royalty for such a time as this [and for this very purpose]?"

¹⁵Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai,

¹⁶"Go, gather all the Jews that are present in Susa, and observe a fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids also will fast in the same way. Then I will go in to [see] the king [without being summoned], which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish."

¹⁷So Mordecai went away and did exactly as Esther had commanded him.

5 ON THE third day [of the fast] Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace opposite his [throne] room. The king was sitting on his royal throne, facing the [main] entrance of the palace.

²When the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, she found favor in his sight; and the king extended to her the golden scepter which was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the top of the scepter.

³Then the king said to her, "What is *troubling* you, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given to you, up to half of the kingdom."

⁴Esther said, "If it pleases the king, may the king and Haman come this day to the banquet that I have prepared for him."

⁵Then the king said, "Bring Haman quickly so that we may do as Esther says." So the king and Haman came to the

banquet which Esther had prepared.

⁶As they drank their wine at the banquet, the king said to Esther, “What is your petition? It shall be granted to you. And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be done.”

⁷Then Esther replied, “My petition and my request is this:

⁸if I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and to do as I request, may the king and Haman come to the banquet that I will prepare for them; and tomorrow I will do as the king says [and express my request].”

⁹Haman went away that day joyful and in good spirits. But when he saw Mordecai at the king’s gate refusing to stand up or show fear before him, he was filled with rage toward Mordecai.

¹⁰Nevertheless, Haman controlled himself and went home. There he sent for his friends and his wife Zeresh.

¹¹Then Haman recounted to them the glory of his riches, the large number of his sons, and every *instance* in which the king had magnified him and how he had promoted him over the officials and servants of the king.

¹²Haman also said, “Even Queen Esther let no one but me come with the king to the banquet she had prepared; and tomorrow also I am invited by her [together] with the king.

¹³“Yet all of this does not satisfy me as long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate.”

¹⁴Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, “Have a gallows fifty cubits high made, and in the morning ask the king to have Mordecai hanged on it; then go joyfully to the

banquet with the king.” And the advice pleased Haman, so he had the gallows made.

6 ON THAT night the king could not sleep; so he ordered that the book of records *and* memorable deeds, the chronicles, be brought, and they were read before the king.

²It was found written there how Mordecai had reported that Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s eunuchs who were doorkeepers, had planned to attack King Ahasuerus (Xerxes).

³The king said, “What honor or distinction has been given Mordecai for this?” Then the king’s servants who attended him said, “Nothing has been done for him.”

⁴So the king said, “Who is in the court?” Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king’s palace to ask the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows which he had prepared for him.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Decide To Be Happy

I hope that you don't have a bad case of the "ifs" similar to what Haman expressed in Esther 5:9. It is a common misconception that if only we had this, that, or the other, we would find the happiness and fulfillment we so desperately desire. We find ourselves saying things such as, "If I didn't have to work so hard, if we had more money, if I had a bigger house, if the kids were grown, if I were married, if I weren't married..."

Stop thinking that you could be happy "if" your circumstances were different and start being happy right now because God loves you and has already blessed you in many ways. Our unhappiness usually comes from within us and not from something around us. Take responsibility for your own joy and stop blaming the lack of it on something or someone. The people who are happy are the ones who decide to be happy.

! REMEMBER, any time the enemy attacks your mind, the battle belongs to the Lord.

⁵The king's servants said to him, "Look, Haman is standing in the court." And the king said, "Let him come in."

⁶So Haman came in and the king said to him, "What is to be done for the man whom the king desires to honor?" Now Haman thought to himself, "Whom would the king desire to honor more than me?"

⁷So Haman said to the king, "For the man whom the king desires to honor,

⁸let a royal robe be brought which the king has worn, and the horse on which the king has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown has been placed;

⁹and let the robe and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble officials. Let him dress the man whom the king delights to honor [in the royal robe] and lead him on horseback through the open square of the city, and proclaim before him, 'This is what shall be done for the man whom the king desires to honor.'"

¹⁰Then the king said to Haman, "Quickly take the royal robe and the horse, as you have said, and do this for Mordecai the Jew, who is sitting at the king's gate. Leave out nothing of all that you have said."

¹¹So Haman took the royal robe and the horse and dressed Mordecai, and led him *on horseback* through the open square of the city, proclaiming before him, "This is what shall be done for the man whom the king desires to honor."

¹²Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman hurried to his [own] house, mourning and with his head covered [in sorrow].

¹³Then Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends

everything that had happened to him. Then his wise counselors and his wife Zeresh said to him, “If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall *in status*, is of Jewish heritage, you will not overcome him, but will certainly fall before him.”

¹⁴While they were still speaking with him, the king’s eunuchs (attendants) arrived and hurriedly brought Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared.

7 SO THE king and Haman came to drink *wine* with Esther the queen.

²And the king said to Esther on the second day also as they drank their wine, “What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted to you. And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom, it shall be done.”

³Then Queen Esther replied, “If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be spared as my petition, and my people [be spared] as my request;

⁴for we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, killed and wiped out of existence. Now if we had only been sold as slaves, men and women, I would have remained silent, for our hardship would not be sufficient to burden the king [by even mentioning it].”

⁵Then King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) asked Queen Esther, “Who is he, and where is he, who dares to do such a thing?”

⁶Esther said, “An adversary and an enemy is Haman, this evil man.” Then Haman became terrified before the king and queen.

⁷Then in his fury, the king stood up from drinking wine *and went* into the palace garden [to decide what he should do]; but Haman stayed to plead for his life from Queen Esther, for he saw that harm had been determined against him by the king.

⁸When the king returned from the palace garden to the place where they were drinking wine, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was. Then the king said, “Will he even *attempt to* assault the queen with me in the palace?” As the king spoke those words, the servants covered Haman’s face [in preparation for execution].

⁹Then Harbonah, one of the eunuchs serving the king said, “Now look, there are gallows fifty cubits (75 ft.) high standing at Haman’s house, which Haman made for Mordecai, whose good warning saved the king.” And the king said, “Hang him on it.”

¹⁰So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king’s anger subsided.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

See Opposition as an Opportunity

In the royal court of the Persian King Ahasuerus, Haman wielded great power and pushed through an edict to destroy the entire people of Israel. It took Esther's courage to expose Haman to the king as "an adversary and an enemy... this evil man," thereby defeating his wicked plan and ultimately benefiting the Jewish people (Esth. 7:6).

Anyone who wishes to go through life without any opposition is in for a huge disappointment. When God calls us to do something, opposition can actually benefit us, because it forces us to choose to either use our faith and stand firm in Christ or give up. Each time we make the right choice, we make it a little more difficult for the devil to deceive us the next time. He will never stop trying, but we do get better and better at recognizing his attacks and standing against them.

God has equipped and anointed us to do hard things. He allows us to go through difficulty to bring glory to Him. He desires to show Himself strong through us. He told Paul that His strength is made perfect in our weakness (see 2 Cor. 12:9).

We may think we can't make it through difficulty, but those thoughts are inaccurate, according to God's Word. He has promised to never allow more to come on us than we can bear (see 1 Cor. 10:13).

During life's difficulties, a thought that usually persists is, *I can't do this; it is just too much; it is too hard*. Watch out for that type of thinking, and when you recognize it, remember that it is a lie and replace it with your own God-inspired thought that goes something like this: *I can do what I need to do because God is with me. This winter season in my life will be over and spring will come*.

Perhaps you need to see yourself in a new way. If you are easily disappointed or discouraged, or if you tend to give up easily, realize that you are not alone in your battles. As a matter of fact, your battles belong to the Lord, and He will fight for you as you continue to trust Him. See yourself in Christ, walking with Him in your life instead of being weak and alone and defeated by the enemy.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Victorious God, You have promised to always lead me in triumph through Christ Jesus. Forgive me for the many times I've yielded to opposition. Thank You that my battles belong to You and You are fighting for me. In Jesus' name. Amen.

8 ON THAT day King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) gave the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews, to Queen Esther; and Mordecai came before the king, because Esther had disclosed what [relation] he was to her.

²The king took off his signet ring which he had taken away from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther put Mordecai in charge of the house of Haman.

³Then Esther spoke again to the king and fell down at his feet and wept and implored him to avert the evil *plot* of Haman the Agagite and his plan which he had devised against the Jews [because the decree to annihilate the Jews was still in effect].

⁴Then the king held out to Esther the golden scepter. So Esther arose and stood before the king.

⁵Then she said, “If it pleases the king and if I have found favor before him and the matter is proper in the king’s view and I am pleasing in his sight, let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, which he wrote [in order] to destroy the Jews who are in all the king’s provinces.

⁶“For how can I endure to see the tragedy that will happen to my people? Or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?”

⁷Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, “Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows because he stretched out his hand against the Jews.

⁸“Also, concerning the Jews, write as you see fit, in the king’s name, and seal it with the king’s signet ring—for a decree which is written in the king’s name and sealed with the king’s signet ring may not be revoked.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Choose Hope

In Esther 8:3, Esther once again begged the king to spare her people, the Jews, from Haman's plot to destroy them. The reason Esther had the courage to speak up one more time was that she never gave up hope that her people could be saved. Haman's plan seemed destined to move forward, but Esther kept fighting.

At times we all have to fight for hope. The enemy may surround us with people who are plotting wickedness, as Haman was, or with circumstances that are frightening or painful, but God's Word teaches us that He surrounds us with His presence and with many good things. Psalm 32:7 says, "You are my hiding place; You, LORD, protect me from trouble; You surround me with songs and shouts of deliverance." Psalm 125:2 says, "As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds His people from this time forth and forever."

If you've been surrounded by negativity, doubt, uncertainty, worry, or disappointment in your life, it is time for a change. You don't have to let those things rule your life any longer. You can change your environment; you can live in hope instead of fear or despair. Even before you see a change in your situation, you can experience a change in your heart. No matter how daunting the challenge you may be facing, you can be like Esther and choose hope.

POWERPOINT

By putting her own life on the line in these extraordinarily difficult situations, Esther worshiped God. Whenever we obey God, whether or not we understand all the whys, it is a type of worship that God cannot ignore. When we stand firm in faith and continue to worship, we will always see the enemy's plan for evil in our lives work for good and to his demise.



⁹So the king's scribes were called at that time in the third month (that is, the month of Sivan) on the twenty-third day; and it was written in accordance with everything that Mordecai commanded, to the Jews, to the chief rulers (satraps), and the governors and officials of the provinces which *extended* from India to Ethiopia (Cush), 127 provinces, to every province in its own script (writing), and to every people in their own language and to the Jews according to their script and their language.

¹⁰He wrote [a decree] in the name of King Ahasuerus, and sealed it with the king's ring, and sent letters by couriers on horseback, riding on the royal [mail] relay horses, the offspring of the racing mares.

¹¹In it the king granted the Jews who were in every city *the right* to assemble and to defend their lives; to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate any armed force that might attack them, their little children, and women; and to take the enemies' goods as plunder,

¹²on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, the thirteenth [day] of the twelfth month (that is, the month of Adar).

¹³A copy of the edict was to be issued as a law in every province and as a proclamation to all peoples, so that the Jews would be ready on that day, to avenge themselves on their enemies.

¹⁴So the couriers, who were mounted on the royal relay horses, left quickly, urged on by the king's command; and the decree was issued at the citadel in Susa [the capital].

¹⁵Then Mordecai departed from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, with a large crown of gold and with a robe of fine linen and purple wool; and the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced.

¹⁶For [at this time] the Jews had light [a dawn of new hope] and gladness and joy and honor.

¹⁷In each and every province and in each and every city, wherever the king's command and his decree arrived, the Jews *celebrated with* gladness and joy, a feast and a holiday. And many among the peoples of the land became Jews, for the fear

of the Jews [and their God] had fallen on them.

9 NOW IN the twelfth month (that is, the month of Adar) on the thirteenth day when the king's command and edict were about to be executed, on the [very] day when the enemies of the Jews had hoped to gain power over them [and slaughter them], it happened the other way around so that the Jews themselves gained power over those who hated them.

²The Jews assembled in their cities throughout the provinces of King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) to apprehend those who wanted to do them harm; and no one could stand before them, for the fear of them [and their God] had fallen on all the peoples.

³Even all the officials of the provinces and the chief rulers (satraps) and the governors and those who attended to the king's business supported the Jews [in defeating their enemies], because the fear of Mordecai [and his God's power] had fallen on them.

⁴For Mordecai was great *and* respected in the king's palace, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces; for the man Mordecai became greater and greater.

⁵So the Jews struck all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them; and they did what they pleased to those who hated them.

⁶At the citadel in Susa the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men,

⁷and [they killed] Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha,

⁸Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha,

⁹Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vaizatha,

¹⁰the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Jews' enemy; but they did not lay their hands on the plunder.

¹¹On that day the number of those who were killed at the citadel in Susa was reported to the king.

¹²The king said to Queen Esther, "The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men and the ten sons of Haman at the citadel in Susa. What then have they done in the rest of the king's provinces! Now what is your petition? It shall be granted to you. What is your further request? It shall also be done."

¹³Esther replied, "If it pleases the king, let it be granted to the Jews who are in Susa to act tomorrow also in accordance with the decree of today; and let [the dead bodies of] Haman's ten sons be hanged on the gallows." [Esth 9:10]

¹⁴So the king commanded it to be done; the decree was given in Susa, and they hanged [the bodies of] Haman's ten sons.

¹⁵The Jews who were in Susa also gathered together on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and killed three hundred men in Susa, but they did not lay their hands on the plunder.

¹⁶Now the rest of the Jews who were in the king's provinces assembled, to defend their lives and rid themselves of their enemies, and kill 75,000 of those who hated them; but they did not lay their hands on the plunder.

¹⁷*This was done* on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, and on the fourteenth day they rested and made it a day of feasting and rejoicing.

¹⁸But the Jews who were in Susa assembled on the

thirteenth and on the fourteenth of the same month, and on the fifteenth day they rested and made it a day of feasting and rejoicing.

¹⁹Therefore the Jews of the villages, who live in the rural [unwalled] towns, make the fourteenth day of the month of Adar a holiday for rejoicing and feasting and sending choice portions *offood* to one another.

²⁰Now Mordecai recorded these events, and he sent letters to all the Jews who lived in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far,

²¹obliging them to celebrate the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same month, annually,

²²because on those days the Jews rid themselves of their enemies, and as the month which was turned for them from grief to joy and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and rejoicing and sending choice portions *offood* to one another and gifts to the poor.

²³So the Jews undertook what they had started to do, and what Mordecai had written to them.

²⁴For Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them and had cast Pur, that is, the lot, [to find the right time] to disturb and destroy them.

²⁵But when it came before the king, he commanded in writing that Haman's wicked scheme which he had devised against the Jews was to return on his own head, and that he and his sons should [endure what he planned for the Jews and] be hanged on the gallows.

²⁶Therefore they called these days Purim after the name Pur (lot). And because of all the instructions in this letter, and what they had faced in this regard and what had happened to them,

²⁷the Jews established and made it a custom for themselves and for their descendants and for all who joined them, so that they would not fail to celebrate these two days as it was written and at the appointed time annually.

²⁸So these days were to be remembered and celebrated throughout every generation, every family, every province and every city; and these days of Purim were not to cease from among the Jews, nor their memory fade from their descendants.

POWERPOINT

While Mordecai did receive honor and position at the end of the story, he first had to be willing to sacrifice everything to save his people. He never sought a position for himself but simply lived his life in obedience to God's purposes. Take your position as Mordecai did. Don't give up. Stand still, trust God, and see the salvation He has planned for you.



²⁹Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full power *and* authority to confirm this second letter about Purim.

³⁰He sent letters to all the Jews, to the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, in words of peace and truth,

³¹to establish these days of Purim [to be observed] at their appointed times, just as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had established for them, and as they had established for

themselves and for their descendants with instructions regarding their times of fasting and their lamentations (expressions of needing help).

³²The command of Esther established these customs for Purim, and it was written in the book [of the royal archives].

10 KING AHASUERUS (Xerxes) imposed a tax on the land and on the coastlands of the sea.

²And all the accomplishments of his authority and strength, and the full account of the greatness of Mordecai to which the king had raised him, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia?

³For Mordecai the Jew was second only to King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews and in favor with his many fellow people, for he worked for the good of his people and spoke for the welfare *and* peace of his whole nation.

Job

Author: | Uncertain
Date: | Probably
originally in the
second millennium BC,
but put into its present
form around the time
of Solomon

If there's ever a time when the battles of the mind are especially intense, it's when we are going through difficulties or situations we do not understand. This is exactly what happened to Job. He was a godly man, but the Lord allowed him to suffer. As he went through tremendous hardships, the enemy tried to make him believe all kinds of lies, using his friends to try to convince him he had sinned and was being punished and that God must not have truly loved him. I am sure that he fought a fierce battle of the mind, but he stood firm in his faith and came through it victorious.

When the enemy attacks you through your own thoughts or the words of others, let me encourage you to follow Job's

example and keep your faith strong, stand on God's Word, and persevere until the victory comes.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM JOB:

Sometimes God allows adversity to come against His people (see Job 1:8–12), but He also promises to work it out for our good (see Romans 8:28).

Regardless of the hardships you may endure, you can determine not to sin with your lips or to speak against God (see Job 2:10).

No matter what happens, never lose your hope in God. Continue to praise Him through good situations and difficult ones (see Job 13:15).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM JOB:

You will laugh at violence and famine, and you will not be afraid of the wild beasts of the earth. | Job 5:22

For I know that my Redeemer and Vindicator lives, and at the last He will take His stand upon the earth. Even after my [mortal] skin is destroyed [by death], yet from my [immortal] flesh I will see God. | Job 19:25–26

Then Job answered the LORD and said, “I know that You can do all things, and that no thought or purpose of Yours can be restrained.” | Job 42:1–2

THE BOOK OF

JOB

1 THERE WAS a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God [with reverence] and abstained from *and* turned away from evil [because he honored God].

²Seven sons and three daughters were born to him.

³He also possessed 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke (pairs) of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and a very great number of servants, so that this man was the greatest [and wealthiest and most respected] of all the men of the east (northern Arabia).

⁴His sons used to go [in turn] and feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send *word* and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. [Gen 21:8; 40:20]

⁵When the days of their feasting were over, Job would send [for them] and consecrate them, rising early in the morning and offering burnt offerings *according to* the number of them all; for Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Job did this at all [such] times.

⁶Now there was a day when the sons of God (angels) came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan (adversary, accuser) also came among them. [Rev 12:10]

⁷The LORD said to Satan, “From where have you come?” Then Satan answered the LORD, “From roaming around on the earth and from walking around on it.”

⁸The LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered *and* reflected on My servant Job? For there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God [with reverence] and abstains from *and* turns away from evil [because he honors God].”

⁹Then Satan answered the LORD, “Does Job fear God for nothing?

¹⁰“Have You not put a hedge [of protection] around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands [and conferred prosperity and happiness upon him], and his possessions have increased in the land.

¹¹“But put forth Your hand now and touch (destroy) all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face.”

¹²Then the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, all that Job has is in your power, only do not put your hand on *the man* himself.” So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD.

¹³Now there was a day when Job’s sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, ¹⁴and a messenger came to Job and said, “The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were feeding beside them, ¹⁵and the Sabeans attacked *and* swooped down on them and took away the animals. They also killed the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”

¹⁶While he was still speaking, another [messenger] also

came and said, “The fire of God (lightning) has fallen from the heavens and has burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”

POWERPOINT

Our warfare is not with other human beings but with the devil and his demons. Our enemy, Satan, attempts to defeat us with strategy and deceit, through well-laid plans and deliberate deception. He begins with bombarding our minds with a cleverly devised pattern of thoughts, suspicions, doubts, fears, wonderings, reasoning, and theories. He moves slowly and cautiously. He has studied us for a long time, and he has a strategy for warfare against us. When we are aware of his tactics, we can resist him.



WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Never Give in to the Enemy

Satan hates those who love God passionately and serve Him wholeheartedly; and he desires to bring suffering into their lives, hoping that they will blame God and no longer want to serve Him. Any thought of God being anything but good is an evil thought from Satan and should be firmly resisted. God is not the source of our difficulties in life. We do not war against flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers and wickedness in heavenly places (see Eph. 6:12).

In Job 1:9–11, the enemy actually tried to accuse God of *bribing* Job into serving Him. “Then Satan answered the LORD, ‘Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not put a hedge [of protection] around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands [and conferred prosperity and happiness upon him], and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth Your hand now and touch (destroy) all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face.’”

Job did not give in to the devil despite one hardship after

another, including the devil's using his wife and friends to beg him to give up. Job was spiritually strong and never gave up, even in the midst of great tragedy and personal suffering, because he had truly sought God more than he sought His gifts. For Job, God was always first! He enjoyed the things God had given Him, but God was more important to him than what he owned.

The Lord delights in giving His children good things—but only if you seek *Him* first. When Solomon asked for wisdom, God not only gave him wisdom, He commended him for not asking for long life or riches. And because he didn't ask for those things, God said, "I'm going to give them to you anyway" (see 1 Kin. 3:5, 9–13). That's the generous way the Lord works. When we seek only His gifts, we may receive those gifts, but we may also get an empty life. Or worse, Satan may even advance. When we seek the Lord, He gives generously, and we experience closeness with God and enjoy blessings.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Great and mighty God, forgive me for anytime I let Your gifts become more important to me than You are. Use me for Your honor and glory and let my life be pleasing to You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

¹⁷While he was still speaking, another [messenger] also came and said, “The Chaldeans formed three bands and made a raid on the camels and have taken them away and have killed the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”

¹⁸While he was still speaking, another [messenger] also came and said, “Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, ¹⁹and suddenly, a great wind came from across the desert, and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people and they died, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”

²⁰Then Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head [in mourning for the children], and he fell to the ground and worshiped [God].

²¹He said,

“Naked (without possessions) I came [into this world] from my mother’s womb,

And naked I will return there.

The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD.”

²²Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.

2 AGAIN THERE was a day when the sons of God (angels) came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan (adversary, accuser) also came among them to present himself before the LORD.

²The LORD said to Satan, “From where have you come?” Then Satan answered the LORD, “From roaming around on the earth and from walking around on it.”

³The LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered *and* reflected on My servant Job? For there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God [with reverence] and abstains from *and* turns away from evil [because he honors God]. And still he maintains *and* holds tightly to his integrity, although you incited Me against him to destroy him without cause.”

⁴Satan answered the LORD, “Skin for skin! Yes, a man will give all he has for his life.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Trusting God with Unanswered Questions

Part of trusting God is having peace with unanswered questions. Job continued to trust God despite the severest of trials and a list of unanswered questions, even when his wife told him to curse God and die (see Job 2:9). God could have given Job all the answers to everything, but He didn't because He wanted Job to trust Him even in the midst of unimaginable suffering.

Have you ever said, "There's nothing we can do but trust God"? Like it's your last-ditch effort—you've done everything else and now you're left with no other choice. We need to change the way we talk. We need to realize trusting God is the greatest privilege we have. What an honor to be able to say, "No matter what kind of problem I have in my life, I get to trust God!" God wants to take care of you, but He doesn't start until you stop. Retire from self-care, and start trusting God. Don't merely trust Him for things, but trust Him in things—even in difficult things you don't understand.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The Healthy Kind of Grief

The word grief refers to “deep mental anguish, as over a loss: sorrow.” To grieve is “to feel grief”—that is, to experience mental anguish, to be sorrowful, to mourn, to be distressed.

The grieving process is necessary and healthy—mentally, emotionally, and even physically (see Job 2:13). A person who refuses to grieve is often in denial, not facing reality, which will ultimately have a devastating effect on his or her entire being.

A spirit of grief is another matter entirely. If not resisted, it will take over and destroy the life of the one who has suffered a loss. If not confronted and controlled, it will rob health, strength, and vitality—and even life itself. Let me give you an example.

A friend of mine lost her son to leukemia and was definitely going through the process of grief, and rightfully so. However, she told me that one day when she began to think about her son, she suddenly felt something wrap itself around her. It made her feel gloomy and sad, and she could feel herself almost wanting to “sink” into it.

God gave her the spirit of discernment that it was a spirit of grief trying to oppress her. She grabbed one of her son’s shirts, wrapped it around herself, and declared that she was using it as a “garment of praise” (Isa. 61:3). Rather than open the

door for major long-term problems, she confronted and dealt with the oppressive spirit of grief until it left.

⁵“But put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh [and severely afflict him]; and he will curse You to Your face.”

⁶So the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your hand, only spare his life.”

⁷So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with *loathsome* boils *and* agonizingly painful sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.

⁸And Job took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself, and he sat [down] among the ashes (rubbish heaps).

⁹Then his wife said to him, “Do you still cling to your integrity [and your faith and trust in God, without blaming Him]? Curse God and die!”

¹⁰But he said to her, “You speak as one of the [spiritually] foolish women speaks [ignorant and oblivious to God’s will]. Shall we indeed accept [only] good from God and not [also] accept adversity *and* disaster?” In [spite of] all this Job did not sin with [words from] his lips.

¹¹Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite; for they had made an appointment together to come to sympathize with him and to comfort him.

¹²When they looked from a distance and did not recognize him [because of his disfigurement], they raised their voices and

wept; and each one tore his robe [in grief] and they threw dust over their heads toward the sky [in sorrow].

¹³So they sat down on the ground with Job for seven days and seven nights and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his pain was very great.

3 AFTER THIS, Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his *birth*.

²And Job said,

³“Let the day on which I was born perish,
And the night which announced: ‘There is a man-child
conceived.’

⁴“May that day be darkness;
Let God above not care about it,
Nor light shine on it.

⁵“Let darkness and gloom claim it for their own;
Let a cloud settle upon it;
Let all that blackens the day terrify it (the day that I was
born).

⁶“As for that night, let darkness seize it;
Let it not rejoice among the days of the year;
Let it not be counted in the number of the months.

⁷“Behold, let that night be barren [and empty];
Let no joyful voice enter it.

⁸“Let those curse it who curse the day,
Who are skilled in rousing up Leviathan.

- 9“Let the stars of its early dawn be dark;
Let *the morning* wait in vain for the light,
Let it not see the eyelids of morning (the day’s dawning),
- 10Because it did not shut the doors of my *mother’s* womb,
Nor hide trouble from my eyes.
- 11“Why did I not die at birth,
Come forth from the womb and expire?
- 12“Why did the knees receive me?
And why the breasts, that I would nurse?
- 13“For now I would have lain down and been quiet;
I would have slept then, I would have been at rest [in
death],
- 14With kings and counselors of the earth,
Who built up [now desolate] ruins for themselves;
- 15Or with princes who had gold,
Who filled their houses with silver.
- 16“Or like a miscarriage which is hidden *and* put away, I would
not exist, Like infants who never saw light.

POWERPOINT

In Job 3:25, Job said that the thing he greatly feared had come upon him. Anytime we feel great fear, it is an opportunity for great faith. Is there a situation that causes you to be unusually afraid? Pray and ask God to replace your fear with faith in His love and power.



- 17“There [in death] the wicked cease from raging,
And there the weary are at rest.
- 18“There the prisoners rest together;
They do not hear the taskmaster’s voice.
- 19““The small and the great are there,
And the servant is free from his master. [Jer 20:14–18]
- 20““Why is the light given to him who is in misery,
And life to the bitter in soul,
- 21“Who wait for death, but it does not come,

And dig (search) for death more [diligently] than for hidden treasures,

²²Who rejoice exceedingly,
And rejoice when they find the grave?

²³*“Why is the light of day given to a man whose way is hidden,
And whom God has hedged in?*

²⁴*“For my groaning comes at the sight of my food,
And my cries [of despair] are poured out like water.*

²⁵*“For the thing which I greatly fear comes upon me,
And that of which I am afraid has come upon me.*

²⁶*“I am not at ease, nor am I quiet,
And I am not at rest, and yet trouble still comes [upon me].”*

4 THEN ELIPHAZ the Temanite answered and said, ²“If we dare to converse with you, will you be impatient [or offended]?
But who can restrain himself from speaking?

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Seeds Ultimately Produce a Harvest

We can see a tomato seed with our eyes and understand the process of planting and expecting a harvest of tomatoes. We cannot see attitudes, thoughts, or words, but they are seeds that operate in the spiritual (unseen) realm, and they also produce a harvest based on what was planted.

People who continually sow negative thoughts, attitudes, and words will produce many negative results in life (see Job 4:8). Likewise, those who sow positive, life-filled thoughts, attitudes, and words will see positive and good results.

You wouldn't plant a tomato seed and expect to harvest broccoli; likewise you shouldn't hope to reap a good harvest if you plant negative-word seeds. Once you truly understand this principle and act on it accordingly, you can change your words and therefore change your life.

3“Behold, you have admonished *and* instructed many,
And you have strengthened weak hands.

4“Your words have helped the one who was stumbling to stand,
And you have strengthened feeble knees.

5“But now adversity comes upon you, and you are impatient
and intolerant; It touches you, and you are horrified.

- 6“Is not your fear *of God* your confidence,
And [is not] the integrity *and* uprightness of your ways
your hope?
- 7“Remember now, who, being innocent, ever perished?
Or where [and in what circumstances] were those upright
and in right standing with God destroyed?
- 8“As I have seen, those who plow wickedness
And those who sow trouble *and* harm harvest it.
- 9“By the breath of God they perish,
And by the blast of His anger they are consumed.
- 10““The roaring of the lion and the voice of the *fierce* lion,
And the teeth of the young lions are broken.
- 11““The lion perishes for lack of prey,
And the cubs of the lioness are scattered.
- 12““Now a word was secretly brought to me,
And my ear received a whisper of it.
- 13““Amid disquieting thoughts from the visions of the night,
When deep sleep falls on men,
- 14“Dread and trembling came upon me,
Which made all my bones shake.
- 15““Then a spirit passed before my face;
The hair on my skin stood on end!
- 16““The spirit stood still, but I could not discern its
appearance;
A form was before my eyes;
There was silence, and then I heard a voice, saying:

17‘Can [mortal] man be just before God *or* be more righteous than He?

Can a man be pure before his Maker *or* be more cleansed than He? [1 John 1:7; Rev 1:5]

18‘God puts no trust *or* confidence, even in His [heavenly] servants,

And He charges His angels with error.

19‘How much more [will He blame and charge] those who dwell in houses (bodies) of clay, Whose foundations are in the dust,

Who are crushed like a moth.

20‘Between morning and evening they are broken in pieces *and* destroyed; Unobserved *and* unnoticed, they perish forever.

21‘Is not their tent-cord drawn up within them [so that the tent collapses]?

Do they not die, and yet without [acquiring] wisdom?’

5 “CALL NOW—is there anyone who will answer you?

And to which of the holy ones (angels) will you turn?

2‘For anger slays the foolish man,

And jealousy kills the simple (naive).

3‘I have seen the foolish taking root [and outwardly prospering],

But I cursed his dwelling immediately [for his destruction was certain].

- 4“His children are far from safety [and included in their father’s ruin],
They are oppressed *and* crushed in the [court of justice in the city’s] gate,
And there is no one to rescue *them*.
- 5“‘The hungry devour his harvest
And take it even [when it grows] among the thorns;
The trap opens for [his] wealth.
- 6“‘For affliction does not come forth from the dust,
Nor does trouble spring forth from the ground.
- 7“‘For man is born for trouble,
[As naturally] as sparks fly upward.
- 8“‘As for me, I would seek God *and* inquire of Him,
And I would commit my cause to God;
- 9Who does great and unsearchable things,
Marvelous things without number.
- 10“‘He gives rain upon the earth
And sends waters upon the fields,
- 11So that He sets on high those who are lowly,
And He lifts to safety those who mourn.
- 12“‘He frustrates the devices *and* schemes of the crafty,
So that their hands cannot attain success *or* achieve anything of [lasting] worth.

A Prayer To

Renew Your Mind



As for me, God, I seek You and inquire of You. I commit my cause to You. You do great and unsearchable things, marvelous things without number.

• adapted from Job 5:8–9

- ¹³“He catches the [so-called] wise in their own shrewdness,
And the advice of the devious is quickly thwarted. [1 Cor
3:19, 20]
- ¹⁴“In the daytime they meet in darkness,
And at noon they grope as in the night.
- ¹⁵“But God saves [the innocent] from the sword of the mouth
of the devious,
And the poor from the hand of the mighty.
- ¹⁶“So the helpless have hope,
And injustice shuts its mouth.
- ¹⁷“Behold, how happy *and* fortunate is the man whom God

reproves,

So do not despise *or* reject the discipline of the Almighty
[subjecting you to trial and suffering].

18“For He inflicts pain, but He binds up *and* gives relief;
He wounds, but His hands also heal.

19“He will rescue you from six troubles;
Even in seven, evil will not touch you.

20“In famine He will redeem you from death,
And in war from the power of the sword.

21“*You will be hidden from the scourge of the tongue,
And you will not be afraid of destruction when it comes.*

22“*You will laugh at violence and famine,
And you will not be afraid of the wild beasts of the earth.*

23“*For you will be in harmony with the stones of the field,
And the beasts of the field will be at peace with you.*

24“*You will know also that your tent is secure and at peace,
And you will visit your dwelling and fear no loss [nor find
anything amiss].*

25“*You will know also that your descendants will be many,
And your offspring as the grass of the earth.*

26“*You will come to your grave in old age,
Like the stacking of grain [on the threshing floor] in its
season.*

27“*Behold this; we have investigated it, and it is true.
Hear and heed it, and know for yourself [for your own
good].”*

6 THEN JOB answered and said, ²“Oh, that my grief could actually be weighed

And placed in the balances together with my tragedy [to see if my grief is the grief of a coward]!

³“For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea;
Therefore my words have been incoherent,

⁴Because the arrows of the Almighty are within me,
My spirit drinks their poison;
The terrors of God are arrayed against me.

⁵“Does the wild donkey bray when he has grass?
Or does the ox low over his fodder?

⁶“Can something that has no taste to it be eaten without salt?

Or is there any flavor in the white of an egg?

⁷“My soul refuses to touch them;
Such things are like loathsome food to me [sickening and repugnant].

⁸“Oh that my request would come to pass,
And that God would grant me the thing that I long for!

⁹“I wish that it would please God to crush me,
That He would let loose His hand and cut me off.

¹⁰“Then I would still have consolation,
And I would jump for joy amid unsparing pain,
That I have not denied *or* hidden the words of the Holy One.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Prayers of Petition

The prayer of petition offered in Job 6:8 is by far the most often used type of prayer. When we petition God, we ask for something for ourselves. Another word for petition is requisition. It is a demand or request made on something to which a person is legally entitled but not yet in possession of, as in the military when an officer requisitions equipment or supplies for his men. As an officer of the United States Army, he is entitled to that material, but in order to receive it he has to submit a definite request for it.

When we come to the Lord with a petition, we are requisitioning from Him what He has already set aside to provide for us when the need arises. For that reason, we frequently exercise our right to petition God. It is, of course, not wrong to ask God to do things for us, but our petitions should be well balanced with praise and thanksgiving.

We can be bold in petitioning God for any type of need in our lives. We are not restricted to a certain number of requests per day. We can feel at ease talking to God about anything that concerns us, because He already knows what we need before we ask (see Matt. 6:8).

¹¹“What strength do I have left, that I should wait [and hope]?”

And what is ahead of me, that I should be patient *and* endure?

12“Is my strength *and* endurance that of stones,
Or is my flesh made of bronze?

13“Is it that I have no help within myself,
And that success *and* wisdom have been driven from me?

14“For the despairing man *there should be* kindness from his friend;
So that he does not abandon (turn away from) the fear of the Almighty.

15“My brothers have acted deceitfully like a brook,
Like the torrents of brooks that vanish,

16Which are dull *and* dirty because of ice,
And into which the snow melts *and* hides itself;

17When it is warm, they are silent *and* cease to flow;
When it is hot, they vanish from their place.

18“The paths of their course wind along,
They go up into nothing *and* perish.
[Your counsel is as helpful to me as a dry streambed in the heat of summer.]

19““The caravans of Tema looked [for water],
The caravans of Sheba waited for them [in vain].

20““They were put to shame *and* disappointed because they had trusted [that they would find water]; They came there and were ashamed.

21““Indeed, you have now become like a dried-up stream,
You see a terror [believing me to be a victim of the wrath of

God] and are afraid [to be compassionate].

22“Did I ever say, ‘Give me *something*,’

Or, ‘Pay a bribe for me from your wealth,’

23Or, ‘Rescue me from the adversary’s hand,’

Or, ‘Redeem me from the hand of the tyrants’?

24“Teach me, and I will be silent;

And show me how I have erred.

25“How painful are words of honesty.

But what does your argument prove?

26“Do you intend to reprove my words [with a convincing argument],

When the words of one in despair belong to the wind [and go ignored]?

27“‘You would cast *lots* (gamble) over the fatherless

And bargain away your friend.

28“Now please look at me,

And *see* if I lie to your face [for you know that I would not].

29“Turn away [from your suspicion], let there be no injustice;

Turn away, my righteousness *and* vindication is still in it.

30“Is there injustice *or* malice on my tongue?

Can my palate not discern what is destructive?

1 “IS NOT man forced to labor on earth?

And are not his days like the days of a hired man?

2“As a slave earnestly longs for the shade,

- And as a hired man eagerly awaits his wages,
3 So am I allotted months of futility *and* suffering,
And [long] nights of trouble *and* misery are appointed to
me.
- 4 “When I lie down I say,
‘When shall I arise [and the night be gone]?’
But the night continues,
And I am continually tossing until the dawning of day.
- 5 “My body is clothed with worms and a crust of dust;
My skin is hardened [and broken and loathsome], and
[breaks out and] runs.
- 6 “My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle,
And are spent without hope.
- 7 “Remember that my life is but breath [a puff of wind, a sigh];
My eye will not see good again.
- 8 “The eye of him who sees me [now] will see me no more;
Your eyes *will be* upon me, but I will not be.
- 9 “As a cloud vanishes and is gone,
So he who goes down to Sheol (the nether world, the place
of the dead) does not come up.
- 10 “He will not return again to his house,
Nor will his place know about him anymore.
- 11 “Therefore I will not restrain my mouth;
I will speak in the anguish of my spirit,
I will complain in the bitterness of my soul [O Lord].
- 12 “Am I the sea, or the sea monster,

That You set a guard over me?

¹³“When I say, ‘My bed will comfort me,
My couch will ease my complaint,’

¹⁴Then You frighten me with dreams
And terrify me through visions,

¹⁵So that I would choose suffocation,
Death rather than my pain.

¹⁶“I waste away *and* loathe my life; I will not live forever.
Let me alone, for my days are but a breath [futile and
without substance].

¹⁷“What is man that You [should] magnify him [and think him
important]?
And that You are concerned about him? [Ps 8:4]

¹⁸“And that You examine him every morning
And try *and* test him every moment?

¹⁹“Will You never turn Your gaze away from me [it plagues
me],
Nor let me alone until I swallow my spittle?

²⁰“If I have sinned, what [harm] have I done to You,
O Watcher of mankind?
Why have You set me as a target for You,
So that I am a burden to myself?

²¹“Why then do You not pardon my transgression
And take away my sin *and* guilt?
For now I will lie down in the dust;
And You will seek me [diligently], but I will not be.”

8 THEN BILDAD the Shuhite answered and said, ²“How long will you say these things?

And will the words of your mouth be a mighty wind?

³“Does God pervert justice?

Or does the Almighty pervert righteousness?

⁴“If your children have sinned against Him,

Then He has handed them over to the power of their transgression *and* punished them.

⁵“If you would [diligently] seek God

And implore the compassion *and* favor of the Almighty,

⁶Then, if you are pure and upright,

Surely now He will awaken for you

And restore your righteous place.

⁷“Though your beginning was insignificant,

Yet your end will greatly increase.

⁸“Inquire, please, of past generations,

And consider *and* apply yourself to the things searched out by their fathers.

⁹“For we are *only* of yesterday and know nothing,

Because our days on earth are [like] a shadow [just a breath or a vapor].

¹⁰“Will they (the fathers) not teach you *and* tell you,

And utter words from their hearts [the deepest part of their nature]?

¹¹“Can the papyrus grow up without a marsh?

Can the rushes *or* reed grass grow without water?

12“While it is still green (in flower) and not cut down,
Yet it withers before any *other* plant [when without water].

13“So are the paths of all who forget God;
And the hope of the godless will perish,

14For his confidence is fragile *and* breaks,
And his trust is [like] a spider’s web.

15“He trusts in his house, but it does not stand;
He holds tightly to it, but it does not endure.

16“He thrives *and* prospers [like a green plant] before the sun,
And his branches spread out over his garden.

17“His [godless] roots are wrapped around a pile of rocks,
And he gazes at a house of stones.

18“If he is snatched from his place [in the garden],
Then his place will forget him, *saying*, ‘I have never seen
you.’

19“Behold, this is the joy of His way;
And from out of the dust others will spring up *and* grow [to
take his place].

20“Behold, God will not reject a *man of* integrity,
Nor will He strengthen *or* support evildoers.

21“He will yet fill your mouth with laughter
And your lips with joyful shouting [if you are found
blameless].

22“Those who hate you will be clothed with shame,
And the tents of the wicked will be no longer.”

9 THEN JOB answered and said, ²“Yes, I know it is true.

But how can a mortal man be right before God?

³“If one should want to contend *or* dispute with Him,
He could not answer Him once in a thousand *times*.

⁴“*God* is wise in heart and mighty in strength;
Who has [ever] defied *or* challenged Him and remained
unharméd?

⁵“*It is God* who removes the mountains, and they do not
know it,

When He overturns them in His anger;

⁶Who shakes the earth out of its place,
And its pillars tremble;

⁷Who commands the sun, and it does not shine;
Who seals up the stars [from view];

⁸Who alone stretches out the heavens
And tramples down the waves of the sea;

⁹Who made [the constellations] the Bear, Orion, and the
Pleiades,

And the [vast starry] spaces of the south;

¹⁰Who does great things, [beyond understanding,]
unfathomable,

Yes, marvelous *and* wondrous things without number.

¹¹“Behold, He passes by me, and I do not see Him;
He moves past me, but I do not perceive Him.

¹²“Behold, He snatches away; who can restrain *or* turn Him
back?

Who will say to Him, ‘What are You doing?’

- 13“God will not turn back His anger;
The [proud] helpers of Rahab [the arrogant monster of the
sea] bow under Him.
- 14“How can I answer Him [and plead my case],
Choosing my words [to reason] with Him?
- 15For though I were righteous, I could not answer.
I must appeal for mercy to my Opponent *and* Judge.
- 16“If I called and He answered me,
I could not believe that He was listening to my voice.
- 17“For He bruises me with a tempest
And multiplies my wounds without cause.
- 18“He will not allow me to catch my breath,
But fills *and* saturates me with bitterness.
- 19“‘If it is a matter of strength *and* power, behold, *He is*
mighty!
And if of justice, who can summon *and* challenge Him?
- 20“Though I am innocent *and* in the right, my own mouth
would pronounce me guilty; Though I am blameless, He
would denounce me as guilty.
- 21“[Though] I am blameless,
I do not care about myself;
I despise my life.
- 22“‘It is *all* one; therefore I say,
‘He destroys [both] the blameless and the wicked.’
- 23“‘When [His] scourge kills suddenly,

He mocks at the despair of the innocent.

24“The earth is given into the hands of the wicked;

He covers the faces of its judges [so that they are blind to justice].

If it is not He, then who is it [that is responsible for all this injustice]?

25“Now my days are swifter than a runner;

They vanish, they see no good.

26“They pass by like the [swift] boats made of reeds,

Like an eagle that swoops down on its prey.

27“‘If I say, ‘I will forget my complaint,

I will leave off my sad appearance, and be cheerful *and* brighten up,’

28I am afraid of all my pains *and* worries [yet to come];

I know that You will not acquit me *and* leave me unpunished.

29“‘I am accounted wicked *and* held guilty;

Why then should I labor in vain [to appear innocent]?

30“‘If I were to wash myself with snow

And cleanse my hands with lye,

31You would still plunge me into the pit,

And my own clothes would hate me [and refuse to cover my foul body].

32“‘For God is not a [mere] man, as I am, that I may answer Him,

That we may go to court *and* judgment together.

33“‘There is no arbitrator between us,

Who could lay his hand upon us both [would that there were]. [1 Tim 2:5]

34“Let Him take His rod away from me,
And let not the dread *and* fear of Him terrify me.

35“*Then* I would speak [my defense] and not fear Him;
But I am not like that in myself.

10 “I AM disgusted with my life *and* loathe it!

I will give free expression to my complaint;
I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.

2“I will say to God, ‘Do not condemn me [and declare me guilty]!
Show me why You contend *and* argue *and* struggle with me.

3“Does it indeed seem right to You to oppress,
To despise *and* reject the work of Your hands,
And to look with favor on the schemes of the wicked?

4“Do You have eyes of flesh?
Do You see as a man sees?

5“Are Your days as the days of a mortal,
Are Your years as man’s years,

6That You seek my guilt
And search for my sin?

7“Although You know that I am not guilty *or* wicked,
Yet there is no one who can rescue me from Your hand.

8“Your hands have formed and made me altogether.
Would You [turn around and] destroy me?

- 9^cRemember now, that You have made me as clay;
So will You turn me into dust again?
- 10^cHave You not poured me out like milk
And curdled me like cheese?
- 11^c[You have] clothed me with skin and flesh,
And knit me together with bones and sinews.
- 12^cYou have granted me life and lovingkindness;
And Your providence (divine care, supervision) has
preserved my spirit.
- 13^cYet these [present evils] You have hidden in Your heart
[since my creation]:
I know that this was within You [in Your purpose and
thought].
- 14^cIf I sin, then You would take note *and* observe me,
And You would not acquit me of my guilt.
- 15^cIf I am wicked, woe to me [for judgment comes]!
And if I am righteous, I dare not lift up my head.
For I am sated *and* filled with disgrace and the sight of my
misery.
- 16^cShould I lift my head up, You would hunt me like a lion;
And again You would show Your marvelous power against
me.
- 17^cYou renew Your witnesses against me
And increase Your indignation *and* anger toward me;
Hardship after hardship is with me [attacking me time after
time].
- 18^cWhy then did You bring me out of the womb?

- Would that I had perished and no eye had seen me!
19¹‘I should have been as though I had not existed;
[I should have been] carried from the womb to the grave.’
20²“Would He not let my few days alone,
Withdraw from me that I may have a little cheer
21³Before I go—and I shall not return—
To the land of darkness and the deep shadow [of death],
22⁴The [sunless] land of utter gloom as darkness *itself*,
[The land] of the shadow of death, without order,
And [where] it shines as [thick] darkness.”

11 THEN ZOPHAR the Naamathite answered and said,

- 2¹“Shall a multitude of words not be answered?
And should a talkative man [making such a long-winded
defense] be acquitted?
3²“Should your boasts *and* babble silence men?
And shall you scoff and no one put you to shame?
4³“For you have said, ‘My teaching (doctrine) [that God
knowingly afflicts the righteous] is pure, And I am
innocent in your eyes.’ [Job 10:7]
5⁴“But oh, that God would speak,
And open His lips [to speak] against you,
6⁵And [that He would] show you the secrets of wisdom!
For sound wisdom has two sides.
Know therefore that God forgets a part of your wickedness
and guilt.

⁷“Can you discover the depths of God?

Can you [by searching] discover the limits of the Almighty
[ascend to His heights, extend to His widths, and
comprehend His infinite perfection]?

⁸“*His wisdom* is as high as the heights of heaven. What can
you do?

It is deeper than Sheol (the nether world, the place of the
dead). What can you know?

⁹“It is longer in measure [and scope] than the earth,
And broader than the sea.

¹⁰“If God passes by or arrests,
Or calls an assembly [of judgment], who can restrain Him?
[If He is against a man, who can call Him to account for it?]

Speak God's Word

*I trust with confidence,
because there is hope; I look
around me and rest securely. I
lie down with no one to
frighten me.*

| adapted from JOB 11:18–19 |

- ¹¹“For He recognizes *and* knows false *and* worthless men,
And He sees wickedness, will He not consider it?
- ¹²“But a hollow (empty-headed) man will become intelligent
and wise
[Only] when the colt of a wild donkey is born as a man.
- ¹³“If you direct your heart [on the right path]
And stretch out your hands to Him,
- ¹⁴If sin is in your hand, put it far away [from you],
And do not let wrongdoing dwell in your tents;
- ¹⁵Then, indeed, you could lift up your face [to Him] without
moral defect, And you would be firmly established *and*
secure and not fear.
- ¹⁶“For you would forget your trouble;
You would remember it as waters that have passed by.

- 17“And your life would be brighter than the noonday;
Darkness [then] would be like the morning.
- 18“Then you would trust [with confidence], because there is
hope;
You would look around you and rest securely.
- 19“*You would lie down with no one to frighten you,
And many would entreat and seek your favor.*
- 20“*But the eyes of the wicked will fail,
And they will not escape [the justice of God];
And their hope is to breathe their last [and die].”*

- 12 THEN JOB responded, ²“No doubt you are the [only
wise] people [in the world],
And wisdom will die with you!
- ³“But I have intelligence *and* understanding as well as you;
I am not inferior to you.
Who does not know such things as these [of God’s wisdom
and might]?
- ⁴“I am a joke to my friends;
I, one whom God answered when he called upon Him—
A just and blameless man is a joke [and laughed to scorn].
- ⁵“He who is at ease has contempt for misfortune,
But misfortune is ready [and anxiously waiting] for those
whose feet slip.
- ⁶“The tents of the destroyers prosper;
And those who provoke God are [apparently] secure,

Whom God brings into their power.

⁷“Now ask the animals, and let them teach you [that God does not deal with His creatures according to their character]; And ask the birds of the air, and let them tell you;

⁸Or speak to the earth [with its many forms of life], and it will teach you;

And let the fish of the sea declare [this truth] to you.

⁹“Who among all these does not recognize [in all these things that good and evil are randomly scattered throughout nature and human life]

That the hand of the LORD has done this,

¹⁰In whose hand is the life of every living thing,
And the breath of all mankind?

¹¹“Does the ear not put words to the test,
Just as the palate tastes its food [distinguishing between the desirable and the undesirable]?

¹²“With the aged [you say] is wisdom,
And *with* long life is understanding.

¹³“But [only] with Him are [perfect] wisdom and might;
He [alone] has [true] counsel and understanding.

¹⁴“Behold, He tears down, and it cannot be rebuilt;
He imprisons a man, and there can be no release.

¹⁵“Behold, He restrains the waters, and they dry up;
Again, He sends the waters out, and they overwhelm *and* devastate the earth.

¹⁶“With Him are might and sound wisdom,

The misled and the misleader are His [and in His power].

17“He makes [great and scheming] counselors walk barefoot
And makes fools of judges.

18“He loosens the bond of kings
And binds their loins with a loincloth.

19“He makes priests walk barefoot,
And He overturns men firmly seated *and* secure.

20“He deprives the trusted ones of speech
And takes away the discernment *and* discretion of the aged.

21“He pours contempt on princes *and* nobles
And loosens the belt of the strong [disabling them].

22“He uncovers mysteries [that are difficult to grasp and
understand] out of the darkness And brings black gloom
and the shadow of death into light.

POWERPOINT

Job 12:22 reminds me of the years of my life that I spent in darkness, hiding from one thing or another. I had lived in darkness for such a long time that coming into the light was not easy as God began revealing issues that needed attention in my life. Knowing that God can change you makes it easier to face a truth about yourself when God is dealing with you. Once you begin to see the amazing things that God can do in and for you, you will be able to trust Him more and more.



23“He makes nations great, and He destroys them;
He enlarges nations, and leads them away [captive].

24“He removes intelligence *and* understanding from the

leaders of the people of the earth And makes them
wander *and* move blindly in a pathless waste.

25“They grope in darkness without light,
And He makes them stagger like a drunken man.”

13 [JOB CONTINUED:] “Behold, my eye has seen all *this*,
My ear has heard and understood it.

2“What you know I also know;
I am not inferior to you.

3“But I wish to speak to the Almighty,
And I desire to argue with God.

4“But you smear me with lies [you defame my character most
untruthfully];
You are all worthless physicians *and* have no remedy to
offer.

5“Oh, that you would be completely silent,
And that *silence* would be your wisdom!

6“Please hear my argument
And listen to the pleadings of my lips.

7“Will you speak what is unjust for God,
And speak what is deceitful for Him?

8“Will you show partiality for Him [and be unjust to me so
that you may gain favor with Him]?
Will you contend *and* plead for God?

9“Will it be well for you when He investigates you [and your
tactics against me]?

Or will you deceive Him as one deceives a man?

10“He will surely reprimand you

If you secretly show partiality.

11“Will not His majesty terrify you,

And will not the dread of Him fall upon you?

12“Your memorable sayings are [worthless, merely] proverbs
of ashes;

Your defenses are defenses of [crumbling] clay.

13“Be silent before me so that I may speak;

And let happen to me what may.

14“Why should I take my flesh in my teeth

And put my life in my hands [incurring the wrath of God]?

15“Even though He kills me;

I will hope in Him.

Nevertheless, I will argue my ways to His face.

16“This also will be my salvation,

For a godless man may not come before Him.

17“Listen diligently to my speech,

And let my declaration fill your ears.

18“Behold now, I have prepared my case;

I know that I will be vindicated.

19“Who will argue *and* contend with me?

For then I would be silent and die.

20“Only [O Lord,] do not do two things to me,

And then I will not hide myself from Your face:

21Withdraw Your hand from me *and* remove this bodily

- suffering,
And let not the dread of You terrify me.
- 22“Then [Lord,] call, and I will answer;
Or let me speak, and then reply to me.
- 23“How many are my iniquities and sins [that so much sorrow
should come to me]?
Make me recognize *and* understand my transgression and
my sin. [Rom 8:1]
- 24“Why do You hide Your face [as if offended]
And consider me Your enemy?
- 25“Will You cause a windblown leaf to tremble?
Will You pursue the chaff of the dry stubble?
- 26“For You write bitter things against me [in Your indictment]
And make me inherit *and* suffer for the iniquities of my
youth.
- 27““You also put my feet in the stocks [as punishment]
And [critically] observe all my paths;
You set a circle *and* limit around the soles of my feet [which
I must not overstep], ²⁸While I waste away like a rotten
thing,
Like a garment that is moth-eaten.

14 “MAN, WHO is born of a woman, Is short-lived and full
of turmoil.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

When Does the Enemy Most Attack Our Thoughts?

For centuries, people have asked: “If God truly loves us, why is there suffering?” And they haven’t fully discovered the answer. God’s Word teaches us that we know in part. Only when Jesus returns, or when we go home to live with Him, will we understand all these things fully.

The reality is that throughout our lives, we will suffer at times. In the midst of those hardships, the Lord wants us to come to Him out of love, to turn to Him for help, and to be thankful as He answers our prayers and comforts us. The timing of our deliverance must be left with His wisdom. We can enjoy our lives during the difficulties if we believe that God is good and that He will take the painful thing and work good out of it for us.

The time between suffering and thanksgiving is when the devil attacks our thoughts intensely. “If God really loved you, you wouldn’t be going through this. You have served God for

nothing. See, this is what happens when you really need help and trust God. He doesn't care about you."

This is where we need to stand firm. We can take courage from Job's story. Few of us have suffered as he did—he lost his children, his possessions, and his health. The enemy used the accusations of his so-called friends, accusations of hypocrisy and deception, to discourage him. However, Job refused to listen. He said, "Even though He kills me; I will hope in Him" (Job 13:15). He refused to allow Satan to attack his mind and make him question God. He didn't understand what God had done or was doing. But he did know that God was with him, and he never doubted God's love and presence.

That's the attitude we want—that calm assurance of God's love. We don't have to understand or be able to explain to others what is happening. If we suffer, we are privileged to walk the same paths as some of God's greatest saints. Suffering can and should end in thanksgiving, for "after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace [who imparts His blessing and favor], who called you to His *own* eternal glory in Christ, will Himself complete, confirm, strengthen, and establish you [making you what you ought to be]" (1 Pet. 5:10).

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Forgive me, God, for complaining when life gets hard. I don't want to suffer; and I don't like it when things go wrong. But I ask that You would help me to have a good attitude and to trust You to bring good out of it. Amen.

- 2“Like a flower he comes forth and withers;
He also flees like a shadow and does not remain.
- 3““You also open Your eyes upon him
And bring him into judgment with Yourself.
- 4““Who can make a clean thing out of the unclean?
No one! [Is 1:18; 1 John 1:7]
- 5““Since his days are determined,
The number of his months is with You [in Your control],
And You have made his limits so he cannot pass [his
allotted time].
- 6““[O God] turn your gaze from him so that he may rest,
Until he fulfills his day [on earth] like a hired man.
- 7““For there is hope for a tree,
If it is cut down, that it will sprout again,
And that the shoots of it will not cease *nor* fail, [but there is
no such hope for man].
- 8““Though its roots grow old in the earth
And its stump dies in the dry soil,
- 9““Yet at the scent of water [the stump of the tree] will flourish
And bring forth sprigs *and* shoots like a seedling.
- 10““But [the brave, strong] man must die and lie face down;
Man breathes his last, and where is he?
- 11““As water evaporates from the sea,
And a river drains and dries up,
- 12““So man lies down and does not rise [again].

Until the heavens are no longer,
The dead will not awake nor be raised from their sleep.

¹³“Oh, that You would hide me in Sheol (the nether world, the place of the dead), That You would conceal me until Your wrath is past,

That You would set a definite time and then remember me
[and in Your lovingkindness imprint me on your heart]!

¹⁴“If a man dies, will he live again?

I will wait all the days of my struggle

Until my change *and* release will come. [John 5:25; 6:40; 1 Thess 4:16]

POWERPOINT

In Job 14:19, Job is frustrated.

It's hard to imagine anything more frustrating for Job than to suffer as he did and *never* know why. Frustration usually comes from trying to do something about a situation we cannot do anything about instead of waiting on the Lord to bring the answer. To pass the frustration test, we simply have to let go and trust God to do what only He can do.



15“[Then] You will call, and I will answer You;
You will long for [me] the work of Your hands.

16“But now You number [each of] my steps;
You do not observe *nor* take note of my sin.

17“My transgression is sealed up in a bag,
And You cover my wickedness [from Your view].

- 18“But as a mountain, if it falls, crumbles into nothing,
And as the rock is moved from its place,
19Water wears away the stones,
Its floods *and* torrents wash away the soil of the earth,
So You [O Lord] destroy the hope of man.
20“You prevail forever against him *and* overpower him, and he
passes on; You change his appearance and send him
away [from the presence of the living].
21“His sons achieve honor, and he does not know it;
They become insignificant, and he is not aware of it.
22“But his body [lamenting its decay] grieves in pain over it,
And his soul mourns over [the loss of] himself.”

15 THEN ELIPHAZ the Temanite answered [Job] and said,

- 2“Should a wise man [such as you] utter such windy *and* vain
knowledge [as we have just heard]
And fill himself with the east wind [of withering, parching,
and violent accusations]?
3“Should he rebuke *and* argue with useless talk?
Or with words in which there is no benefit?
4“Indeed, you are doing away with fear,
And you are diminishing meditation before God.
5“For your guilt teaches your mouth,
And you choose [to speak] the language of the crafty *and*
cunning.
6“Your own mouth condemns you, and not I;

Yes, your own lips testify against you.

7“Were you the first man to be born [the original wise man],
Or were you created before the hills?

8“Do you hear the secret counsel of God,
And do you limit [the possession of] wisdom to yourself?

9“What do you know that we do not know?
What do you understand that is not equally clear to us?

10“Among us are both the gray-haired and the aged,
Older than your father.

11“Are the consolations of God [as we have interpreted them
to you] too trivial for you, [Or] were we too gentle toward
you [in our first speech] to be effective?

12“Why does your heart carry you away [allowing you to be
controlled by emotion]?

And why do your eyes flash [in anger or contempt],

13That you should turn your spirit against God
And let *such* words [as you have spoken] go out of your
mouth?

14“What is man, that he should be pure *and* clean,
Or he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous
and just?

15“Behold, God puts no trust in His holy ones (angels);
Indeed, the heavens are not pure in His sight—

16How much less [pure and clean is] the one who is repulsive
and corrupt,
Man, who drinks unrighteousness *and* injustice like water!

- 17“I will tell you, listen to me;
And what I have seen I will also declare;
- 18What wise men have [freely] told,
And have not hidden [anything passed on to them] from
their fathers,
- 19To whom alone the land was given,
And no stranger passed among them [corrupting the truth].
- 20“The wicked man writhes with pain all his days,
And numbered are the years stored up for him, the ruthless
one.
- 21“A [dreadful] sound of terrors is in his ears;
While at peace *and* in a time of prosperity the destroyer
comes upon him [the tent of the robber is not at peace].
- 22“He does not believe that he will return out of the darkness
[for fear of being murdered], And he is destined for the
sword [of God’s vengeance].
- 23“He wanders about for food, saying, ‘Where is it?’
He knows that the day of darkness *and* destruction is
already at hand.
- 24“Distress and anxiety terrify him,
They overpower him like a king ready for battle.
- 25“Because he has stretched out his hand against God
And behaves arrogantly against the Almighty,
- 26Running *and* charging headlong against Him
With his ornamented *and* massive shield;
- 27For he has covered his face with his fat,
Adding layers of fat to his thighs [giving himself up to

pleasures],

²⁸And he has lived in desolate [God-forsaken] cities,
In houses which no one should inhabit,
Which were destined to become heaps [of ruins];

²⁹He will not become rich, nor will his wealth endure;
And his grain will not bend to the earth *nor* his possessions
be extended on the earth.

³⁰“He will not escape from darkness [fleeing disaster];
The flame [of God’s wrath] will wither his branch,
And by the blast of His mouth he will go away.

³¹“Let him not trust in vanity (emptiness, futility) and be led
astray;
For emptiness will be his reward [for such living].

³²“It will be fulfilled while he still lives,
And his branch will not be green [but shall wither away].

³³“He will fail to bring his grapes to maturity [leaving them to
wither unnourished] on the vine, And will cast off
blossoms [and fail to bring forth fruit] like the olive tree.

³⁴“For the company of the godless is barren,
And fire consumes the tents of bribery (wrong and
injustice).

³⁵“They conceive mischief and bring forth wickedness,
And their inmost soul prepares deceit *and* fraud.”

16 THEN JOB answered and said, ²“I have heard many such
things;

Wearisome *and* miserable comforters are you all.

3“Is there no end to [your futile] words of wind?
Or what plagues you [so much] that you [so boldly] answer
[me like this]?

4“I also could speak like you,
If you were in my place;
I could compose *and* join words together against you
And shake my head at you.

5“[But instead] I could strengthen *and* encourage you with
[the words of] my mouth, And the consolation *and* solace
of my lips would soothe your suffering *and* lessen your
anguish.

6“If I speak [to you miserable comforters], my pain is not
relieved;
And if I refrain [from speaking], what [pain or anguish]
leaves me?

7“But now God has exhausted me.
You [O Lord] have destroyed all my family *and* my
household.

8“You have taken a firm hold on me *and* have shriveled me
up,
It has become a witness [against me];
And my leanness [and infirmity] rises up [as evidence]
against me,
It testifies to my face [about my guilt].

9“His wrath has torn me and hunted me down,
He has gnashed at me with his teeth;
My adversary sharpens His gaze *and* glares [with piercing

eyes] at me.

10“They have gaped at me with their mouths,
With contempt they have struck me on the cheek;
They massed themselves together [and conspired] against
me. [Ps 22:13; 35:21]

11“God hands me over to criminals
And tosses me [headlong] into the hands of the wicked.

12“I was [living] at ease, but He crushed me *and* broke me
apart,
And He has seized me by the neck and has shaken me to
pieces;
He has also set me up as His target.

13“His arrows surround me.
He pierces my kidneys (vital organs) without mercy;
He pours out my gall on the ground.

14“He attacks me, making wound after wound;
He runs at me like a warrior.

15“I have sewed sackcloth over my skin [as a sign of
mourning]
And have defiled my horn (symbol of strength) in the dust.

16“My face is red *and* swollen with weeping,
And on my eyelids is the shadow of death [my eyes are
dimmed],

17Although there is no violence *or* wrongdoing in my hands,
And my prayer is pure.

18“O earth, do not cover my blood,
And let there be no [resting] place for my cry [where it will

cease being heard].

- 19“Even now, behold, my Witness is in heaven,
And my Advocate [who vouches and testifies for me] is on
high. [Rom 1:9]
- 20“My friends are scoffers [who ridicule];
My eye pours out tears to God.
- 21“Oh, that a man would mediate *and* plead with God [for me]
Just as a man [mediates and pleads] with his neighbor *and*
friend. [1 Tim 2:5]
- 22“For when a few years are past,
I shall go the way of no return.

17 “MY SPIRIT is broken, my days are extinguished, The
grave is *ready* for me.

- 2“Surely there are mockers *and* mockery with me,
And my eye gazes on their obstinacy *and* provocation.
- 3“Give me a pledge (guarantee, promise) with Yourself
[acknowledge my innocence before my death]; Who is
there that will be my guarantor *and* give security for me?
- 4“But You [Lord] have closed their hearts to understanding,
Therefore You will not exalt them [by giving a verdict
against me].
- 5“He who denounces *and* informs against his friends for a
share *of the spoil*,
The eyes of his children will also languish *and* fail.

- 6“But He has made me a byword *and* mockery among the people,
And I have become one in whose face people spit.
- 7“My eye has grown dim (unexpressive) because of grief,
And all my [body’s] members are [wasted away] like a shadow.
- 8“‘The upright will be [astonished and] appalled at this,
And the innocent will stir himself up against the godless *and* polluted.
- 9“Nevertheless the righteous will hold to his ways,
And he who has clean hands will grow stronger and stronger. [Ps 24:4]
- 10“‘But as for all of you, come back again,
Even though I do not find a wise man among you.
- 11“‘My days are past, my purposes *and* plans are frustrated *and* torn apart; The wishes of my heart [are broken].
- 12“‘These [thoughts try to] make the night into the day;
‘The light is near,’ *they say* in the presence of darkness [but they pervert the truth].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Strengthens You Through Difficulties

What does this Scripture mean: “The righteous will hold to his ways, and he who has clean hands will grow stronger and stronger” (Job 17:9)? It means God makes you stronger and stronger as you go through all things with a godly attitude. It also means you become less affected by the difficulties and challenges you face as time goes on. It is like exercising; when you first start, you get sore, but as you press through the soreness, you build muscle and gain strength and soon find ease in doing what was once very difficult.

As you have been walking with God, He has been strengthening you. You can face each new challenge, overcoming any fears. God will continually give you the strength you need to overcome, and you will grow in maturity.

- ¹³“But if I look to Sheol (the nether world, the place of the dead) as my home, If I make my bed in the darkness,
- ¹⁴If I call out to the pit (grave), ‘You are my father’;
And to the worm [that feeds on decay], ‘You are my mother
and my sister [because I will soon be closest to you],’
- ¹⁵Where now is my hope?
And who regards *or* considers *or* is even concerned about
my hope?

16“Will my hope go down with me to Sheol (the nether world,
the place of the dead)?
Shall we go down together in the dust?”

18 THEN BILDAD the Shuhite answered and said, ²“How
long will you hunt for words *and* continue these speeches?
Do some clear thinking *and* show understanding and then
we can talk.

³“Why are we regarded as beasts,
As if [we are] stupid (senseless) in your eyes?

⁴“You who tear yourself apart in anger,
Is the earth to be abandoned for your sake,
Or the rock to be moved out of its place?

⁵“Indeed, the light of the wicked will be put out,
And the flame of his fire will not shine. [Prov 13:9; 24:20]

⁶“The light will be dark in his tent,
And his lamp beside him will be put out. [Ps 18:28]

⁷“The vigorous stride will be shortened,
And his own counsel *and* the scheme [in which he trusted]
will bring his downfall.

⁸“For the wicked is thrown into a net by his own feet
(wickedness),
And he steps on the webbing [of the lattice-covered pit].

⁹“A snare catches him by the heel,
And a trap snaps shut on him.

¹⁰“A noose is hidden for him on the ground,

And a trap for him on the path.

11“Terrors frighten him on every side

And chase at his heels.

12“The strength [of the wicked] is famished *and* weakened,

And disaster is ready at his side [if he stops].

13“His skin is devoured by disease;

The firstborn of death [the worst of diseases] consumes his limbs.

14“He is torn from his tent which he trusted [for safety],

And he is marched *and* brought to the king of terrors (death).

15“Nothing of his dwells in his tent;

Brimstone (burning sulfur) is scattered over his dwelling [to purify it].

16“The roots [of the wicked] are dried up below,

And above, his branch is cut off *and* withers.

17“Memory of him perishes from the earth,

And he has no name on the street.

18“He is driven *and* propelled from light into darkness,

And chased from the inhabited world.

19“He has no offspring or prosperity among his people,

Nor any survivor where he sojourned.

20“Those in the west are astonished *and* appalled at his fate,

And those in the east are seized with horror.

21“Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked *and* the ungodly,

And such is the place of him who does not know *or*

recognize *or* honor God.”

- 19 THEN JOB answered and said, ²“How long will you torment *and* exasperate me
And crush me with words?
³“These ten times you have insulted me;
You are not ashamed to wrong me [and harden your hearts against me].
⁴“And if it were true that I have erred,
My error would remain with me [and I would be conscious of it].
⁵“If indeed you [braggarts] vaunt *and* magnify yourselves over me
And prove my disgrace (humiliation) to me,
⁶Know then that God has wronged me *and* overthrown me
And has closed His net around me.
⁷“Behold, I cry out, ‘Violence!’ but I am not heard;
I shout for help, but there is no justice.
⁸“He has walled up my way so that I cannot pass,
And He has set darkness upon my paths.
⁹“He has stripped me of my honor
And removed the crown from my head.
¹⁰“He breaks me down on every side, and I am gone;
He has uprooted my hope like a tree.
¹¹“He has also kindled His wrath [like a fire] against me
And He considers *and* counts me as one of His adversaries.

- 12“His troops come together
And build up their way *and* siege works against me
And camp around my tent.
- 13“He has put my brothers far from me,
And my acquaintances are completely estranged from me.
- 14“My relatives have failed [me],
And my intimate friends have forgotten me.
- 15“Those who live [temporarily] in my house and my maids
consider me a stranger; I am a foreigner in their sight.
- 16“I call to my servant, but he does not answer;
I have to implore him with words.
- 17“My breath is repulsive to my wife,
And I am loathsome to my own brothers.
- 18“Even young children despise me;
When I get up, they speak against me.
- 19“All the men of my council hate me;
Those I love have turned against me.
- 20“My bone clings to my skin and to my flesh,
And I have escaped [death] by the skin of my teeth.
- 21“Have pity on me! Have pity on me, O you my friends,
For the hand of God has touched me.
- 22“Why do you persecute me as God *does*?
Why are you not satisfied with my flesh (anguish)?

A Prayer To

Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, God, that I know
that my Redeemer and
Vindicator lives, and at the
last You will take Your stand
upon the earth. Even after my
body is destroyed by death,
yet from my immortal flesh I
will see You.*

• adapted from Job 19:25–26

²³“Oh, that the words I now speak were written!

Oh, that they were recorded in a scroll!

²⁴“That with an iron stylus and [molten] lead

They were engraved in the rock forever!

²⁵“For I know that my Redeemer *and* Vindicator lives,

And at the last He will take His stand upon the earth. [Is
44:6; 48:12]

²⁶“Even after my [mortal] skin is destroyed [by death],

Yet from my [immortal] flesh I will see God,

²⁷Whom I, even I, will see for myself,

And my eyes will see Him and not another!
My heart faints within me.

- ²⁸“If you say, ‘How shall we [continue to] persecute him?’
And ‘What pretext for a case against him can we find [since we claim the root of these afflictions is found in him]?’”
- ²⁹“*Then* beware *and* be afraid of the sword [of divine vengeance] for yourselves, For wrathful are the punishments of that sword,
So that you may know there is judgment.”

20 THEN ZOPHAR the Naamathite answered and said,

- ²“Therefore my disquieting thoughts make me answer,
Because of the uneasiness that is within me.
- ³“I have heard the reproof which insults me,
But the spirit of my understanding makes me answer.
- ⁴“Do you not know this from the old days,
Since the time that man was placed on the earth,
- ⁵That the triumphing of the wicked is short,
And the joy of the godless is only for a moment? [Ps 37:35, 36]
- ⁶“Though his pride reaches the heavens
And his head touches the clouds,
- ⁷*Yet* he perishes forever like his own refuse;
Those who have seen him will say, ‘Where is he?’
- ⁸“He flies away like a dream and cannot be found;
Yes, he is chased away like a vision of the night.

- 9“The eye which saw him sees him no longer,
Neither does his [accustomed] place behold him any longer.
- 10“His sons favor the poor [and pay his obligations],
And his hands give back his [ill-gotten] wealth.
- 11“His bones are full of youthful strength
But it lies down with him in the dust.
- 12“Though evil *and* wickedness are sweet in his mouth
And he hides it under his tongue,
- 13Though he desires it and will not let it go
But holds it in his mouth,
- 14Yet his food turns [to poison] in his stomach;
It is the venom of vipers within him.
- 15“He swallows [his ill-gotten] riches,
But will vomit them up;
God will drive them out of his belly.
- 16“He sucks the poison of vipers [which ill-gotten wealth contains];
The viper’s tongue slays him.
- 17“He does not look at the rivers,
The flowing streams of honey and butter [to enjoy his wealth].
- 18“He gives back what he has labored for *and* attained
And cannot swallow it [down to enjoy it];
As to the riches of his labor,
He cannot even enjoy them.
- 19“For he has oppressed and neglected the poor;

He has violently taken away houses which he did not build.

20“Because he knew no quietness *or* calm within him [because of his greed], He does not retain anything he desires.

21“There is nothing left of what he devoured;
Therefore his prosperity does not endure.

22“In the fullness of his excess (great abundance) he will be in trouble;

The hand of everyone who suffers will come against him [he is miserable on every side].

23“When he fills his belly,
God will send His fierce anger on him
And will rain it upon him while he is eating. [Num 11:33; Ps 78:26–31]

24“He may flee from the iron weapon,
But the bow of bronze will pierce him through.

25“*The arrow* is drawn forth and it comes out of his back [after passing through his body]; Yes, the glittering point comes out of his gall.

Terrors march in upon him;

26Complete darkness (misfortune) is held in reserve for his treasures.

An unfanned fire will devour him;
It will consume the survivor in his tent.

27“*The heavens* will reveal his wickedness *and* guilt,
And the earth will rise up against him.

28“*The produce and* increase of his house will depart [with the victors]; *His possessions* will be dragged away in the

day of God's wrath.

²⁹“This is the wicked man's portion from God,
And the heritage decreed *and* appointed to him by God.”

21 THEN JOB answered and said, ²“Listen carefully to my
speech,

And let this be the consolation.

³“Bear with me, and I also will speak;
And after I have spoken, you may [continue to] mock [me].

⁴“As for me, is my complaint to man *or* about him?
And why should I not be impatient *and* my spirit troubled?

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

You Can Make Your Life Better

One of the biggest problems we face today is that many people don't want to take responsibility for their lives. It is easy to think that our problems are someone else's fault, but that mind-set never fixes our problems.

Many times, I have watched people with this passive mentality ruin their lives. My mother was guilt-ridden and lived with so many regrets she eventually had a nervous breakdown followed by a lifelong anxiety disorder. Because she refused to stand up to my abusive father and would not take the responsibility to "confront [the evil man] with his actions *and* rebuke him" (Job 21:31), all of our lives were affected in negative and devastating ways.

My mother's unwillingness to take action was directly connected to her thoughts. She believed she had to stay with my father because she could not take care of us financially, and she feared what people would think if they knew the truth. The outcome was that she forfeited the good life God desired her to have, and it did tremendous damage to my brother's life and to

mine.

We may or may not be responsible for the current condition of our lives. Things that happen are often out of our control and may not be our fault, but we don't have to remain in a defeated position. We can come against things that are not right by refusing to let them overwhelm us and by developing the attitude that we will confront and overcome all obstacles with God's help. For that to happen, we cannot feel sorry for ourselves and make excuses, because as long as we do, we will not make progress.

You do have a choice about what you think. Forming new habits will take some retraining of your mind, but you can do it with God's help. Please don't wait any longer for someone else to make your life better. Take the responsibility for improving it yourself. Ask God to help you, and then begin following His guidance. I am not suggesting that everything that is wrong will be fixed overnight. In fact, looking for quick fixes is a deception in itself. Most things take longer than you think they will. Be determined not to give up and you will reach your destination.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Father, forgive me for blaming others for my problems and not taking responsibility to confront and overcome them with Your help. Help me and guide me and give me patience in the battle to reach my destiny. Amen.

- 5“Look at me and be astonished *and* appalled;
And put your hand over your mouth.
- 6“Even when I remember, I am troubled *and* afraid;
Horror *and* trembling take hold of my flesh.
- 7“Why do the wicked *still* live,
Become old, and become mighty in power?
- 8“Their children *and* descendants are established with them
in their sight, And their offspring before their eyes.
- 9“Their houses are safe from fear;
And the rod of God is not on them.
- 10“His bull breeds and does not fail;
His cow calves and does not miscarry.
- 11“They send forth their little ones like a flock,
And their children skip about.
- 12“They lift up their voices *and* sing to the tambourine and
the lyre
And rejoice to the sound of the flute.
- 13“They fully enjoy their days in prosperity,
And so go down to Sheol (the nether world, the place of the
dead) in a [peaceful] moment.
- 14“Yet they say to God, ‘Depart from us,
For we do not desire the knowledge of Your ways.
- 15“Who [and what] is the Almighty, that we should serve
Him?
And what would we gain if we plead with Him?’ [Ex 5:2]

- 16“*But* notice, the prosperity *of the wicked* is not in their hand
(in their power); The counsel of the wicked [and the
mystery of God’s dealings with the ungodly] is far from
my comprehension.
- 17“How often [then] is it that the lamp of the wicked is put
out,
And that their disaster falls on them?
Does God distribute pain *and* destruction *and* sorrow [to
them] in His anger? [Luke 12:46]
- 18“Are they like straw before the wind,
And like chaff that the storm steals *and* carries away?
- 19“*You say*, ‘God stores away [the punishment of] man’s
wickedness for his children.’
Let God repay him so that he may know *and* experience it.
- 20“Let his own eyes see his destruction,
And let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty.
- 21“For what pleasure does he have in his house *and* family
after he is dead, When the number of his months [of life]
is cut off?
- 22“Can anyone teach God knowledge,
Seeing that He judges those on high? [Rom 11:34; 1 Cor
2:16]
- 23“One dies in his full strength,
Being wholly at ease and quiet *and* satisfied;
- 24His pails are full of milk [his sides are filled out with fat],
And the marrow of his bones is moist,
- 25Whereas another dies with a bitter soul,

- Never even tasting pleasure *or* good fortune.
- 26“Together they lie down in the dust,
And the worms cover them.
- 27“Behold, I know your thoughts,
And the plots by which you would wrong me.
- 28“For you say, ‘Where is the house of the noble man?
And where is the tent, the dwelling place of the wicked?’
- 29“Have you not asked those who travel this way,
And do you not recognize their witness?
- 30“That evil men are [now] reserved for the day of disaster
and destruction, They will be led away on the day of
[God’s] wrath?
- 31“*But* who will confront him with his actions *and* rebuke him
face to face, And who will repay him for what he has
done?
- 32“When he is carried to his grave,
A guard will keep watch over his tomb.
- 33“‘The [dirt] clods of the valley are sweet to him [and gently
cover him],
Moreover, all men will follow after him [to a grave],
While countless ones go before him.
- 34“‘How then can you vainly comfort me with empty words,
Since your answers remain untrue?’”

22 THEN ELIPHAZ the Temanite answered and said, ²“Can
a vigorous man be of use to God,

Or a wise man be useful to himself? [Ps 16:2; Luke 17:10]

3“Is it any pleasure *or* joy to the Almighty that you are righteous?

Or is it of benefit to Him that you make your ways perfect?
[Is 62:3; Zech 2:8; Mal 3:17; Acts 20:28]

4“Is it because of your fear of Him that He corrects you,
That He enters into judgment against you?

5“Is not your wickedness great,
And your sins without end?

6“For you have taken pledges of your brothers without
cause,
And stripped men naked.

7“You have not given water to the weary to drink,
And you have withheld bread from the hungry. [Matt 25:42]

8“But the land is possessed by the man with power,
And the favored *and* honorable man dwells in it.

9“You have sent widows away empty-handed,
And the arms (strength) of the fatherless have been broken.

10“Therefore snares surround you,
And sudden dread terrifies *and* overwhelms you;

11Or darkness, so that you cannot see,
And a flood of water covers you.

12“Is not God in the height of heaven?
And behold the distant stars, how high they are!

13“You say, ‘What does God know [about me]?
Can He judge through the thick darkness?

- 14“Thick clouds are a hiding place for Him, so that He cannot see,
And He walks on the vault (circle) of the heavens.’

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, I yield and submit
myself to You and I am at
peace; in this way I will
prosper and great good will
come to me.*

• adapted from Job 22:21

- 15“Will you keep to the ancient path
That wicked men walked [in the time of Noah], [2 Pet 2:5]
- 16Men who were snatched away before their time,
Whose foundations were poured out like a river?
- 17“‘They said to God, ‘Depart from us!
What can the Almighty do for us *or* to us?’
- 18“Yet He filled their houses with good *things*;

But the counsel of the wicked *and* ungodly is far from me.

19“‘The righteous see it and are glad;

And the innocent mock *and* laugh at them, *saying*,

20“‘Surely our adversaries are cut off *and* destroyed,

And fire has consumed their abundance.’

21“‘Now yield *and* submit yourself to Him [agree with God and be conformed to His will] and be at peace; In this way [you will prosper and great] good will come to you.

22“‘Please receive the law *and* instruction from His mouth And establish His words in your heart *and* keep them. [Ps 119:11]

23“‘If you return to the Almighty [and submit and humble yourself before Him], you will be built up [and restored]; *If* you remove unrighteousness far from your tents,

24And place your gold in the dust,
And *the gold of* Ophir among the stones of the brooks [considering it of little value], 25And make the Almighty your gold

And your precious silver,

26Then you will have delight in the Almighty,
And you will lift up your face to God.

27“‘You will pray to Him, and He will hear you,
And you will pay your vows.

28“‘You will also decide *and* decree a thing, and it will be established for you; And the light [of God’s favor] will shine upon your ways.

- ²⁹“When you are cast down *and* humbled, you will speak with confidence,
And the humble person He will lift up *and* save.
- ³⁰“He will even rescue the one [for whom you intercede] who is not innocent;
And he will be rescued through the cleanness of your hands.” [Job 42:7, 8]

23 THEN JOB answered and said, ²“Even today my complaint is contentious;
His hand is heavy despite my groaning.

³“Oh, that I knew where I might find Him,
That I might [even] come to His seat!

⁴“I would present my cause before Him
And fill my mouth with arguments.

⁵“I would learn the words which He would answer,
And understand what He would say to me.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that You
know the way I take and You
pay attention to it. I believe
that when You have tried me, I
will come forth as refined
gold, pure and luminous.*

• adapted from Job 23:10

6“Would He contend against me with His great power?

No, surely He would give attention to me. [Is 27:4, 5; 57:16]

7“There the righteous and upright could reason with Him;

So I would be acquitted forever by my Judge.

8“Behold, I go forward (to the east), but He is not there;

I go backward (to the west), but I cannot perceive Him;

9To the left (north) He turns, but I cannot behold Him;

He turns to the right hand (south), but I cannot see Him.

10“But He knows the way that I take [and He pays attention to it].

*When He has tried me, I will come forth as [refined] gold
[pure and luminous]. [Ps 17:3; 66:10; James 1:12]*

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Is with You

No matter what frightens you, God's Word says not to fear because He is with you (see Isa. 41:10). It is just that simple. I am sure the question comes to mind: If God is with me, why do bad things happen? God never promises us trouble-free lives, but He does promise us His presence and the strength (mental, physical, and emotional) we need to get through our troubles.

Even in the midst of his trial, Job said, "But He knows the way that I take [and He pays attention to it]. When He has tried me, I will come forth as [refined] gold [pure and luminous]" (Job 23:10). Whatever the problem is, you can be assured it will pass, God will be with you all the way through it, and you will be stronger and know God better when it is over than before it began.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Go to God

I encourage you to form a habit of going to God in prayer the moment anything troubles you. Brother Lawrence, a monk who lived in the seventeenth century, enjoyed a close, intimate relationship with God; he knew God's Word and His ways, and he always consulted God when he was troubled. He desired to "practice the presence of God" in all things.

Job also sets a powerful example for us, saying, "My feet have carefully followed His steps; I have kept His ways and not turned aside" (Job 23:11). The more we grow in God's Word, the more experience we have in His ways, the less need we will have for advice from other people. It is not wrong to ask for counsel from the right person or people, but you can also develop a close relationship with God, which will help you to spiritually discern what your course of action should be in many situations (see Prov. 3:6).

11 "My feet have carefully followed His steps;
I have kept His ways and not turned aside.

12 "I have not departed from the commandment of His lips;
I have kept the words of His mouth more than my necessary
food.

13 "But He is unique *and* unchangeable, and who can turn
Him?

And *what* His soul desires, that He does.

¹⁴“For He performs what is planned (appointed) for me,
And He is mindful of many such things.

¹⁵“Therefore I would be terrified at His presence;
When I consider [all of this], I tremble in dread of Him.

¹⁶“For God has made my heart faint,
And the Almighty has terrified me,

¹⁷But I am not silenced by the darkness [of these woes that
fell on me],
Nor by the thick darkness which covers my face.

24 “WHY DOES the Almighty not set seasons for judgment?
Why do those who know Him not see His days [for
punishment of the wicked]? [Acts 1:7]

²“Some remove the landmarks;
They [violently] seize and pasture flocks [appropriating
land and flocks openly].

³“They drive away the donkeys of the orphans;
They take the widow’s ox for a pledge.

⁴“They crowd the needy off the road;
The poor of the land all hide themselves.

⁵“Behold, as wild donkeys in the desert,
The poor go to their work, diligently seeking food;
As bread for their children in the desert.

⁶“They harvest their fodder in a field [that is not their own],
And glean the vineyard of the wicked.

- 7“They spend the night naked, without clothing,
And have no covering against the cold.
- 8“They are wet from the rain of the mountains
And cling to the rock for lack of shelter.
- 9“Others snatch the fatherless [infants] from the breast [to
sell or make them slaves], And against the poor they take a
pledge [of clothing].
- 10“They cause *the poor* to go about naked without clothing,
And they take away the sheaves [of grain] from the hungry.
- 11“Within the walls [of the wicked] the poor make [olive] oil;
They tread [the grapes in] the wine presses, but thirst.
- 12“From the [populous and crowded] city men groan,
And the souls of the wounded cry out for help;
Yet God [seemingly] does not pay attention to the wrong
[done to them].
- 13“Others have been with those who rebel against the light;
They do not want to know its ways
Nor stay in its paths.
- 14“*The murderer* rises at dawn;
He kills the poor and the needy,
And at night he becomes a thief.
- 15“*The eye of the adulterer* waits for the twilight,
Saying, ‘No eye will see me,’
And he covers his face.
- 16“*In the dark* they dig into [the penetrable walls of] houses;
They shut themselves up by day;
They do not know the light [of day].

- 17“For the morning is the same to him as the thick darkness
[of midnight];
For he is familiar with the terrors of thick darkness.
- 18“They are insignificant on the surface of the water;
Their portion is cursed on the earth;
They do not turn toward the vineyards.
- 19“Drought and heat consume the snow waters;
So does Sheol (the nether world, the place of the dead)
[consume] *those who* have sinned.
- 20“*A mother will forget him;*
The worm feeds on him until he is no longer remembered.
And wickedness will be broken like a tree [which cannot be
restored]. [Prov 10:7]

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*God, I thank You that You
give me security and support
me; and that Your eyes are on
my ways.*

- 21“He preys on the barren (childless) woman
And does no good for the widow.
- 22“Yet God draws away the mighty by His power;
He rises, but no one has assurance of life.
- 23“God gives them security, and they are supported;
And His eyes are on their ways.
- 24“They are exalted for a little while, and then they are gone;
Moreover, they are brought low and like everything [they
are] gathered up *and* taken out of the way; Even like the
heads of grain they are cut off.
- 25“And if this is not so, who can prove me a liar
And make my speech worthless?”

25 THEN BILDAD the Shuhite answered and said,

- 2“Dominion and awe belong to God;
He establishes peace *and* order in His high places.
- 3“Is there any number to His [vast celestial] armies?
And upon whom does His light not rise?
- 4“How then can man be justified *and* righteous with God?
Or how can he who is born of a woman be pure *and* clean?
[Ps 130:3; 143:2]
- 5“Behold, even the moon has no brightness [compared to
God’s majesty and glory]

And the stars are not pure in His sight,
6How much less man, *that* maggot,
And the son of man, *that* worm!”

26 BUT JOB answered and said, 2“‘What a help you are to the weak (powerless)!

How you have saved the arm that is without strength!

3“‘How you have counseled the one who has no wisdom!
And how abundantly you have provided sound wisdom
and helpful insight!

4“‘To whom have you uttered [these] words?
And whose spirit [inspired what] came forth from you?

5“‘The spirits of the dead tremble
Underneath the waters and their inhabitants.

6“‘Sheol (the nether world, the place of the dead) is naked
before God,
And Abaddon (the place of destruction) has no covering
[from His eyes].

7“‘*It is* He *who* spreads out the north over emptiness
And hangs the earth on nothing.

8“‘He wraps the waters in His clouds [which otherwise would
spill on earth all at once], And the cloud does not burst
under them.

9“‘He covers the face of the full moon
And spreads His cloud over it.

10“‘He has inscribed a circular limit (the horizon) on the face of

the waters

At the boundary between light and darkness.

¹¹“The pillars of the heavens tremble

And are terrified at His rebuke.

¹²“He stirred up the sea by His power,

And by His understanding He smashed [proud] Rahab.

POWERPOINT

Suffering at an almost unimaginable level—physically, emotionally, relationally—Job’s troubles were not so great that he doubted God’s power to act on his behalf. In the midst of his trials, Job recalled the greatness of God and recognized that he saw only “the fringes of His ways” (Job 26:14). Remember that the same God who “hangs the earth on nothing” (Job 26:7) has promised to act on your behalf.



- ¹³“By His breath the heavens are cleared;
His hand has pierced the [swiftly] fleeing serpent. [Ps 33:6]
- ¹⁴“Yet these are just the fringes of His ways [mere samples of
His power],
The faintest whisper of His voice!
Who can contemplate the thunder of His [full] mighty

power?”

27 JOB CONTINUED his discourse and said, ²“As God lives, who has taken away my right *and* denied me justice,
And the Almighty, who has caused bitterness *and* grief for my soul,

³As long as my life is within me,
And the breath of God is [still] in my nostrils,

⁴My lips will not speak unjustly,
Nor will my tongue utter deceit.

⁵“Far be it from me that I should admit you are right [in your accusations against me]; Until I die, I will not remove my integrity from me.

⁶“I hold fast my uprightness *and* my right standing with God and I will not let them go; My heart does not reproach me for any of my days.

⁷“May my enemy be as the wicked,
And he who rises up against me be as the unrighteous (unjust).

⁸“For what is the hope of the godless, even though he has gained [in this world], When God takes his life?

⁹“Will God hear his cry
When trouble *and* distress come upon him?

¹⁰“Will he take delight in the Almighty?
Will he call on God at all times?

¹¹“I will teach you regarding the hand (power) of God;

I will not conceal what is with the Almighty [God's actual treatment of the wicked].

¹²“Behold, all of you have seen it;

Why then do you act vainly *and* foolishly [cherishing worthless concepts]?

Speak God's Word

*My lips will not speak
unjustly, nor will my tongue
utter deceit. Until I die, I will
not compromise or surrender
my integrity. I hold fast my
uprightness and my right
standing with God and I will
not let them go; my heart
does not reproach me for any
of my days.*

| adapted from JOB 27:4–6 |

- 13“**This [which I am about to explain] is the portion of a wicked man from God, And the inheritance which tyrants and oppressors receive from the Almighty:**
- 14“**Though his children are many, they are destined for the sword;**
And his descendants will not have sufficient bread.
- 15“**Those who survive him will be buried because of the plague,**
And [their] widows will not be able to weep.
- 16“**Though he heaps up silver like dust**

- And piles up clothing like clay,
17 He may prepare it, but the just will wear it
And the innocent will divide the silver.
18 “He builds his house like a spider’s web,
Like a (temporary) hut which a watchman makes.
19 “He lies down rich, but never will again;
He opens his eyes, and it is gone.
20 “Terrors overtake him like a [suddenly rising] flood;
A windstorm steals him away in the night.
21 “The east wind lifts him up, and he is gone;
It sweeps him out of his place.
22 “For it will hurl [thunderbolts of God’s wrath] at him
unsparingly *and* without compassion; He flees in haste
from its power.
23 “People will clap their hands at him [to mock and ridicule
him]
And hiss him out of his place.

28 “SURELY THERE is a mine for silver, And a place where
they refine gold.

- 2 “Iron is taken out of the earth,
And copper is smelted from the stone ore.
3 “*Man* puts an end to darkness [by bringing in a light],
And to the farthest bounds he searches out
The rock buried in gloom and deep shadow.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Hold On to the Right Confession

Job declared, “I hold fast my uprightness and my right standing with God and I will not let them go” (Job 27:6), and Hebrews 4:14 tells us to hold fast our confession of faith in Christ. When we hold fast to something, it indicates something or someone might be trying to take it away from us.

Satan will try to steal our confession by putting wrong thoughts in our minds, hoping those thoughts will produce wrong words that will come out of our mouths and then create wrong actions—Satan fights anything that will produce good results in our lives. To confess means “to agree with, or say the same thing.” Begin saying the same things God says, and get into agreement with Him so His good plan for your life can come to pass. Hold on to your right confession even when circumstances don’t look good, because they will change!

4“*He breaks open (mine) shafts far away from where people live, [In places] forgotten by the [human] foot;
They dangle [in the mines] and hang away from men.*

5“*[As for] the earth, out of it comes food,
But underneath [its surface, down deep] it is turned over as fire.*

6“*Its stones are the bed of sapphires;
It holds dust of gold.*

- 7“The path [deep within] no bird of prey knows,
And the falcon’s eye has not caught sight of it.
- 8“The proud beasts [and their young] have not walked on it,
Nor has the *fierce* lion passed over it.
- 9“Man puts his hand on [and tears apart] the flinty rock;
He overturns the mountains at the base [looking for treasure].
- 10“He cuts out channels *and* passages among the rocks;
And his eye sees every precious thing.
- 11“Man dams up the streams from flowing [so that they do not trickle into the mine], And what is hidden he brings out to the light.
- 12“But where can wisdom be found?
And where is the place of understanding?
- 13“Man does not know the value of it;
Nor is it found in the land of the living.
- 14“‘The deep says, ‘It is not in me’;
And the sea says, ‘It is not with me.’
- 15“‘It cannot be obtained for pure gold,
Nor can silver be weighed as its price.
- 16“‘It cannot be valued in [terms of] the gold of Ophir,
In the precious onyx *or* beryl, or the sapphire.
- 17“‘Gold and glass cannot equal wisdom,
Nor can it be exchanged for articles of fine gold.
- 18“‘No mention of coral and crystal can be made;
For the possession of wisdom is even above [that of] rubies *or* pearls.

- 19“‘The topaz of Ethiopia cannot compare with it,
Nor can it be valued in pure gold.
20“‘From where then does wisdom come?
And where is the place of understanding?
21“‘It is hidden from the eyes of all the living
And concealed from the birds of the heavens.
22“‘Abaddon (the place of destruction) and Death say,
‘We have [only] heard a report of it with our ears.’
23“‘God understands the way [to wisdom]
And He knows its place [for wisdom is with God alone].
24“‘For He looks to the ends of the earth
And sees everything under the heavens.
25“‘When He gave weight *and* pressure to the wind
And allotted the waters by measure,
26When He made a limit for the rain
And a way for the thunderbolt,
27Then He saw wisdom and declared it;
He established it and searched it out.
28“‘But to man He said, ‘Behold, the reverential *and* worshipful
fear of the Lord—that is wisdom; And to depart from evil
is understanding.’”

29 AND JOB again took up his discussion and said, ²“Oh,
that I were as in the months of old,
As in the days when God watched over me, [Eccl 7:10]

- ³When His lamp shone upon my head
And by His light I walked through darkness;
- ⁴As I was in the prime of my days,
When the friendship *and* counsel of God were over my tent,
- ⁵When the Almighty was still with me
And my boys were around me,
- ⁶When my steps [through rich pastures] were washed with
butter *and* cream [from my livestock], And the rock poured
out for me streams of oil [from my olive groves].
- ⁷“When I went out to the gate of the city,
When I took my seat [as a city father] in the square,
- ⁸The young men saw me and hid themselves,
The aged arose *and* stood [respectfully];
- ⁹The princes stopped talking
And put their hands on their mouths;
- ¹⁰The voices of the nobles were hushed,
And their tongues stuck to the roof of their mouths.
- ¹¹“For when an ear heard [my name mentioned], it called me
happy *and* fortunate; And when an eye saw [me], it
testified for me [approvingly],
- ¹²Because I rescued the poor who cried for help,
And the orphan who had no helper.
- ¹³“The blessing of him who was about to perish came upon
me,
And I made the widow’s heart sing for joy.
- ¹⁴“I put on righteousness, and it clothed me;
My justice was like a robe and a turban!

- 15“I was eyes to the blind
And I was feet to the lame.
- 16“I was a father to the needy;
I investigated the case I did not know [and assured justice].
- 17“And I smashed the jaws of the wicked
And snatched the prey from his teeth.
- 18“Then I said, ‘I shall die in my nest,
And I shall multiply my days as the sand.
- 19“My root is spread out *and* open to the waters,
And the dew lies all night upon my branch.
- 20“My glory *and* honor are fresh in me [being constantly renewed],
And my bow gains [ever] new strength in my hand.’
- 21“They listened to me and waited
And kept silent for my counsel.
- 22“After I spoke, they did not speak again,
And my speech dropped upon them [like a refreshing shower].
- 23“They waited for me [and for my words] as for the rain,
And they opened their mouths as for the spring rain.
- 24“I smiled at them when they did not believe,
And they did not diminish the light of my face.
- 25“I chose a way for them and sat as chief,
And dwelt as a king among his soldiers,
As one who comforts mourners.

- 30** “BUT NOW those younger than I mock *and* laugh at me,
Whose fathers I refused to put with the sheepdogs of my flock.
- 2“Indeed, how could the strength of their hands profit me?
Vigor had perished from them.
- 3“They are gaunt with want and famine;
They gnaw the dry *and* barren ground by night in [the
gloom of] waste and desolation.
- 4“They pluck [and eat] saltwort (mallows) among the bushes,
And their food is the root of the broom shrub.
- 5“They are driven from the community;
They shout after them as after a thief.
- 6“They must dwell on the slopes of wadis
And in holes in the ground and in rocks.
- 7“Among the bushes they cry out [like wild animals];
Beneath the prickly scrub they gather *and* huddle together.
- 8“*They are the* sons of [worthless and nameless] fools,
They have been driven out of the land.
- 9“And now I have become [the subject of] their taunting;
Yes, I am a byword *and* a laughingstock to them.
- 10“They hate me, they stand aloof from me,
And do not refrain from spitting in my face.
- 11“For God has loosed His bowstring [attacking me] and [He
has] afflicted *and* humbled me; They have cast off the
bridle [of restraint] before me.
- 12“On my right the [rabble] brood rises;
They push my feet away, and they build up their ways of

destruction against me [like an advancing army].

13“They break up *and* clutter my path [upsetting my plans],
They profit from my destruction;
No one restrains them.

14“As *through* a wide breach they come,
Amid the crash [of falling walls] they roll on [over me].

15“Terrors are turned upon me;
They chase away my honor *and* reputation like the wind,
And my prosperity has passed away like a cloud.

16“And now my soul is poured out within me;
The days of affliction have seized me.

17“My bones are pierced [with aching] in the night season,
And *the pains* that gnaw me take no rest.

18“By the great force [of my disease] my garment (skin) is
disfigured *and* blemished; It binds about me [choking me]
like the collar of my coat.

19“God has cast me into the mire [a swampland of crisis],
And I have become [worthless] like dust and ashes.

20“I cry to You for help, [Lord,] but You do not answer me;
I stand up, but You [only] gaze [indifferently] at me.

21“You have become harsh *and* cruel to me;
With the might of Your hand You [keep me alive only to]
persecute me.

22“You lift me up on the wind and cause me to ride [upon it];
And You toss me about in the tempest *and* dissolve me in
the storm.

- 23“For I know that You will bring me to death
And to the house of meeting [appointed] for all the living.
- 24“However, does not one falling in a heap of ruins stretch out
his hand?
Or in his disaster [will he not] therefore cry out for help?
- 25“Did I not weep for one whose life was hard *and* filled with
trouble?
Was not my heart grieved for the needy?
- 26“When I expected good, then came evil [to me];
And when I waited for light, then came darkness.
- 27“I am seething within *and* my heart is troubled and cannot
rest;
Days of affliction come to meet me.
- 28“I go about mourning without comfort [my skin blackened
by disease, not by the heat of the sun]; I stand up in the
assembly *and* cry out for help.
- 29“I am a brother to [howling] jackals,
And a companion to ostriches [which scream dismally].
- 30“My skin falls from me in blackened flakes,
And my bones are burned with fever.
- 31“Therefore my lyre (harp) is *used* for [the sound of]
mourning,
And my flute for the [sound of the] voices of those who
weep.

31 “I HAVE made a covenant (agreement) with my eyes;

How then could I gaze [lustfully] at a virgin?

²“For what is the portion I would have from God above,
And what heritage from the Almighty on high?

³“Does not tragedy fall [justly] on the unjust
And disaster to those who work wickedness?

⁴“Does not God see my ways
And count all my steps?

⁵“If I have walked with falsehood,
Or if my foot has chased after deceit,

⁶Oh, let Him weigh me with accurate scales,
And let God know my integrity.

⁷“If my step has turned away from the way [of God],
Or if my heart has [covetously] followed my eyes,
Or if any spot [of guilt] has stained my hands,

⁸Then let me plant and [let] another eat [from the results of
my labor],
And let my crops be uprooted *and* ruined.

Speak God's Word

*I have made a covenant with
my eyes; how then could I
gaze lustfully at another
person?*

| *adapted from* JOB 31:1 |

- ⁹“If my heart has been enticed *and* I was made a fool by a woman, Or if I have [covetously] lurked at my neighbor's door [until his departure],
- ¹⁰Let my wife grind [meal, like a bond slave] for another [man],
And let others kneel down over her.
- ¹¹“For *adultery* is a heinous *and* lustful crime;
Moreover, it would be a sin *punishable* by the judges. [Deut 22:22; John 8:5]
- ¹²“For it is a fire which consumes to Abaddon (destruction, ruin, final torment); And [illicit passion] would burn *and* rage *and* uproot all my [life's] increase [destroying everything].
- ¹³“If I have despised *and* rejected the claim of my male or female servants When they filed a complaint against me,
- ¹⁴What then could I do when God arises [to judge me]?

When He calls me to account, what will I answer Him? [Ps 44:21]

¹⁵“Did not He who made me in the womb make my servant,
And did not the same One fashion us both in the womb?
[Prov 14:31; 22:2; Mal 2:10]

¹⁶“If I have withheld from the poor what *they* desired,
Or have caused the eyes of the widow to look in vain [for relief],

¹⁷Or have eaten my morsel [of food] alone,
And did not share it with the orphan

¹⁸(But from my youth the orphan grew up with me as with a father,
And from my mother’s womb I have been the widow’s guide),

¹⁹If I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing,
Or any poor person without covering,

²⁰If his loins have not thanked *and* blessed me [for clothing them],
And if he was not warmed with the fleece of my sheep,

²¹If I have lifted my hand against the orphan,
Because I saw [that the judges would be] my help at the [council] gate,

²²Then let my shoulder fall away from its socket,
And my arm be broken off at the elbow.

²³“For tragedy from God is a terror to me,
And because of His majesty *and* exaltation I can do nothing
[nor endure facing Him]. [Is 13:6; Joel 1:15]

- 24“‘If I have put my trust *and* confidence in gold,
Or have declared fine gold my hope *and* assurance,
- 25If I gloated *and* rejoiced because my wealth was great,
And because my [powerful] hand [alone] had obtained so much,
- 26If I beheld the sun [as an object of worship] when it shone
Or the moon going in its splendor,
- 27And my heart became secretly enticed [by them],
And my hand threw a kiss from my mouth [in respect to them],
- 28This also would have been [a heinous] sin *calling for*
judgment,
For I would have denied God above. [Deut 4:19; 17:2–7]
- 29“‘Have I rejoiced at the destruction of the enemy [who hated me],
Or exulted [in malicious triumph] when evil overtook him?
- 30“‘No, I have not allowed my mouth to sin
By cursing my enemy *and* asking for his life.
- 31“‘I assure you, the men of my tent have said,
‘Who can find one [in need] who has not been satisfied with his meat’?
- 32“‘The stranger has not lodged in the street,
Because I have opened my door to the traveler.
- 33“‘Have I concealed my transgressions like Adam *or* like other men,
By hiding my wickedness in my bosom,

- ³⁴Because I feared the great multitude,
And the contempt of families terrified me,
So that I kept silence *and* did not acknowledge my sin and
did not go out of the door?
- ³⁵“Oh, that I had one to listen to me!
Look, here is my signature (mark);
Let the Almighty answer me!
Let my adversary write out His indictment [and put His
vague accusations in tangible form].
- ³⁶“Surely I would [proudly] bear it on my shoulder,
And bind the scroll around my head like a crown.
- ³⁷“I would count out to Him the number of my steps [with
every detail of my life], Approaching His presence as *if I*
were a prince.
- ³⁸“For if my land has cried out against me,
And its furrows weep together;
- ³⁹If I have eaten its fruits without paying for them,
Or have caused its [rightful] owners to lose their lives,
- ⁴⁰Let thorns grow instead of wheat,
And stinkweed *and* cockleburrs instead of barley.”
- So the words of Job [with his friends] are finished.

32 SO THESE three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes [and could not be persuaded otherwise by them].

²But Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of

Ram, became indignant. His indignation was kindled *and* burned *and* he became upset with Job because he justified himself rather than God [and even expressed doubts about God's character].

³Elihu's anger burned against Job's three friends because they had found no answer [and were unable to determine Job's error], and yet they had condemned Job *and* declared him to be in the wrong [and responsible for his own afflictions].

⁴Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job because the others were years older than he.

⁵And when Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouths of these three men, he burned with anger.

⁶Then Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite said,

"I am young, and you are aged;

For that reason I was anxious and dared not tell you what I think.

⁷"I thought age should speak,

And a multitude of years should teach wisdom.

⁸"But there is [a vital force and] a spirit [of intelligence] in man,

And the breath of the Almighty gives them understanding.
[Prov 2:6]

⁹"Those [who are] abundant *in years* may not [always] be wise,

Nor may the elders [always] understand justice.

¹⁰"Therefore I say, 'Listen to me;

I also will give you my opinion [about Job's situation] *and* tell you plainly what I think.'

- 11“You see, I waited for your words,
I listened to your [wise] reasons,
While you pondered *and* searched out what to say.
- 12“I even paid close attention to [what] you [said],
Indeed, not one of you convinced Job [nor could you refute him],
Not one of you supplied [satisfactory] answers to his words.
- 13“Beware if you say,
‘We have found wisdom;
God thrusts Job down [justly], not man [for God alone is dealing with him].’
- 14“Now Job has not directed his words against me [therefore I have no reason to be offended], Nor will I answer him with arguments like yours. [I speak for truth, not for revenge.]
- 15“They (Job’s friends) are dismayed *and* embarrassed, they no longer answer; The words have moved away *and* failed them,” [says Elihu].
- 16“And shall I wait, because they say nothing,
But stand still and say no more?
- 17“I too will give my share of answers;
I too will express my opinion *and* share my knowledge.
- 18“For I am full of words;
The spirit within me constrains me.
- 19“My belly is like unvented wine;
Like new wineskins it is about to burst.

- 20“I must speak so that I may get relief,
I will open my lips and answer.
- 21“I will not [I warn you] be partial to any man [that is, let my
respect for you mitigate what I say]; Nor flatter any man.
- 22“For I do not know how to flatter, [in an appropriate way,
and I fear that],
My Maker would soon take me away.

33 “HOWEVER, JOB, please listen to my words, And pay
attention to everything I say.

- 2“Behold, I have opened my mouth [to begin my speech];
My tongue in my mouth is going to speak.
- 3“My words will express the uprightness of my heart,
And my lips will speak what they know with utter sincerity.
- 4“The Spirit of God has made me,
And the breath of the Almighty gives me life [which
inspires me].
- 5“Answer me, if you can;
Set yourselves before me, take your stand.
- 6“Behold, I belong to God like you;
I too was formed out of the clay.
- 7“Behold, I will not make you afraid or terrified of me [for I am
only mortal and not God], Nor should any pressure from
me weigh heavily upon you.
- 8“Surely you have spoken in my hearing,

And I have heard the sound of your words, saying:

⁹‘I am pure, without transgression;

I am innocent and there is no guilt in me.

¹⁰‘Behold, God finds pretexts against me;

He counts me as His enemy.

¹¹‘He puts my feet in the stocks [to hinder and humiliate me];

He [suspiciously] watches all my paths,’ [you say].

¹²“Look, let me answer you, in this you are not right *or* just;

For God is greater *and* far superior to man.

¹³“Why do you complain against Him?

That He does not answer [you with] all His doings.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

You Are Righteous

When you receive Jesus as your Savior, the first thing He wants to give you is righteousness. He takes your sin and gives you His righteousness (see 2 Cor. 5:21). God hates for His children to be tormented with guilt and condemnation. He doesn't want us to compare ourselves with others and feel guilty because we can't do what they do, the way they do it. God wants us to know who we are in Christ and to quickly receive His forgiveness for any failure in our lives and then press on with Him. Don't believe the lies of the devil when he tries to make you think downgrading and belittling thoughts about yourself.

You can stop listening to Satan's lies and say instead: "Through Christ, I am in right standing with God." You can stop thinking, What is wrong with me? and start letting God show you the good things that He has placed in you. "For God restores to man His righteousness [that is, his right standing with God—with its joys]" (Job 33:26). Believe and speak, "I am the righteousness of God in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:21).

¹⁴"For God speaks once,

And even twice, yet no one notices it [including you, Job].

¹⁵"In a dream, a vision of the night [one may hear God's

- voice],
When deep sleep falls on men
While slumbering upon the bed,
¹⁶Then He opens the ears of men
And seals their instruction,
¹⁷That He may turn man aside *from his* conduct,
And keep him from pride;
¹⁸He holds back his soul from the pit [of destruction],
And his life from passing over into Sheol (the nether world,
the place of the dead).
¹⁹“Man is also disciplined with pain on his bed,
And with unceasing complaint in his bones,
²⁰So that his life makes him loathe food,
And his soul [loathe] even his favorite dishes.
²¹“His flesh is so wasted away that it cannot be seen,
And his bones which were not seen now stick out.
²²“Then his soul draws near to the pit [of destruction],
And his life to those who bring death (the destroyers).
²³“If there is an angel as a mediator for him,
One out of a thousand,
To explain to a man what is right for him [that is, how to be
in right standing with God], ²⁴Then the angel is gracious
to him, and says,
‘Spare him from going down to the pit [of destruction];
I have found a ransom [a consideration, or reason for
redemption, an atonement]!’

- 25“Let his flesh be restored *and* become fresher than in youth;
Let him return to the days of his youthful strength.
- 26“He will pray to God, and He shall be favorable to him,
So that he looks at His face with joy;
For God restores to man His righteousness [that is, his right
standing with God—with its joys].
- 27“He sings out to other men,
‘I have sinned and perverted that which was right,
And it was not proper for me!
- 28“God has redeemed my life from going to the pit [of
destruction],
And my life shall see the light.”
- 29[Elihu comments,] “Behold, God does all these *things* twice,
yes, three times, with a man, ³⁰To bring his life back from
the pit [of destruction],
That he may be enlightened with the light of the living.
- 31“Pay attention, Job, listen to me;
Keep silent, and I will speak.
- 32“If you have anything to say, answer me;
Speak, for I desire to justify you.
- 33“If not [and you have nothing to say], listen to me;
Keep silent, and I will teach you wisdom.”

34 ELIHU CONTINUED *his discourse* and said, ²“Hear my
words, you wise men,
And listen to me, you who have [so much] knowledge.

- 3“For the ear puts words to the test
As the palate tastes food.
- 4“Let us choose for ourselves that which is right;
Let us know among ourselves what is good.
- 5“For Job has said, ‘I am righteous [and innocent],
But God has taken away my right; [Job 33:9]
- 6Although I am right, I am accounted a liar.
My wound is incurable, *though I am* without
transgression.’
- 7“What man is like Job,
Who drinks up derision like water,
- 8Who goes in company with those who do evil
And walks with wicked men?
- 9“For he has said, ‘It profits a man nothing
When he takes delight *and* is pleased with God *and* obeys
Him.’
- 10“Therefore hear me, you men of understanding.
Far be it from God that He would do wickedness,
And from the Almighty to do wrong.
- 11“For God pays a man according to his work,
And He will make every man find [appropriate]
compensation according to his way.
- 12“Surely God will not act wickedly,
Nor will the Almighty pervert justice.
- 13“Who put God in charge over the earth?
And who has laid *on Him* the whole world?

- 14“If God should determine to do so,
If He should gather to Himself [that is, withdraw from man]
His [life-giving] spirit and His breath, ¹⁵All flesh would
perish together,
And man would return to dust. [Ps 104:29; Eccl 12:7]
- 16“*If you now have understanding, hear this;*
Listen to the sound of my words.
- 17“Shall one who hates justice [and is an enemy of right]
govern?
And will you condemn Him who is just *and* mighty?
- 18“God who says to a king, ‘You are worthless *and* vile,’
Or to princes *and* nobles, ‘You are wicked *and* evil’?
- 19“Who is not partial to princes,
Nor does He regard the rich above the poor,
For they all are the work of His hands.
- 20“In a moment they die, even at midnight
The people are shaken and pass away,
And the powerful are taken away without a [human] hand.
- 21“For God’s eyes are on the ways of a man,
And He sees all his steps. [Ps 34:15; Prov 5:21; Jer 16:17]
- 22“There is no darkness nor deep shadow
Where the evildoers may hide themselves.
- 23“For He sets no appointed time for a man,
That he should appear before Him in judgment.
- 24“He breaks mighty men without inquiry,
And sets others in their place. [Dan 2:21]

- 25“Therefore He knows of their works,
And He overthrows them in the night,
So that they are crushed *and* destroyed.
- 26“He strikes them like the wicked
In a public place,
- 27Because they turned aside from following Him
And would not consider *or* show regard for any of His
ways, [1 Sam 15:11]
- 28So that they caused the cry of the poor to come to Him,
And He heard the cry of the afflicted. [Ex 22:23; James 5:4]
- 29“When He keeps quiet, who then can condemn?
When He hides His face [withdrawing His favor and help],
who then can behold Him [and make supplication to Him],
Whether it be a nation or a man by himself?— ³⁰So that
godless men would not rule
Nor be snares for the people.
- 31“For has anyone said to God,
‘I have endured *my chastisement*;
I will not offend *anymore*;
- 32Teach me what I do not see [in regard to how I have
sinned];
If I have done wrong (injustice, unrighteousness),
I will not do it again’?
- 33“Shall God’s retribution [for your sins] be on your terms,
because you refuse to accept it?
For you must do the choosing, and not I;
Therefore say what you [truthfully] know.

- 34“Men of understanding will tell me,
Indeed, every wise man who hears me [will agree],
35‘Job speaks without knowledge,
And his words are without wisdom *and* insight.
36‘Job ought to be tried to the limit
Because he answers like wicked men!
37‘For he adds rebellion [in his unsubmissive, defiant attitude
toward God] to his [unacknowledged] sin; He claps his
hands among us [in open mockery and contempt of God],
And he multiplies his words [of accusation] against God.’”

35 ELIHU CONTINUED speaking [to Job] and said, ²“Do
you think this is according to [your] justice?

Do you say, ‘My righteousness is more than God’s’?

- 3“For you say, ‘What advantage have you [by living a
righteous life]?

What profit will I have, more [by being righteous] than if I
had sinned?’

- 4“‘I will answer you,
And your companions with you.

- 5“Look to the heavens and see;
And behold the skies which are [much] higher than you.

- 6“‘If you have sinned, what do you accomplish against Him?
And if your transgressions are multiplied, what have you
done to Him?

- 7“‘If you are righteous, what do you give God,

Or what does He receive from your hand?

8“Your wickedness *affects only* a man such as you,
And your righteousness *affects only* a son of man [but it
cannot affect God, who is sovereign].

9“Because of the multitudes of oppressions *the people* cry
out;

They cry for help because of the [violent] arm of the mighty.

10“But no one says, ‘Where is God my Maker,
Who gives songs [of rejoicing] in the night, [Acts 16:25]

11Who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth
And makes us wiser than the birds of the heavens?’

12“The people cry out, but He does not answer
Because of the pride of evil men.

13“Surely God will not listen to an empty cry [which lacks
trust],

Nor will the Almighty regard it.

14“Even though you say that you do not see Him [when
missing His righteous judgment on earth], Yet your case
is before Him, and you must wait for Him!

15“And now, because He has not [quickly] punished in His
anger,

Nor has He acknowledged transgression *and* arrogance well
[and seems unaware of the wrong of which a person is
guilty], ¹⁶Job uselessly opens his mouth

And multiplies words without knowledge [drawing the
worthless conclusion that the righteous have no more
advantage than the wicked].”

36 ELIHU CONTINUED and said, ²“Bear with me a little longer, and I will show you,

That there is yet more to say on God’s behalf.

³“I will bring my knowledge from afar,
And will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.

⁴“For truly my words are not false;
He who is perfect in knowledge is with you.

⁵“Behold, God is mighty, and yet does not despise *anyone*
[nor regard any as trivial]; *He is* mighty in the strength *and*
power of understanding.

⁶“He does not prolong the life of the wicked,
But gives the afflicted their justice.

⁷“He does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous [those
in right standing with Him]; But with kings upon the
throne

He has seated them forever, and they are exalted.

⁸“And if they are bound in bonds [of adversity],
And held by cords of affliction, [Ps 107:10, 11]

⁹Then He declares to them [the true character of] their deeds
And their transgressions, that they have acted arrogantly
[with presumption and notions of self-sufficiency].

¹⁰“He opens their ears to instruction *and* discipline,
And commands that they return from evil.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Thinking Highly of Others

One primary need all people have is to feel significant. We want to feel that we matter, that we have value and purpose. Acceptance from others helps us to feel that way. We can accept or reject someone without saying a word. When someone or something they do seems strange to me, I have a whole repertoire of facial expressions, head shakings, groans, and sighs that say without words, *What is your problem?* And if I started talking to that person or about that person concerning their “ways,” my words could quickly bring offense or feelings of rejection.

Making people feel significant begins with how we think about them. We need to take time to consider how we think about those around us. Is there anyone we approve of 100 percent? Probably not, but the percentage would go up if we simply realize they don’t need to think what we think, like what we like, share our opinions, or make the same choices we would in similar situations. God loves and accepts all of us, and He has made us all different. He wants us to value people where

they are, not where we would like them to be.

Elihu said, “Behold, God is mighty, and yet does not despise *anyone* [nor regard any as trivial]” (Job 36:5). When people have a totally different opinion from ours, instead of regarding them as trivial, why not look at them and think, *I respect your right to your opinion, and I realize my opinion may not be right all the time*. If we think that way, we will talk that way and behave that way. When someone disagrees with us, why not look at them and think with a smile, *I’m open to other ideas, and I’ll consider yours*.

Try making a list of the people you deal with most, then go over the list often and do some “on-purpose thinking.” Intentionally think thoughts like these: *[Person’s name] is valuable, they are gifted, and I need the variety they offer to my life. I appreciate their uniqueness, and I want to help them be all they can be*.

This positive viewpoint about people means we agree to not see ourselves as more important or more valuable than others. It also means we agree with God to embrace them as significant.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Loving and caring God, I so need to become more like You in how I think about and treat other people. Help me to see others as valuable and gifted, created uniquely by You, and loved and completely accepted by You. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

- 11“If they hear and serve *Him*,
They will end their days in prosperity
And their years in pleasantness *and* joy.
- 12“But if they do not hear *and* obey, they will die by the
sword [of God’s destructive judgments]
And they will die [in ignorance] without [true] knowledge.
- 13“But the godless in heart store up anger [at the divine
discipline];
They do not cry [to Him] for help when He binds them [with
cords of affliction]. [Rom 2:5]
- 14“*They die in youth,*
And their life *ends* among the cult prostitutes. [Deut 23:17]
- 15“*He rescues the afflicted in their affliction,*
And opens their ears [so that they pay attention to His
voice] in *times of oppression*.
- 16“*Then indeed, He enticed you from the mouth of distress*
and confinement, Into a broad place where there is no
constraint *or* distress;
And that which was set on your table was full of fatness
(rich food).
- 17“*But you [Job] were full of judgment on the wicked,*
Judgment and justice take hold *of you*.
- 18“*Do not let wrath entice you into scoffing;*
And do not let the greatness *and* the extent of the ransom
turn you aside.

- 19“Will your wealth [be sufficient to] keep you from [the confinement of] distress, Or will all the force of your strength do it?
- 20“Do not long for the night,
When people vanish from their places.
- 21“Take heed *and* be careful, do not turn to wickedness,
For you have chosen this [the vice of complaining against God] rather than [learning from] affliction.
- 22“Behold, God is exalted in His power;
Who is a ruler *or* a teacher like Him?
- 23“Who has appointed God His way,
And who can say [to Him], ‘You have done wrong’?
- 24“Remember that you should magnify God’s work,
Of which men have sung.
- 25“All men have seen God’s work;
Man looks at it from a distance.
- 26“Behold, God is exalted, and we do not know *Him*;
The number of His years is unsearchable. [1 Cor 13:12]
- 27“For He draws up the drops of water,
They distill rain from the mist,
- 28Which the clouds pour down,
They drop abundantly upon mankind.”
- 29“Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds
Or the thundering of His pavilion? [Ps 18:11; Is 40:22]
- 30“Behold, He spreads His lightning around Him [against the dark clouds],

And He covers the depths of the sea.

³¹“For by these [mighty acts] He judges the peoples;
He gives food in abundance.

³²“He covers *His* hands with the lightning,
And commands it to strike the mark.

³³“His thundering voice declares [awesomely] His presence;
The cattle also are told of His coming storm.

37 “INDEED, AT *His* thundering my heart trembles And
leaps out of its place.

²“Listen carefully to the thunder of His voice,
And the rumbling that goes out of His mouth!

³“He lets it loose under the whole heaven,
And His lightning to the ends of the earth.

⁴“After it, His voice roars;
He thunders with the voice of His majesty,
And He does not restrain His lightning [against His
adversaries] when His voice is heard.

⁵“God thunders marvelously with His voice;
He does great things which we cannot comprehend.

⁶“For He says to the snow, ‘Fall on the earth’;
And [He speaks] to the showers and to the downpour [of
His mighty rains], ‘Be strong.’

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Stay Peaceful and Stand Firm

In Job 37, Job was still waiting for answers from God regarding his sufferings, and Elihu advised him, “Stand still and consider the wonders of God” (v. 14). In other words, when you are in a difficult situation, do what you know to do, but don’t feel pressured to take action if you have no direction from God. Ask God to open your mind to new ways of thinking, doing and seeing things. If He shows you something, then do it, and if He doesn’t, then remain peaceful and trust that He will work for you and do what you cannot do. While you are waiting, consider all the wonders and amazing things that God has done all around you. Each of our lives is filled with miracles, and we need to learn to see them.

Think and speak, “I may not know what to do in my situation, but I do know God and He is working on my behalf. I believe God is doing something amazing right now and I am expecting to see it soon.”

⁷“God seals (brings to a standstill, stops) [by severe weather] the hand of every man, That all men [whom He has made] may know His work [that is, His sovereign power and their subjection to it].

⁸“Then the beast goes into its lair
And remains in its hiding place.

- 9“Out of its chamber comes the storm,
And cold from the north wind.
- 10“Ice is made by the breath of God,
And the expanse of the waters is frozen. [Ps 147:17, 18]
- 11“He loads the thick cloud with moisture;
He disperses the cloud of His lightning.
- 12“Its direction is turned around by His guidance,
That it may do whatever He commands it
On the face of the inhabited earth.
- 13“Whether [it be] for correction, or for His earth [generally]
Or for [His] mercy *and* lovingkindness, He causes it to
happen. [Ex 9:18, 23; 1 Sam 12:18, 19]
- 14“Listen to this, Job;
Stand still and consider the wonders of God.
- 15“Do you know how God establishes *and* commands them,
And makes the lightning of His [storm] cloud shine?
- 16“Do you know about the layers of thick clouds [and how
they are balanced and poised in the heavens], The
wonderful works of Him who is perfect in knowledge,
- 17You whose garments are hot,
When He quiets the earth [in sultry summer] with the
[oppressive] south wind?
- 18“Can you, with Him, spread out the sky,
Strong as a molten mirror?
- 19“Tell us [Job] what words [of man] shall we say to such a
Being;

We cannot state *our case* because of darkness [that is, our ignorance in the presence of the unsearchable God].

20“So shall it be told Him that I wish to speak?

Or should a man say that he would be swallowed up [and destroyed by God]?

21“Now people cannot look at the light when it is bright in the skies [without being blinded], When the wind has passed and cleared them.

22“Out of the north comes golden *splendor* [and people can hardly look on it]; Around God is awesome splendor *and* majesty [far too glorious for man’s eyes].

23“*The Almighty*—we cannot find Him;

He is exalted in power

And He will not do violence to [nor disregard] justice and abundant righteousness. [1 Tim 6:16]

24“Men therefore fear Him;

He does not regard *nor* respect any who are wise in heart [in their own understanding and conceit].” [Matt 10:28]

38 THEN THE LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and

said, 2“Who is this that darkens counsel [questioning my authority and wisdom]

By words without knowledge? [Job 35:16]

3“Now gird up your loins like a man,

And I will ask you, and you instruct Me!

4“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Tell *Me*, if you know *and* have understanding.

⁵“Who determined the measurements [of the earth], if you know?

Or who stretched the [measuring] line on it?

⁶“On what were its foundations fastened?

Or who laid its cornerstone,

⁷When the morning stars sang together

And all the sons of God (angels) shouted for joy?

⁸“Or who enclosed the sea with doors

When it burst forth and went out of the womb;

⁹When I made the clouds its garment

And thick darkness its swaddling band,

¹⁰And marked for it My [appointed] boundary

And set bars and doors [defining the shorelines], [Jer 5:22]

¹¹And said, ‘This far you shall come, but no farther;

And here your proud waves shall stop’? [Ps 89:9; 93:4]

¹²“*Since* your days began, have you *ever* commanded the morning, And caused the dawn to know its place,

¹³So that light may take hold of the corners of the earth

And shake the wickedness out of it?

¹⁴“The earth is changed like clay *into which* a seal is pressed;

And the things [of the earth] stand out like a [multi-colored] garment.

¹⁵“Their light is withheld from the wicked,

And the uplifted arm is broken.

¹⁶“Have you entered *and* explored the springs of the sea

Or [have you] walked in the recesses of the deep?

¹⁷“Have the gates of death been revealed to you,
Or have you seen the gates of deep darkness?

¹⁸“Have you understood the expanse of the earth?
Tell *Me*, if you know all this.

¹⁹“Where is the way *where* light dwells?
And as for darkness, where is its place,

²⁰That you may take it to its territory
And that you may know the paths to its house?

²¹“You [must] know, since you were born then,
And because you are so extremely old!

POWERPOINT

When God asked Job where light dwells and where the place of darkness is, He was making a point about the divine mystery that surrounds Him.

While His knowledge is limitless, we will never begin to know everything about Him or His creation. But He knows everything about us, and in His grace He is doing great things for us and in our lives.



- ²²“Have you entered the storehouses of the snow,
Or have you seen the storehouses of the hail,
²³Which I have reserved for the time of trouble,
For the day of battle and war? [Ex 9:18; Josh 10:11; Is 30:30;
Rev 16:21]
- ²⁴“Where is the way that the light is distributed,
Or the east wind scattered over the earth?

- 25“Who has prepared a channel for the torrents of rain *and* for
the flood, Or a path for the thunderbolt,
- 26To bring rain on the uninhabited land,
And on the desert where no man lives,
- 27To satisfy the barren and desolate ground
And to make the seeds of grass to sprout?
- 28“Has the rain a father?
Or who has begotten the drops of dew?
- 29“Out of whose womb has come the ice?
And the frost of heaven, who has given it birth?
- 30“Water becomes like stone [and hides itself],
And the surface of the deep is frozen *and* imprisoned.
- 31“Can you bind the chains of [the cluster of stars called]
Pleiades,
Or loose the cords of [the constellation] Orion?
- 32“Can you lead forth a constellation in its season,
And guide [the stars of] the Bear with her sons?
- 33“Do you know the ordinances of the heavens,
Or [can you] establish their rule over the earth?
- 34“Can you lift up your voice to the clouds,
So that an abundance of water will cover you?
- 35“Can you send forth lightnings that they may go
And say to you, ‘Here we are’?
- 36“Who has put wisdom in the innermost being [of man, or in
the layers of clouds]
Or given understanding to the mind [of man, or to the

heavenly display]?

37“Who can count the clouds by [earthly] wisdom,
Or pour out the water jars of the heavens,

38When the dust hardens into a mass
And the clods stick together [because of the heat]?

39“Can you [Job] hunt the prey for the lion,
Or satisfy the appetite of the young lions

40When they crouch in their dens
And lie in wait in their lair?

41“Who provides prey for the raven
When its young cry to God
And wander about without food?

39 “DO YOU know the time when the wild goats of the rock
give birth [to their young]?

Do you observe the calving of the deer?

2“Can you count the months that they carry offspring,
Or do you know the time when they give birth?

3“They kneel down, they bring forth their young,
They cast out their labor pains.

4“Their young ones become strong, they grow up in the
open field;
They leave and do not return to them.

5“Who sent out the wild donkey free [from dependence on
man]?

And who has loosed the bonds of the wild donkey [to survive in the wild],

⁶To whom I gave the wilderness as his home
And the salt land as his dwelling place?

⁷“He scorns the tumult of the city,
And does not hear the shouting of the taskmaster.

⁸“He explores the mountains as his pasture
And searches after every green thing.

⁹“Will the wild ox be willing to serve you,
Or remain beside your manger at night?

¹⁰“Can you bind the wild ox with a harness [to the plow] in the furrow?
Or will he plow the valleys for you?

¹¹“Will you trust him because his strength is great
And leave your labor to him?

¹²“Will you have faith *and* depend on him to return your grain
And gather it from your threshing floor?

¹³“The [flightless] wings of the ostrich wave joyously;
With the pinion (shackles, fetters) and plumage of love,

¹⁴For she leaves her eggs on the ground
And warms them in the dust,

¹⁵Forgetting that a foot may crush them,
Or that the wild beast may trample them.

¹⁶“She treats her young cruelly, as if they were not hers;
Though her labor is in vain because she is unconcerned [for the safety of her brood],

- 17 For God has made her forget wisdom,
And has not given her a share of understanding.
- 18 “Yet when she lifts herself on high,
[So swift is she that] she laughs at the horse and his rider.
- 19 “Have you given the horse his might?
Have you clothed his neck with quivering *and* a shaking
mane?
- 20 “Have you [Job] made him leap like a locust?
The majesty of his snorting [nostrils] is terrible.
- 21 “He paws in the valley and rejoices in his strength;
He goes out to meet the weapons [of armed men].
- 22 “He laughs at fear and is not dismayed;
And [in battle] he does not turn back from the sword.
- 23 “The quiver rattles against him,
[As do] the flashing spear and the lance [of his rider].
- 24 “With fierceness and rage he races to devour the ground,
And he does not stand still at the sound of the [war]
trumpet.
- 25 “As often as the trumpet sounds he says, ‘Aha!’
And he smells the battle from far away,
And *senses* the thunder of the captains and the war cry.
- 26 “Is it by your understanding that the hawk soars,
Stretching his wings toward the south [as winter
approaches]?
- 27 “Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up
And makes his nest on high [in an inaccessible place]?

- 28“On the cliff he dwells and remains [securely],
Upon the point of the rock and the inaccessible stronghold.
29“From there he spies out the prey;
His eyes see it from far away.
30“His young ones suck up blood;
And where the slain are, there is he.”

40 THEN THE LORD said to Job, 2“Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty?

Let him who disputes with God answer it.”

3Then Job replied to the LORD and said,

4“Behold, I am of little importance *and* contemptible; what can I reply to You?

I lay my hand on my mouth. [Ezra 9:6; Ps 51:4]

5“I have spoken once, but I will not reply again—

Indeed, twice [I have answered], and I will add nothing further.”

6Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, saying,

7“Now gird up your loins (prepare yourself) like a man,
And I will ask you, and you instruct Me.

8“Will you really annul My judgment *and* set it aside as void?

Will you condemn Me [your God] that you may [appear to] be righteous *and* justified?

9“Have you an arm like God,

And can you thunder with a voice like His?

¹⁰“Adorn yourself with eminence and dignity [since you question the Almighty], And array yourself with honor and majesty.

¹¹“Pour out the overflowings of your wrath,
And look at everyone who is proud and make him low.

¹²Look at everyone who is proud, and humble him,
And [if you are so able] tread down the wicked where they stand.

¹³“[Crush and] hide them in the dust together;
Shut them up in the hidden place [the house of death].

¹⁴“[If you can do all this, Job, proving your divine power] then I [God] will also praise you *and* acknowledge That your own right hand can save you.

¹⁵“Behold now, Behemoth, which I created as well as you;
He eats grass like an ox.

¹⁶“See now, his strength is in his loins
And his power is in the muscles *and* sinews of his belly.

¹⁷“He sways his tail like a cedar;
The tendons of his thighs are twisted *and* knit together [like a rope].

¹⁸“His bones are tubes of bronze;
His limbs are like bars of iron.

¹⁹“He is the first [in magnitude and power] of the works of God;
[Only] He who made him can bring near His sword [to

master him].

20“Surely the mountains bring him food,
And all the wild animals play there.

21“He lies down under the lotus plants,
In the hidden shelter of the reeds in the marsh.

22“The lotus plants cover him with their shade;
The willows of the brook surround him.

23“*If a river rages and overflows*, he does not tremble;
He is confident, though the Jordan [River] swells and
rushes against his mouth.

24“Can anyone capture him when he is on watch,
Or pierce his nose with barbs [to trap him]?

41 “CAN YOU draw out Leviathan with a fishhook?

Or press down his tongue with a cord?

2“Can you put a rope [made] of rushes into his nose
Or pierce his jaw through with a hook?

3“Will he make many supplications to you [begging to be
spared]?
Or will he speak soft words to you [to coax you to treat him
kindly]?

4“Will he make a covenant *or* an arrangement with you?
Will you take him for your servant forever?

5“Will you play with him as with a bird?
Or will you bind him [and put him on a leash] for your
maidens?

- 6“Will traders bargain over him?
Will they divide him up among the merchants?
- 7“Can you fill his skin with harpoons,
Or his head with fishing spears?
- 8“Lay your hand on him;
Remember the battle [with him]; you will not do such [an ill-
advised thing] again!
- 9“Behold, his [assailant’s] hope *and* expectation [of
defeating Leviathan] is false; Will not one be overwhelmed
even at the sight of him?
- 10“No one is so fierce [and foolhardy] that he dares to stir up
Leviathan;
Who then is he who can stand before Me [or dares to
contend with Me, the beast’s creator]?
- 11“Who has first given to Me that I should repay him?
Whatever is under the whole heaven is Mine. [Who can
have a claim against Me who made the unmastered
beast?] [Rom 11:35]
- 12“I will not keep silence concerning his limbs,
Nor his mighty strength, nor his orderly frame.
- 13“Who can penetrate *or* strip off his outer armor?
Who can come to his jaws with a double bridle?
- 14“Who can open the doors (jaws) of his face?
Around his [open jaws and] teeth there is terror.
- 15“His strong scales are his pride,
Bound together as with a tight seal.

16“One is so near to another

That no air can come between them.

17“They are joined one to another;

They stick together and cannot be separated.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Let Emotions Subside Before You Speak

The final chapter of Job teaches the importance of not speaking rashly out of our emotions. The suffering Job endured had been unimaginable, and God never explained to Job exactly why He allowed such a trial of Job's faith. Nevertheless, in his direct encounter with God, Job stated, "Therefore [I now see] I have [rashly] uttered that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know" (Job 42:3).

Nothing takes more self-control than not speaking negatively in a negative situation. The mouth wants to spurt out everything the mind thinks and the heart feels at that moment. But at such times, we need to go deeper, thinking and speaking out of our renewed spirit. These are important times to agree with God and say what He says in His Word.

- 18“His sneezes flash forth light,
And his eyes are like the [reddish] eyelids of the dawn.
- 19“Out of his mouth go burning torches,
And sparks of fire leap out.
- 20“Out of his nostrils smoke goes forth
As from a boiling pot and [as from] *burning* rushes.
- 21“His breath kindles coals,
And a flame goes forth from his mouth.

- 22“In Leviathan’s neck resides strength,
And dismay *and* terror dance before him.
- 23“The folds of his flesh are joined together,
Firm on him and immobile [when he moves].
- 24“His heart is as hard as a stone,
Indeed, as solid as a lower millstone.
- 25“When he raises himself up, the mighty are afraid;
Because of the crashing they are bewildered.
- 26“The sword that reaches him cannot avail,
Nor [does] the spear, the dart, or the javelin.
- 27“He considers iron as straw,
Bronze as rotten wood.
- 28“The arrow cannot make him flee;
Slingstones are treated as stubble by him.
- 29“Clubs [also] are regarded as stubble;
He laughs at the rushing *and* the rattling of the javelin.
- 30“His underparts are like sharp pieces of broken pottery;
He moves across *and* spreads out [grooves] like a threshing
sledge on the mire (muddy river banks).
- 31“He makes the deep water boil like a pot;
He makes the sea like a [foaming] pot of ointment.
- 32“Behind him he makes a shining wake;
One would think the deep to be gray-haired [with foam].
- 33“Upon earth there is nothing like him—no equal exists,
A creature made without fear.
- 34“He looks on everything that is high [without terror];

He is monarch over all the sons of pride. [And now, Job, who are you who does not dare to disturb the beast, yet who dares resist Me, the beast's creator? Everything under the heavens is Mine; therefore, who can have a claim against God?]"

42 THEN JOB answered the LORD and said, ²“I know that You can do all things,

And that no thought *or* purpose of Yours can be restrained.

³“[You said to me] ‘Who is this that darkens *and* obscures counsel [by words] without knowledge?’

Therefore [I now see] I have [rashly] uttered that which I did not understand,

Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. [Job 38:2]

⁴“Hear, please, and I will speak;

I will ask You, and You instruct [and answer] me.’

⁵“I had heard of You [only] by the hearing of the ear,

But now my [spiritual] eye sees You.

⁶“Therefore I retract [my words and hate myself]

And I repent in dust and ashes.”

⁷It came about that after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, “My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has.

⁸“Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up a burnt offering

for yourselves, and My servant Job will pray for you. For I will accept him [and his prayer] so that I may not deal with you *according to your folly*, because you have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job has.”

! REMEMBER, God always
leads you in triumph in
Christ!

⁹So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the LORD told them; and the LORD accepted Job’s prayer.

¹⁰The LORD restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends, and the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. [Deut 30:1–3; Ps 126:1, 2]

¹¹Then all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before came to him, and they ate bread with him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him over all the [distressing] adversities that the LORD had brought on him. And each one gave him a piece of money, and each a ring of gold.

¹²And the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; for he had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys. [Job 1:3]

¹³He had seven sons and three daughters.

¹⁴And he called the name of the first [daughter] Jemimah, and the name of the second Keziah, and the name of the third Keren-happuch.

¹⁵In all the land there were found no women so fair as the daughters of Job; and their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers.

¹⁶After this, Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons and his grandsons, four generations.

¹⁷So Job died, an old man and full of days. [James 5:11]

Psalms

Author: | David,
Asaph, the sons of
Korah, Moses, and
others

Date: | 1000 BC–
300 BC

The book of Psalms includes many verses on the mind, particularly verses that call us to *remember* or *know* or *understand* something about God or about ourselves. The words *remember*, *know*, and *understand* all pertain to the mind.

The Psalms are also full of insights on winning the battle of the mind and scriptures you can confess to defeat the enemy. The writers of the Psalms often expressed their thoughts and feelings—positive or negative—to the Lord. Whenever they struggled with negative thoughts though, they eventually remembered God’s goodness and faithfulness and ended up with a positive mind-set.

When you wrestle with wrong thoughts or emotions, let me encourage you to allow the Psalms to restore your hope and strengthen your faith and confidence in God.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM PSALMS:

When you cry for help, the Lord hears (see Psalm 34:17).

When the enemy tries to oppress your mind with negative or discouraging thoughts, one way to overcome him is to praise God (see Psalm 42:5).

God will always help you in times of trouble (see Psalm 46:1).

God knows you thoroughly. He is aware of your every thought before you think it and of your every word before you speak it (see Psalm 139:1–4).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM PSALMS:

As for God, His way is blameless. The word of the LORD is tested [it is perfect, it is faultless]; He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him. | Psalm 18:30

Trust [rely on and have confidence] in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and feed [securely] on His faithfulness. | Psalm 37:3

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will remain secure and rest in the shadow of the Almighty [whose power no enemy can withstand]. | Psalm 91:1

I will bow down [in worship] toward Your holy temple and give thanks to Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth; for You have magnified Your word together with Your name. | Psalm 138:2

THE PSALMS

The following expressions occur often in the Psalms: ***Selah*** may mean *Pause*, *Crescendo* or *Musical Interlude*; ***Maskil*** possibly, *Contemplative*, or *Didactic*, or *Skillful Psalm*; ***Mikhtam*** possibly, *Epigrammatic Poem*, or *Atonement Psalm*; ***Sheol*** the nether world.

BOOK ONE

Psalm 1

The Righteous and the Wicked Contrasted.

¹BLESSED [fortunate, prosperous, and favored by God] is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked [following their advice and example], Nor stand in the path of sinners,

Nor sit [down to rest] in the seat of scoffers (ridiculers).

²But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And on His law [His precepts and teachings] he [habitually] meditates day and night. [Rom 13:8–10; Gal 3:1–29; 2 Tim 3:16]

- ³ And he will be like a tree *firmly* planted [and fed] by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season;
Its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers [and comes to maturity]. [Jer 17:7, 8]
- ⁴ The wicked [those who live in disobedience to God's law] are not so, But they are like the chaff [worthless and without substance] which the wind blows away.

Speak God's Word

*I am like a tree firmly planted
and fed by streams of water;
which yields its fruit in its
season; its leaf does not
wither; and in whatever I do,
I prosper and come to
maturity.*

| adapted from PSALM 1:3 |

- ⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand [unpunished] in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
- ⁶For the LORD knows *and* fully approves the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked shall perish.

Psalm 2

The Reign of the LORD's Anointed.

- ¹WHY ARE the nations in an uproar [in turmoil against God],
And why do the people devise a vain *and* hopeless plot?
- ²The kings of the earth take their stand;
And the rulers take counsel together

Against the LORD and His Anointed (the Davidic King, the Messiah, the Christ), saying, [Acts 4:25–27]

³“Let us break apart their [divine] bands [of restraint]
And cast away their cords [of control] from us.”

⁴He who sits [enthroned] in the heavens laughs [at their rebellion]; The [Sovereign] Lord scoffs at them [and in supreme contempt He mocks them].

⁵Then He will speak to them in His [profound] anger
And terrify them with His displeasure, saying,

⁶“Yet as for Me, I have anointed *and* firmly installed My
King
Upon Zion, My holy mountain.”

⁷“I will declare the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son;

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

What Goes In Comes Out

In the early days of computers, people said, “Garbage in, garbage out.” That was a way of explaining that the computer only worked with the data put into it. If we wanted different results, we needed to put in different information. Most people understand that concept, but when it comes to their minds, many don’t seem to get it.

If you are going to win the battle of the mind, where you focus your attention is crucial. The more you meditate on God’s Word, the stronger you’ll become and the more easily you’ll win the victories you desire.

There is a difference between meditating on the Bible and reading the Bible. Some people like to think that whenever they read God’s Word, they’re absorbing the deep things of God, but often they have little idea of what they’ve read when they finish. Those who meditate on God’s Word are those who think—and think seriously—about what they’re reading. They’re saying, in effect, “God, speak to me. As I ponder Your Word, reveal its depth to me.”

The psalmist made it quite clear that meditating on and thinking about God's Word bring results. "But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law [His precepts and teachings] he [habitually] meditates day and night. And he will be like a tree *firmly* planted [and fed] by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season; its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers [and comes to maturity]" (Ps. 1:2-3).

As you ponder who God is and what He's saying to you, you'll grow. It's really that simple. If you read about and allow your mind to focus on God's love and power, that's what will operate in you. If you think about loving others, that is what you will end up doing, but if you think only about how others have hurt you and what people should be doing for you, then you will be self-focused.

Sadly, some Christians don't put much effort into studying the Word. They hear others teach and preach, and they may listen to online sermons and read the Bible occasionally, but they're not dedicated to making God's Word a major and regular part of their lives.

Be careful what you think about. The more you think about Jesus Christ and the principles He taught, the more you become like Jesus and the stronger you grow. And as you grow, you're winning the battles in your mind.

APRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord God, help me to think about the things that honor You. Make me hungry for more of You and teach me to meditate and focus on Your Word more and more. In Jesus' name. Amen.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Think About God's Word

The Word of God teaches us what we should spend our time thinking about. The psalmist said he thought about or meditated on the “precepts” of God (see Ps. 119:15). That means he spent a lot of time pondering and thinking on the ways of God, His goodness, His instructions. I recommend that you spend time daily just thinking about God, how amazing He is and all the wonderful things He has promised in His Word.

It is very beneficial to think about God's Word because it reveals His will and His amazing plan for His children. The more you think about it, the easier it will be for you to do it. It is also a proven fact that when we think about good things, our joy and peace increase, but when we think about vain or useless things, we become frustrated and dissatisfied.

This day [I proclaim] I have begotten You. [2 Sam 7:14; Heb 1:5; 3:5, 6; 2 Pet 1:17, 18]

⁸“Ask of Me, and I will assuredly give [You] the nations as Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth as Your possession.

⁹“You shall break them with a rod of iron;
You shall shatter them [in pieces] like earthenware.” [Rev 12:5; 19:15]

POWERPOINT

In Psalm 2:7, the psalmist wrote that he would “declare the decree of the LORD.” The written

Word of God is His formal decree. When we declare God’s Word out of our mouths, with hearts full of faith, those faith-filled words go forth to establish God’s order and plan in our lives. It is very important to learn that words contain the power of life and death (see Prov. 18:21).



- ¹⁰Now therefore, O kings, act wisely;
Be instructed *and* take warning, O leaders (judges, rulers) of the earth.
- ¹¹Worship the LORD *and* serve Him with reverence [with awe-inspired fear and submissive wonder]; Rejoice [yet do so] with trembling.
- ¹²Kiss (pay respect to) the Son, so that He does not become

angry, and you perish in the way, For His wrath may soon
be kindled *and* set aflame.

How blessed [fortunate, prosperous, and favored by God]
are all those who take refuge in Him!

Psalm 3

Morning Prayer of Trust in God.

A Psalm of David. When he fled from Absalom his son.

¹O LORD, how my enemies have increased!

Many are rising up against me.

²Many are saying of me,

“There is no help [no salvation] for him in God.”

Selah.

³But You, O LORD, are a shield for me,

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Lord, You are a shield for me, my glory and my honor; and the One who lifts my head. When I cry to You, You will answer me from Your holy mountain.

• adapted from Psalm 3:3–4

My glory [and my honor], and the One who lifts my head.

⁴With my voice I was crying to the LORD,

And He answered me from His holy mountain.

Selah.

⁵I lay down and slept [safely];

I awakened, for the LORD sustains me.

⁶I will not be intimidated *or* afraid of the ten thousands
Who have set themselves against me all around.

⁷Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God!
For You have struck all my enemies on the cheek;
You have shattered the teeth of the wicked.

⁸Salvation belongs to the LORD;
May Your blessing be upon Your people.

Selah.

Psalm 4

Evening Prayer of Trust in God.

To the Chief Musician; on stringed instruments. A Psalm
of David.

¹ANSWER ME when I call, O God of my righteousness!
You have freed me when I was hemmed in *and* relieved me
when I was in distress;
Be gracious to me and hear [and respond to] my prayer.

²O sons of men, how long will my honor *and* glory be
[turned into] shame?
How long will you [my enemies] love worthless (vain, futile)
things and seek deception *and* lies?

Selah.

³But know that the LORD has set apart for Himself [and dealt
wonderfully with] the godly man [the one of honorable
character and moral courage—the one who does right].
The LORD hears *and* responds when I call to Him.

⁴Tremble [with anger or fear], and do not sin;
Meditate in your heart upon your bed and be still [reflect on
your sin and repent of your rebellion]. [Eph 4:26]

Selah.

⁵Offer righteous sacrifices;
Trust [confidently] in the LORD.

⁶Many are saying, “Oh, that we might see some good!”
Lift up the light of Your face upon us, O LORD.

⁷You have put joy in my heart,
More than [others know] when their wheat and new wine
have yielded abundantly.

⁸In peace [and with a tranquil heart] I will both lie down and
sleep,
For You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety *and*
confident trust.

POWERPOINT

Many people say they cannot sleep at night because they can't get their minds to settle down. But Psalm 4:8 says, "In peace [and with a tranquil heart] I will both lie down and sleep." When we use our mind to reason our way through a situation to figure out what to do, we rotate our mind around and around an issue until we become worn-out and confused. We can experience peace of mind and heart when we trust in God, not in our human insight and understanding. You and I can grow to the place where we are satisfied to know the One Who knows, even if we ourselves do not know.



WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Understanding Righteousness

The Bible includes many names of God. In Psalm 4:1, David calls Him the “God of my righteousness.” We find the concept of righteousness mentioned throughout the Word of God, and it’s important for us to understand it.

There are two kinds of righteousness. The first kind is righteousness through right behavior; this is the one we are most familiar with. We struggle through life trying to do what is expected of us, and what society tells us is right. If we have faith in God, we also struggle trying to please Him by obeying all His commands. Most of us feel we never succeed or measure up to the standard that has been set. Those feelings of failure and being wrong or inadequate lead to guilt and condemnation, which press us down in life and cause us to live beneath the privileges we have as children of God. We spend our lives trying to get something that God’s Word says we can have freely as a gift of God’s grace through faith. I like to say it is like trying to get into a chair we are already seated in.

The second kind of righteousness available to us is God’s

righteousness. It is His gift to us at the time we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior. It comes by grace through faith. Since it is a free gift, we cannot earn it, deserve it, or pay for it. The gift of righteousness God gives us has already been paid for through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

In this kind of righteousness, God takes our sin and gives us His righteousness, and by an act of His love and mercy, He views us as having right standing with Him through faith (see 2 Cor. 5:21). This is the great exchange! God takes our sins, puts them on Jesus, and gives us His righteousness. Someone had to pay the price for sin, and we could not. So God sent Jesus to be our substitute and pay our sin debt in full. God is the God of our righteousness, the One who sees us as righteous not because of anything we have ever done, but because of what Jesus has done for us.

Once we know we have been made right with God through faith in Jesus, the knowledge of His love and what He has done for us causes us to “want” to do what is right, and we are then doing it for the right reason. We do what is right because He loves us, and not to get Him to love us, because His love is a free gift.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God of my righteousness, thank You for sending Jesus to suffer and die for my sins so I do not have to struggle to try to please You. Help me to live with a constant awareness that You see me as righteous because of Him. In His name. Amen.

Psalm 5

Prayer for Protection from the Wicked.

To the Chief Musician; on wind instruments. A Psalm of David.

- ¹LISTEN TO my words, O LORD,
Consider my groaning *and* sighing.
- ²Heed the sound of my cry for help, my King and my God,
For to You I pray.
- ³In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice;
In the morning I will prepare [a prayer and a sacrifice] for
You and watch *and* wait [for You to speak to my heart].
- ⁴For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness;
No evil [person] dwells with You.
- ⁵The boastful *and* the arrogant will not stand in Your sight;
You hate all who do evil.
- ⁶You destroy those who tell lies;
The LORD detests *and* rejects the bloodthirsty and deceitful
man.
- ⁷But as for me, I will enter Your house through the
abundance of Your steadfast love *and* tender mercy; At
Your holy temple I will bow [obediently] in reverence for
You.
- ⁸O LORD, lead me in Your righteousness because of my

enemies; Make Your way straight (direct, right) before me.

⁹For there is nothing trustworthy *or* reliable *or* truthful in what they say; Their heart is destruction [just a treacherous chasm, a yawning gulf of lies].

Their throat is an open grave;

They [glibly] flatter with their [silken] tongue. [Rom 3:13]

¹⁰Hold them guilty, O God;

Let them fall by their own designs *and* councils!

Cast them out because of the abundance of their transgressions,

For they are mutinous *and* have rebelled against You.

¹¹But let all who take refuge *and* put their trust in You rejoice,

Let them ever sing for joy;

Because You cover *and* shelter them,

Let those who love Your name be joyful *and* exult in You.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

First Thing

David said, “In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice; in the morning I will prepare [a prayer and a sacrifice] for You and watch and wait [for You to speak to my heart]” (Ps. 5:3).

What was the first thing you said after getting up this morning? I believe we can prophesy (speak forth) and set the tone of the day by what we say at the beginning of it. Maybe you said, “I’m tired, and I dread going to work.” These kinds of words often come naturally, but you can decide to live supernaturally and say what God would say. Can you imagine Him saying, “This is going to be a lousy day”? Of course not! He would say something awesome and positive, and we should too—“I have favor everywhere I go”; “Today is going to be an awesome day”; “I’m going to see the hand of God at work today!”

**A Prayer To
Renew Your
Mind**



*You, O Lord, bless me and all
the people who are in right
standing with You; You
surround me with favor as
with a shield.*

• adapted from Psalm 5:12

- ¹²For You, O LORD, bless the righteous man [the one who is in right standing with You]; You surround him with favor as with a shield.

Psalm 6

Prayer for Mercy in Time of Trouble.

To the Chief Musician; on stringed instruments, set [possibly] an octave below. A Psalm of David.

- ¹O LORD, do not rebuke *or* punish me in Your anger,
Nor discipline me in Your wrath.
- ²Have mercy on me *and* be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am weak (faint, frail); Heal me, O LORD, for my bones are dismayed *and* anguished.
- ³My soul [as well as my body] is greatly dismayed.
But as for You, O LORD—how long [until You act on my behalf]?

- ⁴Return, O LORD, rescue my soul;
Save me because of Your [unfailing] steadfast love *and*
mercy.
- ⁵For in death there is no mention of You;
In Sheol (the nether world, the place of the dead) who will
praise You *and* give You thanks?
- ⁶I am weary with my groaning;
Every night I soak my bed with tears,
I drench my couch with my weeping.
- ⁷My eye grows dim with grief;
It grows old because of all my enemies.
- ⁸Depart from me, all you who do evil,
For the LORD has heard the voice of my weeping. [Matt
7:23; Luke 13:27]
- ⁹The LORD has heard my supplication [my plea for grace];
The LORD receives my prayer.
- ¹⁰Let all my enemies be ashamed and greatly horrified;
Let them turn back, let them suddenly be ashamed [of what
they have done].

Psalm 7

The LORD Implored to Defend the Psalmist against the Wicked.

An Ode of David, [perhaps in a wild, irregular, enthusiastic strain,] which he sang to the LORD concerning the words of Cush, a Benjamite.

¹O LORD my God, in You I take refuge;
Save me and rescue me from all those who pursue me,
²So that my enemy will not tear me like a lion,
Dragging me away while there is no one to rescue [me].

³O LORD my God, if I have done this, If there is injustice in
my hands,

⁴If I have done evil to him who was at peace with me,
Or without cause robbed him who was my enemy,

⁵Let the enemy pursue me and overtake me;
And let him trample my life to the ground
And lay my honor in the dust.

Selah.

⁶Arise, O LORD, in Your anger;
Lift up Yourself against the rage of my enemies;
Rise up for me; You have commanded judgment *and*
vindication.

⁷Let the assembly of the nations be gathered around You,
And return on high over them.

⁸The LORD judges the peoples;
Judge me, O LORD, *and* grant me justice according to my
righteousness and according to the integrity within me.

⁹Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but
establish the righteous [those in right standing with You];
For the righteous God tries the hearts and minds. [Rev
2:23]

¹⁰My shield *and* my defense depend on God,

Who saves the upright in heart.

¹¹God is a righteous judge,
And a God who is indignant every day.

¹²If a man does not repent, God will sharpen His sword;
He has strung *and* bent His [mighty] bow and made it ready.

¹³He has also prepared [other] deadly weapons for Himself;
He makes His arrows fiery shafts [aimed at the unrepentant].

¹⁴Behold, the [wicked and irreverent] man is pregnant with
sin,
And he conceives mischief and gives birth to lies.

¹⁵He has dug a pit and hollowed it out,
And has fallen into the [very] pit which he made [as a trap].

¹⁶His mischief will return on his own head,
And his violence will come down on the top of his head
[like loose dirt].

¹⁷I will give thanks to the LORD according to His
righteousness *and* justice, And I will sing praise to the
name of the LORD Most High.

Psalm 8

The LORD's Glory and Man's Dignity.

To the Chief Musician; set to a Philistine lute [or perhaps
to a particular Hittite tune]. A Psalm of David.

¹O LORD, our Lord,
How majestic *and* glorious *and* excellent is Your name in all
the earth!

You have displayed Your splendor above the heavens.

²Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babes You have
established strength

Because of Your adversaries,

That You might silence the enemy *and* make the revengeful
cease. [Matt 21:15, 16]

³When I see *and* consider Your heavens, the work of Your
fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have
established,

⁴What is man that You are mindful of him,

POWERPOINT

Have you ever wondered if you are good enough for God to love you? Unfortunately, many people believe God loves them only as long as they don't make mistakes. The psalmist asked, "What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of [earthborn] man that You care for him?" (Ps. 8:4). I think David knew that God loved Him, but He was still amazed that He did. The Bible tells us that we are God's creation, the work of His hands, and that He loves each one of us unconditionally, and that is amazing!



And the son of [earthborn] man that You care for him?

⁵Yet You have made him a little lower than *God, And You

have crowned him with glory and honor.

⁶You made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands;

You have put all things under his feet, [1 Cor 15:27; Eph 1:22, 23; Heb 2:6–8]

⁷All sheep and oxen,
And also the beasts of the field,

⁸The birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
Whatever passes through the paths of the seas.

⁹O LORD, our Lord,
How majestic *and* glorious *and* excellent is Your name in all the earth!

Psalm 9

A Psalm of Thanksgiving for God's Justice.

To the Chief Musician; on Muth-labben. A Psalm of David.

¹I WILL give thanks *and* praise the LORD, with all my heart; I will tell aloud all Your wonders *and* marvelous deeds.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Be Glad

Twice in Philippians 4:4 the apostle Paul tells us to rejoice. He urges us to “not be anxious or worried about anything” (Phil. 4:6), but to pray and give thanks to God in every circumstance and in everything—not after everything is working out good in our lives.

If we wait until everything is perfect before rejoicing and giving thanks, we won't ever have consistent joy. Learning to enjoy life, to “be in high spirits” even in the midst of difficult circumstances, is one way we develop spiritual maturity. Paul also writes that we “are progressively being transformed into His image from [one degree of] glory to [even more] glory” (2 Cor. 3:18). We need to learn how to enjoy the glory (the spiritual maturity) we are experiencing at each level of our development. Let's learn to pray a prayer of rejoicing and be glad in the Lord this day and every day along the way toward our goal (see Ps. 9:2).

When I first started my ministry, I depended on my circumstances for happiness. Finally the Lord showed me the doorway to happiness. He gave me a breakthrough by teaching me that fullness of joy is found in His presence—not in His presents (see Ps. 16:11)!

True joy comes from seeking God's face.

- ²I will rejoice and exult in you;
I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.
- ³When my enemies turn back,
They stumble and perish before You.
- ⁴For You have maintained my right and my cause;
You have sat on the throne judging righteously.
- ⁵You have rebuked the nations, You have destroyed the
wicked *and* unrepentant; You have wiped out their name
forever and ever.
- ⁶The enemy has been cut off *and* has vanished in
everlasting ruins,
You have uprooted their cities;
The very memory of them has perished.
- ⁷But the LORD will remain *and* sit enthroned forever; He has
prepared *and* established His throne for judgment. [Heb
1:11]
- ⁸And He will judge the world in righteousness;
He will execute judgment for the nations with fairness
(equity). [Acts 17:31]
- ⁹The LORD also will be a refuge *and* a stronghold for the
oppressed, A refuge in times of trouble;
- ¹⁰And those who know Your name [who have experienced
Your precious mercy] will put their confident trust in You,
For You, O LORD, have not abandoned those who seek
You. [Ps 42:1]
- ¹¹Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion; Declare

among the peoples His [great and wondrous] deeds.

¹²For He who avenges blood [unjustly shed] remembers them
(His people);

He does not forget the cry of the afflicted *and* abused.

¹³Have mercy on me *and* be gracious to me, O LORD; See how
I am afflicted by those who hate me,
You who lift me up from the gates of death,

¹⁴That I may tell aloud all Your praises,
That in the gates of the daughter of Zion (Jerusalem)
I may rejoice in Your salvation *and* Your help.

¹⁵The nations have sunk down in the pit which they have
made;
In the net which they hid, their own foot has been caught.

¹⁶The LORD has made Himself known;
He executes judgment;
The wicked are trapped by the work of their own hands.

Higgaion (meditation) Selah.

¹⁷The wicked will turn to Sheol (the nether world, the place of
the dead), *Even* all the nations who forget God.

¹⁸For the poor will not always be forgotten,
Nor the hope of the burdened perish forever.

¹⁹Arise, O LORD, do not let man prevail;
Let the nations be judged before You.

²⁰Put them in [reverent] fear of You, O LORD,
So that the nations may know they are but [frail and mortal]
men.

Selah.

Psalm 10

A Prayer for the Overthrow of the Wicked.

- ¹WHYDO You stand far away, O LORD?
Why do You hide [Yourself, veiling Your eyes] in times of trouble?
- ²In pride *and* arrogance the wicked hotly pursue *and* persecute the afflicted; Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised.
- ³For the wicked boasts *and* sings the praises of his heart's desire, And the greedy man curses and spurns [and even despises] the LORD.
- ⁴The wicked, in the haughtiness of his face, will not seek *nor* inquire for *Him*;

POWERPOINT

Psalm 10:4 is about the thoughts of the wicked, who think there is no God. In contrast, the righteous know there is a God and think about Him often. In fact, our lives depend on spending regular, quality time with God. Once I learned that fellowship with Him is vital, I gave it priority in my life. I encourage you to do the same and to think about Him often. God is with us all the time, and we should not ignore Him for hours at a time.



All his thoughts are, “There is no God [so there is no accountability or punishment].”

⁵His ways prosper at all times;
Your judgments [LORD] are on high, out of his sight [so he never thinks about them]; As for all his enemies, he

sneers at them.

⁶He says to himself, “I will not be moved;
For throughout all generations I will not be in adversity [for
nothing bad will happen to me].”

⁷His mouth is full of curses and deceit (fraud) and
oppression;
Under his tongue is mischief and wickedness [injustice and
sin].

⁸He lurks in ambush in the villages;
In hiding places he kills the innocent;
He lies in wait for the unfortunate [the unhappy, the poor,
the helpless].

⁹He lurks in a hiding place like a lion in his lair;
He lies in wait to catch the afflicted;
He catches the afflicted when he draws him into his net.

¹⁰He crushes [his prey] and crouches;
And the unfortunate fall by his mighty *claws*.

¹¹He says to himself, “God has [quite] forgotten;
He has hidden His face; He will never see my deed.”

¹²Arise, O LORD! O God, lift up Your hand [in judgment]; Do
not forget the suffering.

¹³Why has the wicked spurned *and* shown disrespect to
God?

He has said to himself, “You will not require me to account.”

¹⁴You have seen it, for You have noted mischief and vexation
(irritation) to take it into Your hand.
The unfortunate commits *himself* to You;

You are the helper of the fatherless.

¹⁵ Break the arm of the wicked and the evildoer,
Seek out his wickedness until You find no more.

¹⁶ The LORD is King forever and ever; The nations will perish
from His land.

¹⁷ O LORD, You have heard the desire of the humble *and*
oppressed; You will strengthen their heart, You will
incline Your ear to hear,

¹⁸ To vindicate *and* obtain justice for the fatherless and the
oppressed,
So that man who is of the earth will no longer terrify them.

Psalm 11

The LORD a Refuge and Defense.

To the Chief Musician. *A Psalm* of David.

¹ IN THE LORD I take refuge [and put my trust];
How can you say to me, “Flee like a bird to your mountain;

² For look, the wicked are bending the bow;
They take aim with their arrow on the string
To shoot [by stealth] in darkness at the upright in heart.

³ “If the foundations [of a godly society] are destroyed,
What can the righteous do?”

⁴ The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD’s throne is in
heaven.
His eyes see, His eyelids test the children of men. [Acts

7:49; Rev 4:2]

⁵The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Make Christ Your Foundation

A foundation is the most important part of a building. Without a solid foundation, the building won't last long. Everything else concerning the building is built on the foundation. If the foundation is weak or cracked, nothing built on it is safe. It could crumble or fall apart at any time, especially if stress is placed on it by a storm.

David warned, "If the foundations [of a godly society] are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Ps. 11:3). The Bible encourages people to build their lives on the solid rock of Christ, rooted securely in Him (see Matt. 7:24–27; Eph. 3:17). If you try to build your life on what people say and think about you, on how they treat you, on how you feel, or based on your past mistakes, you are building on sinking sand. But if you trade that old, cracked foundation for a solid foundation, one based on Christ and His love, nothing can shake you.

And His soul hates the [malevolent] one who loves violence. [James 1:12]

⁶Upon the wicked (godless) He will rain coals of fire;
Fire and brimstone and a dreadful scorching wind will be the portion of their cup [of doom].

⁷For the LORD is [absolutely] righteous, He loves

righteousness (virtue, morality, justice); The upright shall see His face.

Psalm 12

God, a Helper against the Treacherous.

To the Chief Musician; set an octave below. A Psalm of David.

¹SAVE *AND* help *and* rescue, LORD, for godly people cease to be, For the faithful vanish from among the sons of men.

²They speak deceitful *and* worthless words to one another; With flattering lips and a double heart they speak.

³May the LORD cut off all flattering lips,
The tongue that speaks great things [in boasting];

⁴Who have said, “With our tongue we will prevail;
Our lips are our own; who is lord *and* master over us?”

⁵“Because of the devastation of the afflicted, because of the groaning of the needy, Now I will arise,” says the LORD; “I will place him in the safety for which he longs.”

⁶The words *and* promises of the LORD are pure words, Like silver refined in an earthen furnace, purified seven times.

⁷You, O LORD, will preserve *and* keep them; You will protect him from this [evil] generation forever.

⁸The wicked strut about [in pompous self-importance] on every side,
As vileness is exalted *and* baseness is prized among the sons of men.

Psalm 13

Prayer for Help in Trouble.

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

¹HOW LONG, O LORD? Will You forget me forever?
How long will You hide Your face from me?

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Learn by Doing

Worry is failing to trust God to take care of the various situations in our lives. When we worry, we are actually acting on the thought If I try hard enough, I can find a solution to my problem, which is the opposite of trusting God.

Most of us have spent our lives trying to take care of ourselves, and it takes time to learn how to trust God in every situation. But we learn by doing as David did. Surrounded by his enemies, David said, "But I have trusted and relied on and been confident in Your lovingkindness and faithfulness; my heart shall rejoice and delight in Your salvation" (Ps. 13:5). We have to step out in faith, and as we do, we will experience the faithfulness of God, which makes it easier to trust Him the next time.

- ²How long must I take counsel in my soul,
Having sorrow in my heart day after day?
How long will my enemy exalt himself *and* triumph over me?
- ³Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; Give light (life) to
my eyes, or I will sleep the *sleep of death*,
- ⁴And my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"
And my adversaries will rejoice when I am shaken.
- ⁵But I have trusted *and* relied on *and* been confident in Your

lovingkindness *and* faithfulness; My heart shall rejoice
and delight in Your salvation.

⁶I will sing to the LORD,
Because He has dealt bountifully with me.

Psalm 14

Folly and Wickedness of Men.

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

¹THE [SPIRITUALLY ignorant] fool has said in his heart,
“There is no God.”

They are corrupt, they have committed repulsive *and*
unspeakable deeds;

There is no one who does good. [Rom 3:10]

²The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the children
of men To see if there are any who understand (act wisely),
Who [truly] seek after God, [longing for His wisdom and
guidance].

³They have all turned aside, together they have become
corrupt;

There is no one who does good, not even one. [Rom 3:11,
12]

⁴Have all the workers of wickedness *and* injustice no
knowledge, Who eat up my people as they eat bread,
And do not call upon the LORD?

⁵There they tremble with great fear,
For God is with the [consistently] righteous generation.

⁶You [evildoers] shamefully plan against the poor,
But the LORD is his safe refuge.

⁷Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion!
When the LORD restores His captive people,
Then Jacob will rejoice, Israel will be glad. [Rom 11:25–27]

Psalm 15

Description of a Citizen of Zion.

A Psalm of David.

¹O LORD, who may lodge [as a guest] in Your tent?
Who may dwell [continually] on Your holy hill?

²He who walks with integrity *and* strength of character, and
works righteousness, And speaks *and* holds truth in his
heart.

³He does not slander with his tongue,
Nor does evil to his neighbor,
Nor takes up a reproach against his friend;

⁴In his eyes an evil person is despised,
But he honors those who fear the LORD [and obediently
worship Him with awe-inspired reverence and submissive
wonder].

He keeps his word even to his own disadvantage and does
not change it [for his own benefit];

⁵He does not put out his money at interest [to a fellow
Israelite],
And does not take a bribe against the innocent.

He who does these things will never be shaken. [Ex 22:25, 26]

Psalm 16

The LORD, the Psalmist's Portion in Life and Deliverer in Death.

A Mikhtam of David [probably intended to record memorable thoughts].

¹KEEP *AND* protect me, O God, for in You I have placed my trust *and* found refuge.

²I said to the LORD, "You are my Lord;
I have no good besides You."

³As for the saints (godly people) who are in the land,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Thinking Excellent Thoughts

We can never become excellent in our actions if we don't first make a commitment to become excellent in our thoughts. The Bible teaches us to think on things that are filled with virtue and excellence, things such as believing the best at all times, things that are honorable, just, pure, lovely, and lovable (see Phil. 4:8).

What kinds of thoughts do you entertain? When you recognize that your thoughts are not good, do you take action to cast them out of your mind or do you lazily let them remain? It is impossible to become one of "the majestic and the noble and the excellent ones" without first developing an excellent mind (Ps. 16:3). God has called each of us to be excellent in all that we do and to enjoy an excellent life. If you haven't done so yet, start today thinking in that direction.

They are the majestic *and* the noble *and* the excellent ones in whom is all my delight.

⁴The sorrows [pain and suffering] of those who have chosen another *god* will be multiplied [because of their idolatry]; I will not pour out their drink offerings of blood,
Nor will I take their names upon my lips.

⁵The LORD is the portion of my inheritance, my cup [He is all

I need]; You support my lot.

⁶The [boundary] lines [of the land] have fallen for me in pleasant places;
Indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me.

⁷I will bless the LORD who has counseled me; Indeed, my heart (mind) instructs me in the night.

⁸I have set the LORD continually before me;
Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

⁹Therefore my heart is glad and my glory [my innermost self] rejoices;
My body too will dwell [confidently] in safety,

¹⁰For You will not abandon me to Sheol (the nether world, the place of the dead),
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. [Acts 13:35]

¹¹You will show me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
In Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore. [Acts 2:25–28, 31]

Psalm 17

Prayer for Protection against Oppressors.

A Prayer of David.

¹HEAR THE just (righteous) cause, O LORD; listen to my loud [piercing] cry; Listen to my prayer, that comes from guileless lips.

²Let my verdict of vindication come from Your presence;

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that You
will show me the path of life;
in Your presence is fullness of
joy; at Your right hand there
are pleasures forevermore.*

• adapted from Psalm 16:11

Speak God's Word

*I intend that my mouth will
not transgress and that I will
not sin with my words.*

| *adapted from* PSALM 17:3 |

May Your eyes look with equity *and* behold things that are just.

³You have tried my heart;
You have visited me in the night;
You have tested me and You find nothing [evil in me];
I intend that my mouth will not transgress.

⁴Concerning the deeds of men, by the word of Your lips
I have kept away from the paths of the violent.

⁵My steps have held closely to Your paths;
My feet have not staggered.

⁶I have called upon You, for You, O God, will answer me;
Incline Your ear to me, hear my speech.

⁷Wondrously show Your [marvelous and amazing]
lovingkindness,
O Savior of those who take refuge at Your right hand
From those who rise up *against them*.

- ⁸Keep me [in Your affectionate care, protect me] as the apple
of Your eye;
Hide me in the [protective] shadow of Your wings
- ⁹From the wicked who despoil *and* deal violently with me,
My deadly enemies who surround me.
- ¹⁰They have closed their unfeeling *heart* [to kindness and
compassion];
With their mouths they speak proudly *and* make
presumptuous claims.
- ¹¹They track us down *and* have now surrounded us in our
steps;
They set their eyes to force us to the ground,
- ¹²He is like a lion eager to tear [his prey],
And like a young lion lurking in hiding places.
- ¹³Arise, O LORD, confront him, cast him down; Save my soul
from the wicked with Your sword,
- ¹⁴From men with Your hand, O LORD,
From men of the world [these moths of the night] whose
portion [of enjoyment] is in this life—idle and vain, And
whose belly You fill with Your treasure;
They are satisfied with children,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Filling the God-Shaped Hole

There is a God-shaped hole inside every one of us, and even if we had all the money in the world, nothing we bought could fill it. The only thing that is able to satisfy that craving is God Himself. Seek God as your first and most vital necessity in life. Put Him first in your time, thoughts, conversation, and actions. Love Him with all your heart and talk to Him throughout the day about everything that takes place in your life.

David prayed, "As for me, I shall see Your face in righteousness; I will be [fully] satisfied when I awake [to find myself] seeing Your likeness" (Ps. 17:15). As you include God in all that you do, you will develop an intimacy with Him that will satisfy your soul like nothing else in the world can do.

And they leave what they have left [of wealth] to their children.

¹⁵As for me, I shall see Your face in righteousness;
I will be [fully] satisfied when I awake [to find myself]
seeing Your likeness.

Psalm 18

David Praises the LORD for Rescuing Him.

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David, the servant of the LORD, who spoke the words of this song to the LORD on the day when the LORD rescued him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. And he said: ¹“I LOVE You [fervently and devotedly], O LORD, my strength.”

²The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and the One who rescues me; My God, my rock *and* strength in whom I trust *and* take refuge;

My shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower—
my stronghold. [Heb 2:13]

³I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised; And I am saved from my enemies. [Rev 5:12]

⁴The cords of death surrounded me,
And the streams of ungodliness *and* torrents of destruction terrified me.

⁵The cords of Sheol (the nether world, the place of the dead) surrounded me;
The snares of death confronted me.

Speak God's Word

The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and the One who rescues me; my God, my rock and strength in whom I trust and take refuge; my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower—my stronghold. I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; and I am saved from my enemies.

| *adapted from* PSALM 18:2–3 |

⁶In my distress [when I seemed surrounded] I called upon the LORD

And cried to my God for help;

He heard my voice from His temple,

And my cry for help came before Him, into His *very* ears.

⁷Then the earth shook and quaked,

The foundations of the mountains trembled;

They were shaken because He was indignant *and* angry.

⁸Smoke went up from His nostrils,

And fire from His mouth devoured;
Coals were kindled by it.

⁹He bowed the heavens also and came down;
And thick darkness was under His feet.

¹⁰And He rode upon a cherub (storm) and flew;
And He sped on the wings of the wind.

¹¹He made darkness His hiding place (covering); His pavilion
(canopy) around Him,
The darkness of the waters, the thick clouds of the skies.

¹²Out of the brightness before Him passed His thick clouds,
Hailstones and coals of fire.

¹³The LORD also thundered in the heavens,
And the Most High uttered His voice,
Hailstones and coals of fire.

¹⁴He sent out His arrows and scattered them;
And *He sent* an abundance of lightning flashes and
confused *and* routed them [in defeat].

¹⁵Then the stream beds of the waters appeared,
And the foundations of the world were laid bare
At Your rebuke, O LORD,
At the blast of the breath of Your nostrils.

¹⁶He reached from on high, He took me;
He drew me out of many waters.

¹⁷He rescued me from my strong enemy,
And from those who hated me, for they were too strong for
me.

¹⁸They confronted me in the day of my disaster,

But the LORD was my support.

¹⁹He brought me out into a broad place;
He rescued me because He was pleased with me *and*
delighted in me.

²⁰The LORD dealt with me according to my righteousness
(moral character, spiritual integrity); According to the
cleanness of my hands He has rewarded me.

²¹For I have kept the ways of the LORD,
And have not wickedly departed from my God.

²²For all His ordinances were before me,
And I did not put away His statutes from me.

²³I was blameless before Him,
And I kept myself free from my sin.

²⁴Therefore the LORD has rewarded me according to my
righteousness (moral character, spiritual integrity),
According to the cleanness of my hands in His sight.

²⁵With the kind (merciful, faithful, loyal) You show Yourself
kind, With the blameless You show Yourself blameless,

²⁶With the pure You show Yourself pure,
And with the crooked You show Yourself astute.

²⁷For You save an afflicted *and* humble people,
But bring down those [arrogant fools] with haughty eyes.

²⁸For You cause my lamp to be lighted *and* to shine;
The LORD my God illumines my darkness.

²⁹For by You I can crush a troop,
And by my God I can leap over a wall.

- ³⁰ As for God, His way is blameless.
The word of the LORD is tested [it is perfect, it is faultless];
He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him.
- ³¹ For who is God, but the LORD?
Or who is a rock, except our God,
- ³² The God who encircles me with strength
And makes my way blameless?
- ³³ He makes my feet like hinds' feet [able to stand firmly and
tread safely on paths of testing and trouble]; He sets me
[securely] upon my high places.
- ³⁴ He trains my hands for war,
So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.
- ³⁵ You have also given me the shield of Your salvation,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Enjoy All Kinds of People

I once read that most of our unhappiness comes from people not being what we want them to be or doing what we want them to do, and I couldn't agree more. That being the case, how can we enjoy the day if we don't learn to enjoy all different types of people, especially the ones we may find annoying?

I have found it helpful to realize that God has created all kinds of people with many different temperaments and personalities, and I truly believe He enjoys and loves them all. Because I cannot enjoy anyone whom I am judging critically, I often remind myself that I need to value people where they are, not where I would like them to be. Being merciful in my attitude toward others actually helps me enjoy my life, and it will do the same for you (see Ps. 18:25). I urge you to accept those who are different from you and learn to enjoy them as God does.

And Your right hand upholds *and* sustains me;
Your gentleness [Your gracious response when I pray]
makes me great.

³⁶You enlarge the path beneath me *and* make my steps secure,
So that my feet will not slip.

³⁷I pursued my enemies and overtook them;

- And I did not turn back until they were consumed.
- ³⁸I shattered them so that they were not able to rise;
They fell [wounded] under my feet.
- ³⁹For You have encircled me with strength for the battle;
You have subdued under me those who rose up against me.
- ⁴⁰You have also made my enemies turn their backs to me [in
defeat],
And I silenced *and* destroyed those who hated me.
- ⁴¹They cried for help, but there was no one to save them—
Even to the LORD [they cried], but He did not answer them.
- ⁴²Then I beat them fine as the dust before the wind;
I emptied them out as the dirt of the streets.
- ⁴³You have rescued me from the contentions of the people;
You have placed me as the head of the nations;
A people whom I have not known serve me.
- ⁴⁴As soon as they hear me, they respond *and* obey me;
Foreigners feign obedience to me.
- ⁴⁵Foreigners lose heart,
And come trembling out of their strongholds.
- ⁴⁶The LORD lives, blessed be my rock; And may the God of
my salvation be exalted,
- ⁴⁷The God who avenges me,
And subdues peoples (nations) under me.
- ⁴⁸He rescues me from my enemies;
Yes, You lift me up above those who rise up against me;
You deliver me from the man of violence.

- ⁴⁹Therefore will I give thanks *and* praise You, O LORD, among
the nations, And sing praises to Your name. [Rom 15:9]
- ⁵⁰He gives great triumphs to His king,
And shows steadfast love *and* mercy to His anointed,
To David and his descendants forever. [2 Sam 22:2–51]

Psalm 19

The Works and the Word of God.

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

- ¹THE HEAVENS are telling of the glory of God;
And the expanse [of heaven] is declaring the work of His
hands. [Rom 1:20, 21]
- ²Day after day pours forth speech,
And night after night reveals knowledge.
- ³There is no speech, nor are there [spoken] words [from the
stars];
Their voice is not heard.
- ⁴Yet their voice [in quiet evidence] has gone out through all
the earth,
Their words to the end of the world.
In them *and* in the heavens He has made a tent for the sun,
[Rom 10:18]
- ⁵Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber;
It rejoices as a strong man to run his course.
- ⁶The sun's rising is from one end of the heavens,
And its circuit to the other end of them;

And there is nothing hidden from its heat.

⁷The law of the LORD is perfect (flawless), restoring *and* refreshing the soul; The statutes of the LORD are reliable *and* trustworthy, making wise the simple.

⁸The precepts of the LORD are right, bringing joy to the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

⁹The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the LORD are true, they are righteous altogether.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Let the words of my mouth
and the meditation of my
heart be acceptable and
pleasing in Your sight, O
Lord, my rock and my
Redeemer.*

• adapted from Psalm 19:14

- ¹⁰They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.
- ¹¹Moreover, by them Your servant is warned [reminded, illuminated, and instructed];
In keeping them there is great reward.
- ¹²Who can understand his errors *or* omissions? Acquit me of hidden (unconscious, unintended) *faults*.
- ¹³Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous (deliberate, willful) *sins*;
Let them not rule *and* have control over me.
Then I will be blameless (complete),
And I shall be acquitted of great transgression.
- ¹⁴Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
Be acceptable *and* pleasing in Your sight,
O LORD, my [firm, immovable] rock and my Redeemer.

Psalm 20

Prayer for Victory over Enemies.

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

- ¹MAY THE LORD answer you (David) in the day of trouble!
May the name of the God of Jacob set you *securely* on high
[and defend you in battle]!
- ²May He send you help from the sanctuary (His dwelling place)

And support *and* strengthen you from Zion!

³May He remember all your meal offerings
And accept your burnt offering.

Selah.

⁴May He grant you your heart's desire
And fulfill all your plans.

⁵We will sing joyously over your victory,
And in the name of our God we will set up our banners.
May the LORD fulfill all your petitions.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Attitude Determines Altitude

The Bible teaches us that our words have power and that we will have what we consistently say. Along with that, our thoughts affect our moods and attitudes. In other words, our attitude in life affects our altitude in life, meaning our attitude determines how far we can go in life—how far we can go in pursuing our dreams, relationships, business, intimate relationship with God, etc.

Your thoughts and my thoughts will determine the kind of lives we will have in the future. You don't have to think about and focus on whatever falls into your head. You can think things on purpose. Sometimes it is good to just sit down and have a think session. Are the "words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart... acceptable and pleasing" in the Lord's sight (Ps. 19:14)? After almost forty years of knowing these things, I still have to practice them daily. Be determined to maintain good thoughts.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Pray About Everything, Fear Nothing

Some years ago the Lord spoke these words to me: “Pray about everything and fear nothing.” During the next couple of weeks, He continued showing me different things about prayer versus fear. Many of them dealt with little areas in which fear would try to creep into my life and cause me problems. He showed me that in every case, no matter how great or important or how small or insignificant, the solution was to pray.

Sometimes we become afraid just by staring at our circumstances. The more we focus on the problem, the more fearful we become. Instead, we are to keep our eyes, thoughts, and our words focused on God. He is able to handle anything that we may ever have to face in this life.

God has promised to strengthen us, to harden us to difficulties, to hold us up and retain us “with the saving strength of His right hand” (Ps. 20:6). He also commands us to not be afraid. But remember, He is not commanding us to never feel fear, but rather to not let it control us.

The Lord is saying to you and me personally, “Do not fear, I will help you” (Isa. 41:13). But we will never experience the help of God until we place everything in His loving hands and live by faith rather than fear.

When you feel fear, don't back down or run away. Instead,

pray and move forward even though you feel afraid.

⁶Now I know that the LORD saves His anointed; He will
answer him from His holy heaven
With the saving strength of His right hand.

⁷Some *trust* in chariots and some in horses,
But we will remember *and* trust in the name of the LORD our
God.

⁸They have bowed down and fallen,
But we have risen and stood upright.

⁹O LORD, save [the king];
May the King answer us in the day we call.

! REMEMBER, when you
are in Christ, victory
belongs to you!

Psalm 21

Praise for Help.

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

¹O LORD the king will delight in Your strength,
And in Your salvation how greatly will he rejoice!

²You have given him his heart's desire,
And You have not withheld the request of his lips.

Selah.

- ³For You meet him with blessings of good things;
You set a crown of pure gold on his head.
- ⁴He asked life of You,
And You gave it to him,
Long life forever and evermore.
- ⁵His glory is great because of Your victory;
Splendor and majesty You bestow upon him.
- ⁶For You make him most blessed [and a blessing] forever;
You make him joyful with the joy of Your presence. [Gen
12:2]
- ⁷For the king [confidently] trusts in the LORD, And through
the lovingkindness (faithfulness, goodness) of the Most
High he will never be shaken.
- ⁸Your hand will reach out *and* defeat all your enemies;
Your right hand will reach those who hate you.
- ⁹You will make them as [if in] a blazing oven in the time of
your anger;
The LORD will swallow them up in His wrath,
And the fire will devour them.
- ¹⁰Their offspring You will destroy from the earth,
And their descendants from the sons of men.
- ¹¹For they planned evil against You;
They devised a [malevolent] plot
And they will not succeed.
- ¹²For You will make them turn their backs [in defeat];
You will aim Your bowstring [of divine justice] at their faces.

¹³Be exalted, LORD, in Your strength;
We will sing and praise Your power.

Psalm 22

A Cry of Anguish and a Song of Praise.

To the Chief Musician; set to [the tune of] Aijeleth Hashshahar (The Doe of the Dawn). A Psalm of David.

¹MYGOD, my God, why have You forsaken me?
Why are You so far from helping me, and from the words of
my groaning? [Matt 27:46]

²O my God, I call out by day, but You do not answer;
And by night, but I find no rest *nor* quiet.

³But You are holy,
O You who are enthroned in [the holy place where] the
praises of Israel [are offered].

⁴In You our fathers trusted [leaned on, relied on, and were
confident];
They trusted and You rescued them.

⁵They cried out to You and were delivered;
They trusted in You and were not disappointed *or* ashamed.

⁶But I am [treated as] a worm [insignificant and powerless]
and not a man; I am the scorn of men and despised by the
people. [Matt 27:39–44]

⁷All who see me laugh at me *and* mock me;
They [insultingly] open their lips, they shake their head,
saying, [Matt 27:43]

⁸“He trusted *and* committed himself to the LORD, let Him save him.

Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him.” [Matt 27:39, 43; Mark 15:29, 30; Luke 23:35]

⁹Yet You are He who pulled me out of the womb;
You made me trust when on my mother’s breasts.

¹⁰I was cast upon You from birth;
From my mother’s womb You have been my God.

¹¹Do not be far from me, for trouble is near;
And there is no one to help.

¹²Many [enemies like] bulls have surrounded me;
Strong *bulls* of Bashan have encircled me. [Ezek 39:18;
Amos 4:1]

¹³They open wide their mouths against me,
Like a ravening and a roaring lion.

¹⁴I am poured out like water,
And all my bones are out of joint.
My heart is like wax;
It is melted [by anguish] within me.

¹⁵My strength is dried up like a fragment of clay pottery;
And my [dry] tongue clings to my jaws;
And You have laid me in the dust of death. [John 19:28]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

What Do You Do with Disappointment?

Psalm 22:5 speaks of those who trusted in God “and were not disappointed or ashamed.” There is nothing unusual or wrong about initial feelings of disappointment, but it is what we do from that point forward that makes all the difference in the world. Absolutely nobody gets everything they want all the time, so we need to learn how to deal properly with disappointment.

Trusting God completely, and believing that His plan is infinitely better for you than your own, will prevent you from being disappointed with God. You might feel anger toward your situation, but don't ever be angry with God. When you get angry, you naturally want to lash out at someone, but it is unwise to make God your target. He is the only One Who can help you and truly comfort you; therefore, it is much better to run to Him in your time of pain than to run away from Him.

¹⁶For [a pack of] dogs have surrounded me;
A gang of evildoers has encircled me,
They pierced my hands and my feet. [Is 53:7; John 19:37]

¹⁷I can count all my bones;
They look, they stare at me. [Luke 23:27, 35]

¹⁸They divide my clothing among them
And cast lots for my garment. [John 19:23, 24]

¹⁹But You, O LORD, do not be far from me; O You my help,
come quickly to my assistance.

²⁰Rescue my life from the sword,
My only *life* from the paw of the dog (the executioner).

²¹Save me from the lion's mouth;
From the horns of the wild oxen You answer me.

²²I will tell of Your name to my countrymen;
In the midst of the congregation I will praise You. [John
20:17; Rom 8:29; Heb 2:12]

²³You who fear the LORD [with awe-inspired reverence], praise
Him!
All you descendants of Jacob, honor Him.
Fear Him [with submissive wonder], all you descendants of
Israel.

²⁴For He has not despised nor detested the suffering of the
afflicted;
Nor has He hidden His face from him;
But when he cried to Him for help, He listened.

²⁵My praise will be of You in the great assembly.
I will pay my vows [made in the time of trouble] before
those who [reverently] fear Him.

²⁶The afflicted will eat and be satisfied;
Those who [diligently] seek Him *and* require Him [as their
greatest need] will praise the LORD.
May your hearts live forever!

²⁷All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD,

- And all the families of the nations will bow down *and* worship before You,
- ²⁸For the kingship *and* the kingdom are the LORD's And He rules over the nations.
- ²⁹All the prosperous of the earth will eat and worship;
All those who go down to the dust (the dead) will bow before Him,
Even he who cannot keep his soul alive.
- ³⁰Posterity will serve Him;
They will tell of the Lord to the next generation.
- ³¹They will come and declare His righteousness
To a people yet to be born—that He has done it [and that it is finished]. [John 19:30]

Psalm 23

The LORD, the Psalmist's Shepherd.

A Psalm of David.

- ¹THE LORD is my Shepherd [to feed, to guide and to shield me], [Ezek 34:11–31]
I shall not want.
- ²He lets me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside the still *and* quiet waters. [Rev 7:17]
- ³He refreshes *and* restores my soul (life);
He leads me in the paths of righteousness
for His name's sake.
- ⁴Even though I walk through the [sunless] ^{*}valley of the

shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me;
Your rod [to protect] and Your staff [to guide], they comfort
and console me.

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my
enemies.

Speak God's Word

*Surely goodness and mercy
and unfailing love shall
follow me all the days of my
life, and I shall dwell forever,
throughout all my days, in
the house and in the presence
of the Lord.*

| *adapted from* PSALM 23:6 |

You have anointed *and* refreshed my head with oil;
My cup overflows.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy *and* unfailing love shall follow
me all the days of my life, And I shall dwell forever
[throughout all my days] in the house *and* in the presence
of the LORD.

Psalm 24

The King of Glory Entering Zion.

A Psalm of David.

¹ THE EARTH is the LORD's, and the fullness of it,
The world, and those who dwell in it. [1 Cor 10:26]

²For He has founded it upon the seas

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Looking Ahead

Your future has no room for your past, and I encourage you not to get stuck in a moment in your life that is over. God is a Redeemer and a Restorer. He promises to refresh and restore our souls, and He will—if we invite Him in and cooperate with His healing process in our lives.

When Psalm 23:2 says that He makes us lie down in green pastures and leads us beside still and quiet waters, it reminds me that God wants us to have peace. In order to do that, we need to stop running from the past and simply make a decision to be still, face the past, and receive healing from God. As long as we are running, something is chasing us, but if we confront it with God by our side, we can defeat it and enjoy the new life that is ours in Christ.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Fear No Evil

Wouldn't life be better if we didn't have to deal with the debilitating fear that Satan tries to put on us every day, fear that is intended to keep us from having the power, love, and sound mind that God wants us to have? If you have ever struggled as I once did with anxiety, you are familiar with the worry, stress, and the feeling of heaviness that comes with it.

Many people struggle with fear that has no obvious cause or source. They wonder why they are always afraid and can't change, no matter how hard they try. Others worry constantly about what *might* happen. "What if..." is their favorite phrase. The endless list of possible tragedies keeps these unfortunate people bound up and miserable.

We need to learn to resist fear when it rises against us. Second Timothy 1:7 tells us, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity *or* cowardice *or* fear, but [He has given us a spirit] of power and of love and of sound judgment *and* personal discipline [abilities that result in a calm, well-balanced mind and self-control]."

Sometimes we think of fear as an emotion, but we need to realize that fear is actually a spirit. In fact, I believe fear is one of Satan's favorite tools, and he particularly loves to torment Christians with it. At every possible opportunity, he will whisper in your ear, telling you that God has forgotten you and there is no hope.

Psalm 23:4 says, "Even though I walk through the [sunless] valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod [to protect] and Your staff [to guide], they comfort *and* console me." The psalmist David said he walked *through* the valley.

When we fear or become afraid, we can be sure that's not God at work, but one of the sly tricks of the enemy. If he can make us think that God is not going to help us, we'll start to lose the battle.

God is love. We can never say these words enough. Fear is a spirit that must be confronted head on—it will not leave on its own. We need to proclaim the Word of God and command fear to leave. So the next time fear knocks on your door, send faith to answer!

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord Jesus, there are times I feel unworthy of Your love, but You do not love me because I'm worthy; You love me because You are love. Thank You for Your reassurance that I am truly loved by You; therefore I have no reason to fear. Amen.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Trust Takes Time

How many times have you become frustrated and all upset needlessly over troublesome situations that come your way? How many years of your life have you spent saying, "Oh, I'm believing God. I'm trusting God," when, in reality, you were only worrying, talking negatively, and trying to figure out everything on your own? You may have thought you were trusting God because you were saying, "I trust God," but inside you were anxious and panicky. You were trying to learn to trust God, but you were not quite there yet. I know. I did that for many years myself.

Psalm 25:2 speaks of having unwavering trust and steadfast confidence in the Lord. We do not develop that kind of trust and confidence quickly; they are built up over a period of time. It usually takes some time to overcome an ingrained habit of worry, anxiety, or fear. That is why it is so important to "hang in there" with God. Don't quit and give up, because you gain experience and spiritual strength every round you face with courage; and each time you will find that you've become a little stronger than you were the last time. Sooner or later, if you remain steadfast and don't give up, you will be more than the devil can handle.

If you are in a time of trials, use that time to build your trust in God. Trust Him to deliver you out of the snare or to bring you through the battle successfully.

And established it upon the streams *and* the rivers.

³Who may ascend onto the mountain of the LORD?
And who may stand in His holy place?

⁴He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
Who has not lifted up his soul to what is false,
Nor has sworn [oaths] deceitfully. [Matt 5:8]

⁵He shall receive a blessing from the LORD,
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

⁶This is the generation (description) of those who diligently
seek Him *and* require Him as their greatest need, Who seek
Your face, even [as did] Jacob. [Ps 42:1]

Selah.

⁷Lift up your heads, O gates,
And be lifted up, ancient doors,
That the King of glory may come in.

⁸Who is the King of glory?
The LORD strong and mighty,
The LORD mighty in battle.

⁹Lift up your heads, O gates,
And lift them up, ancient doors,
That the King of glory may come in.

¹⁰Who is [He then] this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts,
He is the King of glory [who rules over all creation with His
heavenly armies].

Selah.

Psalm 25

Prayer for Protection, Guidance and Pardon.

A Psalm of David.

¹TO YOU, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

²O my God, in You I [have unwavering] trust [and I rely on
You with steadfast confidence],

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Let me know Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths. Guide me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation. For You and only You I wait expectantly all the day long.

• *adapted from Psalm 25:4–5*

Do not let me be ashamed *or* my hope in You be
disappointed;

Do not let my enemies triumph over me.

³Indeed, none of those who [expectantly] wait for You will be
ashamed;

Those who turn away from what is right *and* deal
treacherously without cause will be ashamed (humiliated,
embarrassed).

- ⁴Let me know Your ways, O LORD;
Teach me Your paths.
- ⁵Guide me in Your truth and teach me,
For You are the God of my salvation;
For You [and only You] I wait [expectantly] all the day long.
- ⁶Remember, O LORD, Your [tender] compassion and Your
lovingkindnesses, For they have been from of old.
- ⁷Do not remember the sins of my youth or my
transgressions;
According to Your lovingkindness remember me,
For Your goodness' sake, O LORD.
- ⁸Good and upright is the LORD;
Therefore He instructs sinners in the way.
- ⁹He leads the humble in justice,
And He teaches the humble His way.
- ¹⁰All the paths of the LORD are lovingkindness *and* goodness
and truth *and* faithfulness To those who keep His
covenant and His testimonies.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*God, You lead the humble in
justice, and You teach the
humble Your way.*

• adapted from Psalm 25:9

- ¹¹For Your name's sake, O LORD,
Pardon my wickedness *and* my guilt, for they are great.
- ¹²Who is the man who fears the LORD [with awe-inspired
reverence and worships Him with submissive wonder]?
He will teach him [through His word] in the way he should
choose.
- ¹³His soul will dwell in prosperity *and* goodness,
And his descendants will inherit the land.
- ¹⁴The secret [of the wise counsel] of the LORD is for those
who fear Him, And He will let them know His covenant
and reveal to them [through His word] its [deep, inner]
meaning. [John 7:17; 15:15]
- ¹⁵My eyes are continually toward the LORD,
For He will bring my feet out of the net.
- ¹⁶Turn to me [LORD] and be gracious to me, For I am alone and
afflicted.
- ¹⁷The troubles of my heart are multiplied;

Bring me out of my distresses.

¹⁸Look upon my affliction and my trouble,
And forgive all my sins.

¹⁹Look upon my enemies, for they are many;
They hate me with cruel *and* violent hatred.

²⁰Guard my soul and rescue me;
Do not let me be ashamed *or* disappointed,
For I have taken refuge in You.

²¹Let integrity and uprightness protect me,
For I wait [expectantly] for You.

²²O God, redeem Israel,
Out of all his troubles.

Psalm 26

Protestation of Integrity and Prayer for Protection.

A Psalm of David.

¹VINDICATE ME, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity;
I have [relied on and] trusted [confidently] in the LORD
without wavering *and* I shall not slip.

²Examine me, O LORD, and try me;
Test my heart and my mind.

Speak God's Word

I walk in my integrity; I have trusted confidently in the Lord without wavering and I will not slip. I invite God to examine me and try me; test my heart and my mind. For His lovingkindness is before my eyes, and I walk faithfully in His truth.

| adapted from PSALM 26:1–3 |

- ³For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes,
And I have walked [faithfully] in Your truth.
- ⁴I do not sit with deceitful *or* unethical *or* worthless men,
Nor seek companionship with pretenders (self-righteous hypocrites).
- ⁵I hate the company of evildoers,
And will not sit with the wicked.
- ⁶I will wash my hands in innocence,
And I will go about Your altar, O LORD,
- ⁷That I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving
And declare all Your wonders.

⁸O LORD, I love the habitation of Your house And the place
where Your glory dwells.

⁹Do not sweep my soul away with sinners,

POWERPOINT

Integrity means being honest and doing the right thing in every situation. We cannot make other people have integrity, but each of us is responsible to God and to ourselves to have integrity in our own lives. When we see wrongdoing all around us, we need to avoid the temptation to say, “Everyone else is doing it, so what’s the problem?” Even if no one else in the world keeps their word or acts honorably, we need to keep our word and live with integrity because it is the right thing to do. We are to follow God, not the ways of the world.



Nor [sweep away] my life with men of bloodshed,
¹⁰In whose hands is a wicked scheme,

And whose right hand is full of bribes.

¹¹But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity;
Redeem me and be merciful *and* gracious to me.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

What Does Your Heart Say?

Have you ever said something and thought, Where did that come from? The truth is it came from somewhere inside of you. You had to think it at some point, or it wouldn't have come out. Proverbs 23:7 says, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he." Whatever is in our hearts or in our minds will ultimately come out of our mouths. We can find out the true condition of our hearts by listening to ourselves.

If you don't like what you are saying, ask God to examine you, and try you; to test your heart and your mind and to help you think as He thinks (see Ps. 26:2). And pray this prayer from Psalm 51:10: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right and steadfast spirit within me."

¹²My foot stands on a level place;
In the congregations I will bless the LORD.

Psalm 27

A Psalm of Fearless Trust in God.

A Psalm of David.

¹THE LORD is my light and my salvation—
Whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the refuge *and* fortress of my life—

Whom shall I dread?

²When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh,
My adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell.

³Though an army encamp against me,
My heart will not fear;

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, You are my light and my
salvation—whom shall I fear?
You are my refuge and the
fortress of my life—whom
shall I dread?*

• *adapted from Psalm 27:1*

Though war arise against me,
Even in this I am confident.

⁴One thing I have asked of the LORD, and that I will seek:
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD [in His
presence] all the days of my life, To gaze upon the beauty

[the delightful loveliness and majestic grandeur] of the
LORD

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Love Overcomes Rejection

The psalmist writes in Psalm 27:10 of an extremely painful type of rejection—being abandoned by a father and mother. Rejection of any kind, no matter who rejects us, can cause depression. To be rejected means to be thrown away as having no value or as being unwanted. We were created for acceptance, not rejection. The emotional pain of rejection is one of the deepest kinds of pain we can know, especially if the rejection comes from someone we love or expect to love us, such as parents or a spouse.

If you have been depressed, it might be due to a root of rejection in your life. Overcoming rejection is certainly not easy, but we can overcome it through the love of Jesus Christ.

In Ephesians 3:18, Paul prayed for the church that they would “be fully capable of comprehending with all the saints (God’s people) the width and length and height and depth of His love [fully experiencing that amazing, endless love].” He said this experience far surpasses mere knowledge.

Watch for all the ways that God shows His love for you, and it will overcome the rejection you may have experienced from other people. Every time God gives us favor, He is showing us that He loves us. There are many ways He shows His love for us all the time; we simply need to begin watching for them.

Having a deep revelation concerning God’s love for us will

help keep us from depression.

And to meditate in His temple. [Ps 16:11; 18:6; 65:4; Luke 2:37]

⁵For in the day of trouble He will hide me in His shelter;
In the secret place of His tent He will hide me;
He will lift me up on a rock.

⁶And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies
around me,
In His tent I will offer sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.

⁷Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud;
Be gracious *and* compassionate to me and answer me.

⁸*When You said*, “Seek My face [in prayer, require My presence as your greatest need],” my heart said to You,
“Your face, O LORD, I will seek [on the authority of Your word].”

⁹Do not hide Your face from me,
Do not turn Your servant away in anger;
You have been my help;
Do not abandon me nor leave me,
O God of my salvation!

¹⁰Although my father and my mother have abandoned me,
Yet the LORD will take me up [adopt me as His child]. [Ps 22:10]

¹¹Teach me Your way, O LORD,

And lead me on a level path
Because of my enemies [who lie in wait].

¹²Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries,
For false witnesses have come against me;
They breathe out violence.

Speak God's Word

*The Lord is my strength and
my impenetrable shield; my
heart trusts with unwavering
confidence in Him, and I am
helped; therefore my heart
greatly rejoices, and with my
song I shall thank Him and
praise Him.*

| adapted from PSALM 28:7 |

¹³ *I would have despaired* had I not believed that I would see
the goodness of the LORD
In the land of the living.

¹⁴ Wait for *and* confidently expect the LORD;
Be strong and let your heart take courage;
Yes, wait for *and* confidently expect the LORD.

Psalm 28

A Prayer for Help, and Praise for Its Answer.

A Psalm of David.

¹ TO YOU I call, O LORD,

My rock, do not be deaf to me,
For if You are silent to me,
I will become like those who go down to the pit (grave).

²Hear the voice of my supplication (specific requests,
humble entreaties) as I cry to You for help, As I lift up my
hands *and* heart toward Your innermost sanctuary (Holy
of Holies).

³Do not drag me away with the wicked
And with those who do evil,
Who speak peace with their neighbors,
While malice *and* mischief are in their hearts.

⁴Repay them according to their work and according to the
evil of their practices;
Repay them according to the deeds of their hands;
Repay them what they deserve. [2 Tim 4:14; Rev 18:6]

⁵Because they have no regard for the works of the LORD
Nor the deeds of His hands,
He will tear them down and not rebuild them.

⁶Blessed be the LORD,
Because He has heard the voice of my supplication.

⁷The LORD is my strength and my [impenetrable] shield; My
heart trusts [with unwavering confidence] in Him, and I am
helped;
Therefore my heart greatly rejoices,
And with my song I shall thank Him *and* praise Him.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Love Leads to Obedience

The more we love God, and the more we receive His love, the more we are able to obey Him promptly and reverently. We should realize that all God's commands will benefit our lives. When God tells us to not do something, He is never trying to take something away from us. Instead, He is protecting us as our "[impenetrable] shield" from something harmful (see Ps. 28:7).

Loving God means that we trust Him, and when we trust Him, we are able to trust His direction in our lives. If you are having difficulty doing something that you know God wants you to do, or not doing something you know He doesn't want you to do, remember that He loves you and is trying to help you—trust Him and obey.

⁸The LORD is their [unyielding] strength,
And He is the fortress of salvation to His anointed.

⁹Save Your people and bless Your inheritance;
Be their shepherd also, and carry them forever.

Psalm 29

The Voice of the LORD in the Storm.

A Psalm of David.

- ¹ ASCRIBE TO the LORD, O sons of the mighty,
Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
- ² Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name;
Worship the LORD in the beauty *and* majesty of His
holiness [as the creator and source of holiness].
- ³ The voice of the LORD is upon the waters; The God of glory
thunders;
The LORD is over many waters.
- ⁴ The voice of the LORD is powerful;
The voice of the LORD is full of majesty.
- ⁵ The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;
Yes, the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.
- ⁶ He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
And Sirion (Mount Hermon) like a young, wild ox.
- ⁷ The voice of the LORD rakes flames of fire (lightning).
- ⁸ The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;
The LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
- ⁹ The voice of the LORD makes the doe labor *and* give birth
And strips the forests bare;
And in His temple all are saying, "Glory!"
- ¹⁰ The LORD sat *as King* at the flood; Yes, the LORD sits as
King forever.
- ¹¹ The LORD will give [unyielding and impenetrable] strength
to His people; The LORD will bless His people with peace.

Psalm 30

Thanksgiving for Deliverance from Death.

A Psalm; a Song at the Dedication of the House (Temple).

A Psalm of David.

¹I WILL extol *and* praise You, O LORD, for You have lifted me up, And have not let my enemies rejoice over me.

²O LORD my God,

Speak God's Word

*God's anger is but for a
moment, His favor is for my
lifetime. Weeping may endure
for a night, but a shout of joy
comes in the morning.*

| adapted from PSALM 30:5 |

I cried to You for help, and You have healed me.

³O LORD, You have brought my life up from Sheol (the nether world, the place of the dead); You have kept me alive, so that I would not go down to the pit (grave).

⁴Sing to the LORD, O you His godly ones,
And give thanks at the mention of His holy *name*.

⁵For His anger is but for a moment,
His favor is for a lifetime.
Weeping may endure for a night,
But a shout of joy comes in the morning. [2 Cor 4:17]

⁶As for me, in my prosperity I said,
“I shall never be moved.”

⁷By Your favor *and* grace, O LORD, you have made my mountain stand strong; You hid Your face, and I was

horrified.

⁸I called to You, O LORD,

And to the Lord I made supplication (specific request).

⁹“What profit is there in my blood (death), if I go down to the pit (grave)?

Will the dust praise You? Will it declare Your faithfulness [to man]?

¹⁰“Hear, O LORD, be gracious *and* show favor to me; O LORD, be my helper.”

¹¹You have turned my mourning into dancing for me;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God's Favor Lasts a Lifetime

I have said many times that God does become angry with sin and injustice, but His nature and character are not those of an angry God.

Perhaps I can explain it this way: My father was an angry man, and he quickly punished people for every tiny infraction of his rules. Being around him made my mother, brother, and me fearful, nervous, and tense, feeling guilty and condemned for something all the time. Although we tried very hard to do what he wanted, it was impossible, because his rules were unending and changed frequently. We lived in an atmosphere of constantly awaiting punishment.

In contrast, my husband, Dave, is not an angry man. He can become angry if I do something he really does not like or if I speak to him disrespectfully, but his anger only lasts for a moment. Dave knows my personality is a bit feisty at times and that I am sorry when I behave badly, so he extends mercy to me and is always willing to forget the misdeed and return to peace.

Dealing with an angry person is very different from dealing with someone who can become angry but has no desire to stay that way. God's anger is only for a moment. His mercies are new every morning (see Lam. 3:23), and His favor lasts for a lifetime.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The Importance of Joy

Psalm 30:11 describes what our relationship with God should do for us. Are you glad? Do you have joy most of the time? Would you consider yourself a happy, joyful person in most circumstances?

At one point in my life, after being a Christian and a minister for many years, I had to answer these questions for myself, and I realized that I was mad and sad more than I was glad. I also knew that had to change.

I searched for the root of my lack of joy, and one thing I discovered was I did not truly understand the great value and importance of joy. Joy is to our lives like gasoline is to an engine. Without gasoline, the engine will not run. Without joy, I don't believe human beings run well either. Joy gives us actual physical energy; it provides the zeal and enthusiasm we need in our lives. According to Nehemiah 8:10, the joy of the Lord is our strength.

Without joy, everything is “down”—negative, dreary, flat, and tasteless. Our thoughts are negative; our attitudes are negative; our emotions are depressed; and even our heads, shoulders, and arms hang down. Jesus did not die to give us “down” lives. He is our glory and the lifter of our heads (see Ps. 3:3). He is full of joy (see John 17:13), and He wants us to be people of joy!

You have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,
¹²That my soul may sing praise to You and not be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever.

Psalm 31

A Psalm of Complaint and of Praise.

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

¹IN YOU, O LORD, I have placed my trust *and* taken refuge;
Let me never be ashamed;
In Your righteousness rescue me.

²Incline Your ear to me, deliver me quickly;
Be my rock of refuge,
And a strong fortress to save me.

³Yes, You are my rock and my fortress;
For Your name's sake You will lead me and guide me.

⁴You will draw me out of the net that they have secretly laid
for me,
For You are my strength *and* my stronghold.

⁵Into Your hand I commit my spirit;
You have redeemed me, O LORD, the God of truth *and*
faithfulness. [Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59]

**A Prayer To
Renew Your
Mind**



*Lord, You have turned my
mourning into dancing; You
have taken off my sackcloth
and clothed me with joy, that
my soul may sing praise to
You and not be silent. O Lord
my God, I will give thanks to
You forever.*

• *adapted from Psalm 30:11–12*

Speak God's Word

*I will rejoice and be glad in
Your steadfast love, because
You have seen my affliction;
You have taken note of my
life's distresses.*

| adapted from PSALM 31:7 |

⁶I hate those who pay regard to vain (empty, worthless) idols;
But I trust in the LORD [and rely on Him with unwavering confidence].

⁷I will rejoice and be glad in Your steadfast love,
Because You have seen my affliction;
You have taken note of my life's distresses,

⁸And You have not given me into the hand of the enemy;
You have set my feet in a broad place.

⁹Be gracious *and* compassionate to me, O LORD, for I am in trouble; My eye is clouded *and* weakened by grief, my soul and my body also.

¹⁰For my life is spent with sorrow
And my years with sighing;

My strength has failed because of my iniquity,

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*I trust confidently in You and
Your greatness, O Lord; I say,
“You are my God.” My times
are in Your hands.*

• *adapted from Psalm 31:14–15*

And even my body has wasted away.

¹¹Because of all my enemies I have become a reproach *and*
disgrace,

Especially to my neighbors,

And an object of dread to my acquaintances;

Those who see me on the street run from me.

¹²I am forgotten like a dead man, out of mind;

I am like a broken vessel.

¹³For I have heard the slander *and* whispering of many,

Terror is on every side;

While they schemed together against me,
They plotted to take away my life. [Jer 20:10]

¹⁴But as for me, I trust [confidently] in You *and* Your
greatness, O LORD; I said, “You are my God.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Waiting on God

When success does not come easily and we find ourselves frustrated and weary in our efforts, we need to wait for the Lord. Waiting for the Lord, as David describes in Psalm 31:24, simply means spending time with Him, being in His presence, meditating on His Word, worshiping Him, and keeping Him at the center of our lives. Waiting on God properly requires that we wait with an attitude of expectancy, believing that God is going to do something good for us.

When you wait on the Lord, you draw everything you need from Him. He is your refuge, your enabler; your joy, your peace, your righteousness, and your hope. He gives you everything you need to live in victory over any circumstance. Stay close to Him and receive the strength you need every day. Don't let anything separate you from the love of God found in Christ Jesus.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Receiving God's Gift of Grace

Jesus forgave all our sins when He died on the cross, and He paid the price for our guilt as well. When we acknowledge or admit our sin to God, telling Him everything, refusing to hide our sin, we are able to receive His gift of grace (see Ps. 32:5). Confession is good for the soul; it allows us to let go of heavy burdens caused by guilty secrets.

Feelings of guilt do not always go away instantly, but we can take God at His Word and say, "I am forgiven, and the guilt has been removed." Our feelings will eventually catch up with our decisions. We can live by the truth in God's Word and not according to the way that we feel.

- ¹⁵ My times are in Your hands;
Rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from those
who pursue *and* persecute me.
- ¹⁶ Make Your face shine upon Your servant;
Save me in Your lovingkindness.
- ¹⁷ Let me not be put to shame, O LORD, for I call on You; Let
the wicked (godless) be put to shame, let them be silent in
Sheol (the nether world, the place of the dead).
- ¹⁸ Let the lying lips be mute,
Which speak insolently *and* arrogantly against the

[consistently] righteous
With pride and contempt.

- ¹⁹How great is Your goodness,
Which You have stored up for those who [reverently] fear
You,
Which You have prepared for those who take refuge in You,
Before the sons of man!
- ²⁰In the secret place of Your presence You hide them from the
plots *and* conspiracies of man; You keep them secretly in
a shelter (pavilion) from the strife of tongues.
- ²¹Blessed be the LORD,
For He has shown His marvelous favor *and* lovingkindness
to me [when I was assailed] in a besieged city.
- ²²As for me, I said in my alarm,
“I am cut off from Your eyes.”
Nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications
(specific requests)
When I cried to You [for help].
- ²³O love the LORD, all you His godly ones!
The LORD preserves the faithful [those with moral and
spiritual integrity]
And fully repays the [self-righteousness of the] arrogant.
- ²⁴Be strong and let your hearts take courage,
All you who wait for *and* confidently expect the LORD.

Psalm 32

Blessedness of Forgiveness and of Trust in God.

A Psalm of David. A skillful song, or a didactic or reflective poem.

¹BLESSED [FORTUNATE, prosperous, favored by God] is he whose transgression is forgiven, And whose sin is covered.

²Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute wickedness, And in whose spirit there is no deceit. [Rom 4:7, 8]

³When I kept silent *about my sin*, my body wasted away
Through my groaning all the day long.

⁴For day and night Your hand [of displeasure] was heavy upon me;
My energy (vitality, strength) was drained away as with the burning heat of summer.

Selah.

⁵I acknowledged my sin to You,
And I did not hide my wickedness;
I said, "I will confess [all] my transgressions to the LORD";
And You forgave the guilt of my sin.

Selah.

⁶Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You [for forgiveness] in a time when You [are near and] may be found; Surely when the great waters [of trial and distressing times] overflow they will not reach [the spirit in] him.

⁷You are my hiding place; You, LORD, protect me from

trouble; You surround me with songs *and* shouts of deliverance.

Selah.

⁸I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you [who are willing to learn] with My eye
upon you.

⁹Do not be like the horse or like the mule which have no
understanding,
Whose trappings include bridle and rein to hold them in
check,
Otherwise they will not come near to you.

¹⁰Many are the sorrows of the wicked,
But he who trusts in *and* relies on the LORD shall be
surrounded with compassion *and* lovingkindness.

¹¹Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous [who actively
seek right standing with Him]; Shout for joy, all you
upright in heart.

Psalm 33

Praise to the Creator and Preserver.

¹REJOICE IN the LORD, you righteous ones;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The Holy Spirit Guides Us

Psalm 32:9 encourages us not to “be like the horse or like the mule.” These animals need a “bridle and rein to hold them in check” because they have “no understanding.” When we think about what this verse really means, it can help us in many ways.

A horse either follows the pull of the bridle, which controls the bit in its mouth, or it feels great pain. Our relationship with the Holy Spirit works in a similar way. He is our bridle and the bit in our mouths. He should be controlling the reins of our lives.

If we follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit, we will end up with a good life that is fruitful and enjoyable. But if we do not follow Him, we can end up in painful situations.

In the midst of life's storms, if we don't bridle our tongue, we may not reach the breakthrough God has for us or experience the fullness of His plan for our lives. But if we accept the leadership of the Holy Spirit, He will guide us in our thoughts, words, and all our actions.

Praise is becoming *and* appropriate for those who are upright [in heart—those with moral integrity and godly character].

- ²Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre;
Sing praises to Him with the harp of ten strings.
- ³Sing to Him a new song;
Play skillfully [on the strings] with a loud *and* joyful sound.
- ⁴For the word of the LORD is right;
And all His work is done in faithfulness.
- ⁵He loves righteousness and justice;
The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the LORD.
- ⁶By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, And all
their host by the breath of His mouth. [Gen 1:1–3; Job
38:4–11; Heb 11:3; 2 Pet 3:5]
- ⁷He gathers the waters of the sea together as in a wineskin;
He puts the deeps in storehouses.
- ⁸Let all the earth fear *and* worship the LORD; Let all the
inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.
- ⁹For He spoke, and it was done;
He commanded, and it stood fast.

POWERPOINT

According to Psalm 33:11, the thoughts of God's heart, meaning His will, stand forever. God wants to speak to us, to share His thoughts with us. But in order for that to happen we need to quiet our own minds so we can hear what He is revealing. Several years ago God showed me that my mind was too busy to hear anything He said. We live in a very fast-paced and noisy world these days, and it is important to separate ourselves from it and have times of being still and quiet, waiting on God.



A Prayer To

Renew Your Mind



Thank You, Lord, that Your eye is upon me because I fear You and worship You with awe-inspired reverence and obedience, and I hope confidently in Your compassion and lovingkindness.

• adapted from Psalm 33:18

- ¹⁰The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations;
He makes the thoughts *and* plans of the people ineffective.
- ¹¹The counsel of the LORD stands forever,
The thoughts *and* plans of His heart through all generations.
- ¹²Blessed [fortunate, prosperous, and favored by God] is the nation whose God is the LORD, The people whom He has chosen as His own inheritance. [Deut 32:8, 9]
- ¹³The LORD looks [down] from heaven; He sees all the sons of man;

- ¹⁴From His dwelling place He looks closely
Upon all the inhabitants of the earth—
- ¹⁵He who fashions the hearts of them all,
Who considers *and* understands all that they do.
- ¹⁶The king is not saved by the great size of his army;
A warrior is not rescued by his great strength.
- ¹⁷A horse is a false hope for victory;
Nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength.
- ¹⁸Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon those who fear Him
[and worship Him with awe-inspired reverence and
obedience], On those who hope [confidently] in His
compassion *and* lovingkindness,
- ¹⁹To rescue their lives from death
And keep them alive in famine.
- ²⁰We wait [expectantly] for the LORD;
He is our help and our shield.
- ²¹For in Him our heart rejoices,
Because we trust [lean on, rely on, and are confident] in His
holy name.
- ²²Let Your [steadfast] lovingkindness, O LORD, be upon us, In
proportion as we have hoped in You.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Start Saying “I Trust God”

In Psalm 34:4, the psalmist writes that God delivered him from all his fears. Fear is closely related to worry, dread, anxiety, and various other negative emotions. To win the battle of the mind, we must learn to handle fear and worry in a godly way.

I wonder how many times the words “I’m afraid...,” “I’m concerned that...,” or “I’m worried about...” go out into the atmosphere? Millions of people use these phrases perhaps millions of times throughout their lives. But what’s the purpose? These words are not effective, and they don’t help us in any way. Worry and fear don’t change our circumstances; they simply change us by moving our minds away from hope and faith.

Anxiety and fear immobilize us; when we sit and worry, we are not doing anything that can help or change our situation. Fear and worry steal our peace and joy and cause stress.

Whenever you find yourself saying, “I’m worried about...” or “I’m afraid that...,” replace those negative words with “I trust God.” When we say that we trust God, it releases His power to work in our lives. When you are in a battle with worry, instead of vocalizing it, study God’s Word and remember His faithfulness in past situations. God will deliver you from all your fears, as Psalm 34:4 says, and you can do your part to help reach that breakthrough. Move in the right direction by

eliminating “I’m worried” and “I’m afraid” from your vocabulary.

Psalm 34

The LORD, a Provider and the One Who Rescues Me.

A Psalm of David; when he pretended to be insane before Abimelech, who drove him out, and he went away.

- ¹I WILL bless the LORD at all times;
His praise shall continually be in my mouth.
- ²My soul makes its boast in the LORD;
The humble *and* downtrodden will hear it and rejoice.
- ³O magnify the LORD with me,
And let us lift up His name together.
- ⁴I sought the LORD [on the authority of His word], and He answered me, And delivered me from all my fears. [Ps 73:25; Matt 7:7]
- ⁵They looked to Him and were radiant;
Their faces will never blush in shame *or* confusion.
- ⁶This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him
And saved him from all his troubles.
- ⁷The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him
[with awe-inspired reverence and worship Him with obedience], And He rescues [each of] them. [2 Kin 6:8–23; Ps 18:1; 145:20]
- ⁸O taste and see that the LORD [our God] is good; How

blessed [fortunate, prosperous, and favored by God] is the man who takes refuge in Him. [1 Pet 2:2, 3]

⁹O [reverently] fear the LORD, you His saints (believers, holy ones);

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Submitting Our Mouths to God

When I first started in ministry, I knew that God had given me an ability to communicate because it was easy for me. Words are my tools. The Lord gave me the gift, and then He called me into the ministry to use that ability to work for Him. But my gift has also been my greatest problem at times. I struggled for a long time with the right use of my tongue.

Over the years, various people said things such as, “Hold your tongue,” “Do you always speak first and think later?” or “Must you sound so harsh?” Had I not ignored what people were saying to me, I would have realized that God was trying to tell me something important. But I continued in my own stubborn ways, and I know I wounded people with my words. I am sorry for that, and I am grateful that God has forgiven me.

I finally realized that if God was going to use my life, I needed to obey Him concerning the proper use of my words—not just when I was in the pulpit, but all the time. God’s Word says, “Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit” (Ps. 34:13).

I had a choice. I could continue to hurt people with my words or I could submit my mouth to God. Obviously, I wanted to be subject to the Lord, but it was still a battle.

Our words are expressions of our hearts, of what’s going on inside us. If we want to know who a person really is, all we

need to do is listen to their words. If we listen long enough, we learn a lot about them.

As I learned to listen to my own words, I began to learn a lot about myself. Some of the things I learned did not please me, but they also helped me realize that my words were not pleasing to God, and I wanted them to be. Once I confessed my failure to God, the victory came—not all at once and not perfectly; but God is patient, and He continues to work with us as long as we work with Him.

No matter how many problems you may have with the proper use of words, God wants to change you. It won't be easy, but you can win the battle. And the effort will be worth it.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord, put a watch over my mouth so I will not sin against You with my tongue. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*I ask, Lord, that You would
help me keep my tongue from
evil and my lips from
speaking deceit.*

• adapted from Psalm 34:13

For to those who fear Him there is no want.

¹⁰The young lions lack [food] and grow hungry,
But they who seek the LORD will not lack any good thing.

¹¹Come, you children, listen to me;
I will teach you to fear the LORD [with awe-inspired
reverence and worship Him with obedience].

¹²Who is the man who desires life
And loves many days, that he may see good?

¹³Keep your tongue from evil
And your lips from speaking deceit.

- ¹⁴ Turn away from evil and do good;
Seek peace and pursue it.
- ¹⁵ The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous [those with
moral courage and spiritual integrity]
And His ears are open to their cry.
- ¹⁶ The face of the LORD is against those who do evil,
To cut off the memory of them from the earth. [1 Pet 3:10–12]
- ¹⁷ When *the righteous* cry [for help], the LORD hears And
rescues them from all their distress *and* troubles.
- ¹⁸ The LORD is near to the heartbroken
And He saves those who are crushed in spirit (contrite in
heart, truly sorry for their sin).

Speak God's Word

*The eyes of the Lord are
toward the righteous and His
ears are open to my cry. When
I cry for help, the Lord hears
and rescues me from all my
distress and troubles.*

| *adapted from* PSALM 34:15, 17 |

POWERPOINT

Psalm 34:19 makes clear that “many hardships *and* perplexing circumstances” will confront people who are consistently righteous. When we are in Christ, we are righteous (see 2 Cor. 5:21), so we know we will face challenges, difficulties, and times when we won’t know what to do. We may have many specific reasons to become anxious, but if we focus on our righteousness instead of our worries, we will be victorious.



¹⁹Many hardships *and* perplexing circumstances confront the righteous, But the LORD rescues him from them all.

²⁰He keeps all his bones;
Not one of them is broken. [John 19:33, 36]

²¹Evil will cause the death of the wicked,

And those who hate the righteous will be held guilty *and*
will be condemned.

²²The LORD redeems the soul of His servants,
And none of those who take refuge in Him will be
condemned.

Psalm 35

Prayer for Rescue from Enemies.

A Psalm of David.

- ¹CONTEND, O LORD, with those who contend with me;
Fight against those who fight against me.
- ²Take hold of shield and buckler (small shield),
And stand up for my help.
- ³Draw also the spear and javelin to meet those who pursue
me.
Say to my soul, "I am your salvation."
- ⁴Let those be ashamed and dishonored who seek my life;

POWERPOINT

When you are having problems, don't fall into the trap of thinking you are being punished for something you have done wrong in your life. If there is something you need to learn from your situation, be open to learning it. But remember that God is merciful, He is good, and He *wants* your needs to be met. He *wants* you to have a good job, a decent place to live, transportation to get you where you need to go, good friends, and a great spiritual life. God *wants* you to be blessed in every area of your life—spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically, financially, and socially. In fact, when you do well in these areas, God “delights and takes pleasure” in it (see Ps. 35:27). Just be patient in your difficulties and God will come through for you.



Let those be turned back [in defeat] and humiliated who plot evil against me.

⁵Let them be [blown away] like chaff before the wind [worthless, without substance], With the angel of the LORD driving them on.

⁶Let their way be dark and slippery,
With the angel of the LORD pursuing *and* harassing them.

⁷For without cause they hid their net for me;
Without cause they dug a pit [of destruction] for my life.

⁸Let destruction come upon my enemy by surprise;
Let the net he hid for me catch him;
Into that very destruction let him fall.

⁹Then my soul shall rejoice in the LORD; It shall rejoice in His salvation.

¹⁰All my bones will say, "LORD, who is like You,
Who rescues the afflicted from him who is too strong for him [to resist alone],
And the afflicted and the needy from him who robs him?"

¹¹Malicious witnesses rise up;
They ask me of things that I do not know.

¹²They repay me evil for good,
To the sorrow of my soul.

- ¹³But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was
sackcloth (mourning garment);
I humbled my soul with fasting,
And I prayed with my head bowed on my chest.
- ¹⁴I behaved as if grieving for my friend or my brother;
I bowed down in mourning, as one who sorrows for his
mother.
- ¹⁵But in my stumbling they rejoiced and gathered together
[against me];
The slanderers whom I did not know gathered against me;
They slandered *and* reviled me without ceasing.
- ¹⁶Like godless jesters at a feast,
They gnashed at me with their teeth [in malice].
- ¹⁷LORD, how long will You look on [without action]?
Rescue my life from their destructions,
My only *life* from the young lions.
- ¹⁸I will give You thanks in the great congregation;
I will praise You among a mighty people.
- ¹⁹Do not let those who are wrongfully my enemies rejoice
over me;
Nor let those who hate me without cause wink their eye
[maliciously]. [John 15:24, 25]
- ²⁰For they do not speak peace,
But they devise deceitful words [half-truths and lies]
against those who are quiet in the land.
- ²¹They open their mouths wide against me;
They say, “Aha, aha, our eyes have seen it!”

- ²²You have seen this, O LORD; do not keep silent.
O Lord, do not be far from me.
- ²³Wake Yourself up, and arise to my right
And to my cause, my God and my Lord.
- ²⁴Judge me, O LORD my God, according to Your righteousness
and justice; And do not let them rejoice over me.
- ²⁵Do not let them say in their heart, “Aha, that is what we
wanted!”
Do not let them say, “We have swallowed him up *and*
destroyed him.”
- ²⁶Let those be ashamed and humiliated together who rejoice
at my distress;
Let those be clothed with shame and dishonor who magnify
themselves over me.
- ²⁷Let them shout for joy and rejoice, who favor my vindication
and want what is right for me; Let them say continually,
“Let the LORD be magnified, who delights *and* takes
pleasure in the prosperity of His servant.”
- ²⁸And my tongue shall declare Your righteousness (justice),
And Your praise all the day long.

Psalm 36

Wickedness of Men and Lovingkindness of God.

To the Chief Musician. *A Psalm* of David the servant of
the LORD.

- ¹TRANSGRESSION SPEAKS [like an oracle] to the wicked

(godless) [deep] within his heart; There is no fear (dread)
of God before his eyes. [Rom 3:18]

²For he flatters *and* deceives himself in his own eyes
Thinking that his sinfulness will not be discovered and
hated [by God].

³The words of his mouth are wicked and deceitful;
He has ceased to be wise *and* to do good.

⁴He plans wrongdoing on his bed;
He sets himself on a path that is not good;
He does not reject *or* despise evil.

⁵Your lovingkindness *and* graciousness, O LORD, extend to
the skies, Your faithfulness [reaches] to the clouds.

⁶Your righteousness is like the mountains of God,
Your judgments are like the great deep.
O LORD, You preserve man and beast.

⁷How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!
The children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your
wings.

⁸They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house;
And You allow them to drink from the river of Your delights.

⁹For with You is the fountain of life [the fountain of life-
giving water];
In Your light we see light. [John 4:10, 14]

¹⁰O continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You,
And Your righteousness (salvation) to the upright in heart.

¹¹Do not let the foot of the proud [person] overtake me,

And do not let the hand of the wicked drive me away.
¹²There those who [are perverse and] do evil have fallen;
They have been thrust down and cannot rise.

Psalm 37

Security of Those Who Trust in the LORD, and Insecurity of the Wicked.

A Psalm of David.

- ¹DO NOT worry because of evildoers,
Nor be envious toward wrongdoers;
²For they will wither quickly like the grass,
And fade like the green herb.
³Trust [rely on and have confidence] in the LORD and do
good; Dwell in the land and feed [securely] on His
faithfulness.
⁴Delight yourself in the LORD,
And He will give you the desires *and* petitions of your
heart.

**A Prayer To
Renew Your
Mind**



*Thank You, Lord, that as I
trust in You and do good, I
will dwell in the land and
feed on Your faithfulness. As I
delight myself in You, You
give me the desires and
petitions of my heart. I commit
my way to You. I trust in You
and believe You will do it.*

• *adapted from Psalm 37:3–5*

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Commit It to the Lord

God intervenes in the situations we face in life when we commit our ways to Him (see Ps. 37:5).

The more we try to take care of our own problems without asking God to help us, the more we will struggle. I was quite independent and found it difficult to humble myself and admit I needed help. However, when I finally submitted to God in these areas and found the joy of casting all my care on Him, I could not believe I had lived so long under such huge amounts of pressure.

Commit to the Lord your children, your marriage, your personal relationships, and especially anything you may be tempted to be concerned about. In order to succeed at being ourselves, we must continually be committing ourselves to God, giving to Him those things that appear to be holding us back. Only God really knows what needs to be accomplished, and He is the only One qualified to complete that work in us. The more we sincerely commit ourselves to Him, the greater the joy of letting go and trusting Him.

⁵Commit your way to the LORD;
Trust in Him also and He will do it.

⁶He will make your righteousness [your pursuit of right standing with God] like the light, And your judgment like

[the shining of] the noonday [sun].

⁷Be still before the LORD; wait patiently for Him *and* entrust yourself to Him; Do not fret (whine, agonize) because of him who prospers in his way,
Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes.

⁸Cease from anger and abandon wrath;
Do not fret; *it leads* only to evil.

⁹For those who do evil will be cut off,
But those who wait for the LORD, they will inherit the land.
[Is 57:13c]

¹⁰For yet a little while and the wicked one will be gone
[forever];
Though you look carefully where he used to be, he will not be [found]. [Heb 10:36, 37; Rev 21:7, 8]

¹¹But the humble will [at last] inherit the land
And will delight themselves in abundant prosperity *and* peace. [Ps 37:29; Matt 5:5]

¹²The wicked plots against the righteous
And gnashes at him with his teeth.

¹³The Lord laughs at him [the wicked one—the one who oppresses the righteous],
For He sees that his day [of defeat] is coming.

¹⁴The wicked have drawn the sword and bent their bow
To cast down the afflicted and the needy,
To slaughter those who are upright in conduct [those with personal integrity and godly character].

Speak God's Word

*I will cease from anger and
abandon wrath. I will not fret
or worry—it tends to only
makes things worse.*

| adapted from PSALM 37:8 |

- ¹⁵The sword [of the ungodly] will enter their own heart,
And their bow will be broken.
- ¹⁶Better is the little of the righteous [who seek the will of God]
Than the abundance (riches) of many wicked (godless). [1
Tim 6:6, 7]
- ¹⁷For the arms of the wicked will be broken,
But the LORD upholds *and* sustains the righteous [who seek
Him].
- ¹⁸The LORD knows the days of the blameless,
And their inheritance will continue forever.
- ¹⁹They will not be ashamed in the time of evil,
And in the days of famine they will have plenty *and* be
satisfied.
- ²⁰But the wicked (ungodly) will perish,
And the enemies of the LORD will be like the glory of the

pastures *and* like the fat of lambs [that is consumed in smoke], They vanish—like smoke they vanish away.

²¹The wicked borrows and does not pay back,
But the righteous is gracious *and* kind and gives.

²²For those blessed by God will [at last] inherit the land,
But those cursed by Him will be cut off. [Is 57:13c]

²³The steps of a [good and righteous] man are directed *and*
established by the LORD, And He delights in his way [and
blesses his path].

²⁴When he falls, he will not be hurled down,
Because the LORD is the One who holds his hand *and*
sustains him.

²⁵I have been young and now I am old,
Yet I have not seen the righteous (those in right standing
with God) abandoned
Or his descendants pleading for bread.

²⁶All day long he is gracious and lends,
And his descendants are a blessing.

²⁷Depart from evil and do good;
And you will dwell [securely in the land] forever.

²⁸For the LORD delights in justice
And does not abandon His saints (faithful ones);
They are preserved forever,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Orders Our Steps

If we are willing to follow God, He delights in leading us and in being involved in every area of our life. When God delights in us, He busies Himself with the steps we take (see Ps. 37:23). That is really amazing! God cares so much about us that He is concerned with everything that concerns us.

He guides us in many ways, but one of the things He guides us to do is to be merciful and deal graciously with others. He guides us to help others in any way that we can. When we follow God, we are guided away from any evil way, and He teaches us to do good. We overcome evil with good (see Rom. 12:21).

Instead of being angry with people who hurt us or treat us unfairly, we can be merciful to them and do good to them. And then God will be our Vindicator and reward us.

But the descendants of the wicked will [in time] be cut off.

²⁹The righteous will inherit the land
And live in it forever.

³⁰The mouth of the righteous proclaims wisdom,
And his tongue speaks justice *and* truth.

³¹The law of his God is in his heart;
Not one of his steps will slip.

- ³²The wicked lies in wait for the righteous
And seeks to kill him.
- ³³The LORD will not leave him in his hand
Or let him be condemned when he is judged.
- ³⁴Wait for *and* expect the LORD and keep His way, And He will
exalt you to inherit the land;
[In the end] when the wicked are cut off, you will see it.
- ³⁵I have seen a wicked, violent man [with great power]
Spreading *and* flaunting himself like a cedar in its native
soil,
- ³⁶Yet he passed away, and lo, he was no more;
I sought him, but he could not be found.
- ³⁷Mark the blameless man [who is spiritually complete], and
behold the upright [who walks in moral integrity]; There
is a [good] future for the man of peace [because a life of
honor blesses one's descendants].
- ³⁸As for transgressors, they will be completely destroyed;
The future of the wicked will be cut off.
- ³⁹But the salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; He is
their refuge *and* stronghold in the time of trouble.
- ⁴⁰The LORD helps them and rescues them;
He rescues them from the wicked and saves them,
Because they take refuge in Him.

Psalm 38

Prayer in Time of Discipline.

A Psalm of David; to bring to remembrance.

¹O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your wrath,
Nor discipline me in Your burning anger.

POWERPOINT

Like David, no one wants to be in dark places such as is described in Psalm 38. We all go through difficult times, but thankfully Jesus is the light of the world, and He will give us light in the dark places of our lives. We may not always know exactly what is going to happen in our situations, but we can always know that Jesus is our hope and He will help us. It is important that during our difficulties we keep a positive attitude. God is positive and He wants us to be the same way.



²For Your arrows have sunk into me *and* penetrate deeply,
And Your hand has pressed down on me *and* greatly
disciplined me.

³There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your

- indignation;
There is no health in my bones because of my sin.
- ⁴For my iniquities have gone over my head [like the waves of a flood];
As a heavy burden they weigh too much for me.
- ⁵My wounds are loathsome and foul
Because of my foolishness.
- ⁶I am bent over and greatly bowed down;
I go about mourning all day long.
- ⁷For my sides are filled with burning,
And there is no health in my flesh.
- ⁸I am numb and greatly bruised [deadly cold and completely worn out];
I groan because of the disquiet *and* moaning of my heart.
- ⁹Lord, all my desire is before You;
And my sighing is not hidden from You.
- ¹⁰My heart throbs violently, my strength fails me;
And as for the light of my eyes, even that has also gone from me.
- ¹¹My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague;
And my neighbors stand far away. [Luke 23:49]
- ¹²Those who seek my life lay snares *for me*,
And those who seek to injure me threaten mischievous things *and* destruction;
They devise treachery all the day long.
- ¹³But I, like a deaf man, do not hear;

I am like a mute man who does not open his mouth.

¹⁴Yes, I am like a man who does not hear,

In whose mouth are no arguments.

¹⁵For in You, O LORD, I hope;

You will answer, O Lord my God.

¹⁶For I pray, “May they not rejoice over me,

Who, when my foot slips, would boast against me.”

¹⁷For I am ready to fall;

My sorrow is continually before me.

¹⁸For I do confess my guilt *and* iniquity;

I am filled with anxiety because of my sin. [2 Cor 7:9, 10]

¹⁹But my [numerous] enemies are vigorous and strong,

And those who hate me without cause are many.

²⁰They repay evil for good, they attack *and* try to kill me,

Because I follow what is good.

²¹Do not abandon me, O LORD;

O my God, do not be far from me.

²²Make haste to help me,

O Lord, my Salvation.

Psalm 39

The Vanity of Life.

To the Chief Musician; for Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

¹I SAID, “I will guard my ways

That I may not sin with my tongue;

I will muzzle my mouth

While the wicked are in my presence.”

²I was mute and silent [before my enemies],
I refrained *even* from good,
And my distress grew worse.

³My heart was hot within me.
While I was musing the fire burned;
Then I spoke with my tongue:

⁴“LORD, let me know my [life’s] end
And [to appreciate] the extent of my days;
Let me know how frail I am [how transient is my stay here].

⁵“Behold, You have made my days as [short as] hand widths,
And my lifetime is as nothing in Your sight.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

How To Speak Right Words

The psalmist David prayed a lot about his words. He said, “I will guard my ways that I may not sin with my tongue; I will muzzle my mouth...” (Ps. 39:1). “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable and pleasing in Your sight, O LORD, my [firm, immovable] rock and my Redeemer” (Ps. 19:14). “Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips” (Ps. 141:3). We can see from these Scriptures that David was determined not to sin with his tongue. At the same time he relied on God for strength to follow through on his commitment.

One of the things we should ask God for each day is to help us speak right things. Our words are very important, and they should be used for God’s purposes. We should desire to be mouthpieces for God, speaking His Word faithfully.

Surely every man at his best is a mere breath [a wisp of smoke, a vapor that vanishes]! [Eccl 1:2]

Selah.

⁶“Surely every man walks around like a shadow [in a charade];

Surely they make an uproar for nothing;

Each one builds up *riches*, not knowing who will receive them. [Eccl 2:18, 19; 1 Cor 7:31; James 4:14]

- ⁷“And now, Lord, for what do I expectantly wait?
My hope [my confident expectation] is in You.
- ⁸“Save me from all my transgressions;
Do not make me the scorn *and* reproach of the [self-righteous, arrogant] fool.
- ⁹“I am mute, I do not open my mouth,
Because it is You who has done it.
- ¹⁰“Remove Your plague from me;
I am wasting away because of the conflict *and* opposition of Your hand.
- ¹¹“With rebukes You discipline man for sin;
You consume like a moth what is precious to him;
Surely every man is a mere breath [a wisp of smoke, a vapor that vanishes].
- Selah.*
- ¹²“Hear my prayer, O LORD, and listen to my cry; Do not be silent at my tears;
For I am Your temporary guest,
A sojourner like all my fathers.
- ¹³“O look away from me, that I may smile *and* again know joy
Before I depart and am no more.”

Psalm 40

God Sustains His Servant.

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

- ¹I WAITED patiently *and* expectantly for the LORD; And He

inclined to me and heard my cry.

²He brought me up out of a horrible pit [of tumult and of destruction], out of the miry clay, And He set my feet upon a rock, steadying my footsteps *and* establishing my path.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Lord, thank You that as I wait patiently and expectantly for You, You incline to me and hear my cry. When I am discouraged or depressed, I believe You will bring me up out of the horrible pit and set my feet upon a rock, steadying my footsteps and establishing my path.

• adapted from Psalm 40:1–2

³He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God;

Many will see and fear [with great reverence]
And will trust confidently in the LORD. [Ps 5:11]

⁴Blessed [fortunate, prosperous, and favored by God] is the man who makes the LORD his trust, And does not regard the proud nor those who lapse into lies.

⁵Many, O LORD my God, are the wonderful works which You have done, And Your thoughts toward us;
There is none to compare with You.
If I would declare and speak of *your wonders*,
They would be too many to count.

⁶Sacrifice and meal offering You do not desire, *nor* do You delight in them; You have opened my ears *and* given me the capacity to hear [and obey Your word];
Burnt offerings and sin offerings You do not require. [Mic 6:6–8]

⁷Then I said, “Behold, I come [to the throne];
In the scroll of the book it is written of me.

⁸“I delight to do Your will, O my God;
Your law is within my heart.” [Jer 31:33; Heb 10:5–9]

⁹I have proclaimed good news of righteousness [and the joy that comes from obedience to You] in the great assembly;
Behold, I will not restrain my lips [from proclaiming Your righteousness],
As You know, O LORD.

¹⁰I have not concealed Your righteousness within my heart;
I have proclaimed Your faithfulness and Your salvation.

I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth
from the great assembly. [Acts 20:20, 27]

- ¹¹Do not withhold Your compassion *and* tender mercy from
me, O LORD; Your lovingkindness and Your truth will
continually preserve me.
- ¹²For innumerable evils have encompassed me;
My sins have overtaken me, so that I am not able to see.
They are more numerous than the hairs of my head,
And my heart has failed me.
- ¹³Be pleased, O LORD, to save me;
O LORD, make haste to help me.
- ¹⁴Let those be ashamed and humiliated together
Who seek my life to destroy it;
Let those be turned back [in defeat] and dishonored
Who delight in my hurt.
- ¹⁵Let those be appalled *and* desolate because of their shame
Who say to me, “Aha, aha [rejoicing in my misfortune]!”
- ¹⁶Let all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You;
Let those who love Your salvation say continually,
“The LORD be magnified!”
- ¹⁷Even though I am afflicted and needy,
Still the Lord takes thought *and* is mindful of me.
You are my help and my rescuer.
O my God, do not delay. [Ps 70:1–5; 1 Pet 5:7]

Psalm 41

The Psalmist in Sickness Complains of Enemies and False Friends.

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

¹BLESSED [by God's grace and compassion] is he who considers the helpless;

The LORD will save him in the day of trouble.

²The LORD will protect him and keep him alive;

And he will be called blessed in the land;

You do not hand him over to the desire of his enemies.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Is with You Always

God has promised that He will never leave you nor forsake you (see Deut. 31:8). In the midst of sickness and the betrayal of a close friend, David said of the Lord, "You set me in Your presence forever" (Ps. 41:12). No matter what you are going through in life, you do not have to go through it alone. Every day with God is not going to be a perfect day without problems. But your worst day with Jesus will still be better than your best day without Him.

Say all throughout the day, "God is with me right now. Right now, God is with me. God is with me when I go to work. God is with me when I go to the marketplace. God is with me. He's not just with me when I go to church; God is with me all the time. He cares about everything I do."

³The LORD will sustain *and* strengthen him on his sickbed; In his illness, You will restore him to health.

⁴As for me, I said, "O LORD, be gracious to me; Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You."

⁵My enemies speak evil of me, *saying*,
"When will he die and his name perish?"

⁶And when one comes to see me, he speaks empty words,
While his heart gathers malicious gossip [against me];

When he goes away, he tells it [everywhere].

⁷All who hate me whisper together about me;
Against me they devise my hurt [imagining the worst for me], *saying*,

⁸“A wicked thing is poured out upon him *and* holds him;
And when he lies down, he will not rise up again.”

⁹Even my own close friend in whom I trusted,
Who ate my bread,
Has lifted up his heel against me [betraying me]. [John 13:18]

¹⁰But You, O LORD, be gracious to me and restore me [to health], So that I may repay them.

¹¹By this I know that You favor *and* delight in me,
Because my enemy does not shout in triumph over me.

¹²As for me, You uphold me in my integrity,
And You set me in Your presence forever.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



When my soul is in despair,

*when it has become restless
and disquieted within me, I
hope in You, God. I wait
expectantly for You, for I shall
yet praise You, the help of my
countenance and my God.*

• adapted from Psalm 42:11

- ¹³Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, From everlasting to everlasting [from this age to the next, and forever].
Amen and Amen (so be it).

BOOK TWO

Psalm 42

Thirsting for God in Trouble and Exile.

To the Chief Musician. A skillful song, *or* a didactic *or* reflective poem, of the sons of Korah.

- ¹AS THE deer pants [longingly] for the water brooks,
So my soul pants [longingly] for You, O God.
- ²My soul (my life, my inner self) thirsts for God, for the living God.
When will I come and see the face of God? [Ps 63:1, 2; John 7:37; 1 Thess 1:9, 10]
- ³My tears have been my food day and night,
While they say to me all day long, “Where is your God?”

⁴These things I [vividly] remember as I pour out my soul;
How I used to go along before the great crowd of people
and lead them in procession to the house of God [like a
choirmaster before his singers, timing the steps to the
music and the chant of the song], With the voice of joy
and thanksgiving, a great crowd keeping a festival.

⁵Why are you in despair, O my soul?
And why have you become restless *and* disturbed within
me?
Hope in God *and* wait expectantly for Him, for I shall again
praise Him
For the help of His presence.

⁶O my God, my soul is in despair within me [the burden more
than I can bear];
Therefore I will [fervently] remember You from the land of
the Jordan
And the peaks of [Mount] Hermon, from Mount Mizar.

⁷Deep calls to deep at the [thundering] sound of Your
waterfalls;
All Your breakers and Your waves have rolled over me.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Be Patient with Yourself

David said, “Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become restless *and* disturbed within me? Hope in God *and* wait expectantly for Him, for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence” (Ps. 42:5).

Discouragement destroys hope, and without hope we give up, so naturally the enemy always tries to discourage us. The Bible repeatedly tells us not to be discouraged or dismayed. God knows we will not attain victory if we remain discouraged, so God encourages us with His Word and His presence.

When discouragement or condemnation tries to overtake you, examine your thought life. What kind of thoughts have you been thinking? Do they sound something like this?

I'm not going to make it; this is too hard. I always fail, it has always been the same; nothing ever changes. I'm sure other people don't have this much trouble getting their minds renewed. I may as well give up. I'm tired of trying. I pray, but it seems as if God doesn't hear. He probably doesn't answer my prayers

because He is so disappointed in the way I act.

If this example represents your thoughts, then no wonder you get discouraged or feel condemned. Remember, you become what you think. Think discouraging thoughts, and you'll become discouraged. Think condemning thoughts, and you'll come under condemnation. Change your thinking and be set free!

Instead of thinking negatively, think like this:

Well, things are going a little slow; but, thank God, I'm making progress. I'm on the right path that will lead me to freedom. I had a rough day yesterday, I chose wrong thinking all day long, I made a mistake, but at least that is one day I won't have to repeat. This is a new day. I'm not going to give up. You love me, Lord. Your mercy is new every morning.

This is an example of how to effectively use your weapon of the Word to tear down strongholds. I recommend that you not only think right thoughts on purpose, but also go the extra mile and speak them aloud as your confession.

Remember, God is delivering you, little by little, so don't be discouraged and don't feel condemned if you make a mistake. Be patient with yourself!

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord Jesus, with Your help, I can make it. With Your help, I won't be discouraged and feel hopeless. With Your help, I can defeat every wrong thought that comes to my mind. Thank You for victory. Amen.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Put Your Hope in God

Does your inner man ever feel cast down? Sometimes mine does. So did David's. When he felt that way, David put his hope in God and waited expectantly for Him, praising Him as his help and his God (see Ps. 42:5).

To overcome his downcast feelings and emotions, he used songs and shouts of deliverance. That's why so many of his psalms are songs of praise to God to be sung in the midst of unsettling situations.

David knew that when he got down, his countenance went down with him. That is why he talked to himself, his soul (mind, will, and emotions), and encouraged and strengthened himself in the Lord (see 1 Sam. 30:6).

When we find ourselves in that same depressed state, we should wait expectantly for the Lord, praise Him Who is our help and our God, and encourage and strengthen ourselves in Him. When you feel discouraged, remember a victory you experienced in the past, and expect another one.

We who are righteous—in right standing with God—by believing in Jesus Christ, we who take refuge and put our trust in the Lord can sing and shout for joy! The Lord makes a covering over us and defends us. He fights our battles for us when we praise Him (see 2 Chr. 20:17, 20–21)!

You and I must realize and remember that depression is not part of our inheritance in Jesus Christ. Joy is God's will for His children.

⁸Yet the LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, And in the night His song will be with me,
A prayer to the God of my life.

⁹I will say to God my rock, "Why have You forgotten me?
Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?"

¹⁰As a crushing of my bones [with a sword], my adversaries taunt me,
While they say continually to me, "Where is your God?"

¹¹Why are you in despair, O my soul?
Why have you become restless *and* disquieted within me?
Hope in God *and* wait expectantly for Him, for I shall yet praise Him,
The help of my countenance and my God.

Psalm 43

Prayer for Rescue.

¹JUDGE *AND* vindicate me, O God; plead my case against an ungodly nation.

O rescue me from the deceitful and unjust man!

²For You are the God of my strength [my stronghold—in whom I take refuge]; why have You rejected me?

Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

³O send out Your light and Your truth, let them lead me;

Let them bring me to Your holy hill

And to Your dwelling places.

⁴Then I will go to the altar of God,

To God, my exceeding joy;

POWERPOINT

Discouragement destroys hope and disturbs our souls (see Ps.

43:5), so naturally the devil always tries to discourage us.

The Bible repeatedly tells us not to be discouraged or dismayed, to not be in despair or restless or disturbed, but to hope in God. God knows that we will not come through to victory if we remain discouraged, so He always encourages us to come to Him, our “exceeding joy,” and praise Him as we wait expectantly for Him (see Ps. 43:4).



With the lyre I will praise You, O God, my God!

⁵Why are you in despair, O my soul?

And why are you restless *and* disturbed within me?

Hope in God *and* wait expectantly for Him, for I shall again

praise Him,
The help of my [sad] countenance and my God.

Psalm 44

Former Times of Help and Present Troubles.

To the Chief Musician. *A Psalm* of the sons of Korah. A skillful song, *or* a didactic *or* reflective poem.

- ¹WE HAVE heard with our ears, O God,
Our fathers have told us
The work You did in their days,
In the days of old.
- ²You drove out the [pagan] nations with Your own hand;
Then you planted *and* established them (Israel);
[It was by Your power that] You uprooted the [pagan]
peoples,
Then You spread them abroad.
- ³For our fathers did not possess the land [of Canaan] by
their own sword,
Nor did their own arms save them,
But Your right hand and Your arm and the light of Your
presence,
Because You favored *and* delighted in them.
- ⁴You are my King, O God;
Command victories *and* deliverance for Jacob (Israel).
- ⁵Through You we will gore our enemies [like a bull];
Through Your name we will trample down those who rise up

against us.

⁶For I will not trust in my bow,
Nor will my sword save me.

⁷But You have saved us from our enemies,
And You have put them to shame *and* humiliated those who
hate us.

⁸In God we have boasted all the day long,
And we will praise *and* give thanks to Your name forever.

Selah.

⁹But now You have rejected us and brought us to dishonor,
And You do not go out with our armies [to lead us to
victory].

¹⁰You make us turn back from the enemy,
And those who hate us have taken spoil for themselves.

¹¹You have made us like sheep to be eaten [as mutton]
And have scattered us [in exile] among the nations.

¹²You sell Your people cheaply,
And have not increased Your wealth by their sale.

¹³You have made us the reproach *and* taunt of our neighbors,
A scoffing and a derision to those around us.

¹⁴You make us a byword among the nations,
A laughingstock among the people.

¹⁵My dishonor is before me all day long,
And humiliation has covered my face,

¹⁶Because of the voice of the taunter and reviler,
Because of the presence of the enemy and the avenger.

¹⁷All this has come upon us, yet we have not forgotten You,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Write God's Word on Your Heart

In Psalm 45:1, the psalmist said his tongue was “like the pen of a skillful writer.” And in Proverbs 3:1–3, the Word states we should not forget God’s laws but “write them on the tablet of your heart.” We see from these two Scriptures that the heart is the tablet and the tongue is the pen.

When you confess God’s Word out loud with your tongue, you are effectively writing it on your heart. When you write it on your heart, it becomes more firmly established both in your heart and in the earth. God’s Word is forever “settled in heaven [standing firm and unchangeable]” (Ps. 119:89), and we establish it in the earth each time we speak it. When your mouth is filled with God’s Word, it is a mighty weapon against the enemy!

Nor have we been false to Your covenant [which You made with our fathers].

¹⁸Our heart has not turned back,

Nor have our steps wandered from Your path,

¹⁹Yet You have [distressingly] crushed us in the place of jackals

And covered us with [the deep darkness of] the shadow of death.

- ²⁰If we had forgotten the name of our God
Or stretched out our hands to a strange god,
²¹Would not God discover this?
For He knows the secrets of the heart.
²²But for Your sake we are killed all the day long;
We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. [Rom 8:35–39]
²³Awake! Why do You sleep, O Lord?
Awaken, do not reject us forever.
²⁴Why do You hide Your face
And forget our affliction and our oppression?
²⁵For our life has melted away into the dust;
Our body clings to the ground.
²⁶Rise up! Come be our help,
And ransom us for the sake of Your steadfast love.

Psalm 45

A Song Celebrating the King's Marriage.

To the Chief Musician; set to the [tune of] "Lilies." A Psalm of the sons of Korah. A skillful song, *or* a didactic *or* reflective poem. A Song of Love.

- ¹MYHEART overflows with a good theme;
I address my psalm to the King.
My tongue is like the pen of a skillful writer.
²You are fairer than the sons of men;
Graciousness is poured upon Your lips;

Therefore God has blessed You forever.

³Strap Your sword on *Your* thigh, O mighty One,
In Your splendor and Your majesty!

⁴And in Your majesty ride on triumphantly
For the cause of truth and humility and righteousness;
Let Your right hand guide You to awesome things.

⁵Your arrows are sharp;
The peoples (nations) fall under You;
Your arrows pierce the hearts of the King's enemies.

⁶Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;
The scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom.

⁷You have loved righteousness (virtue, morality, justice) and
hated wickedness;
Therefore God, your God, has anointed You
Above Your companions with the oil of jubilation. [Heb 1:8,
9]

⁸All Your garments are *fragrant with* myrrh, aloes *and*
cassia;
From ivory palaces stringed instruments have made You
glad.

⁹Kings' daughters are among Your noble ladies;
At Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir.

¹⁰Hear, O daughter, consider and incline your ear [to my
instruction]: Forget your people and your father's house;

¹¹Then the King will desire your beauty;
Because He is your Lord, bow down *and* honor Him.

¹²The daughter of Tyre will come with a gift;

! REMEMBER, don't wait
until the battle is finished to
declare your victory. Thank
God in advance!

The rich among the people will seek your favor.

¹³Glorious is the King's daughter within [the palace];
Her robe is interwoven with gold. [Rev 19:7, 8]

¹⁴She will be brought to the King in embroidered garments;
The virgins, her companions who follow her,
Will be brought to You.

¹⁵With gladness and rejoicing will they be led;
They will enter into the King's palace.

¹⁶In place of your fathers will be your sons;
You shall make princes in all the land.

¹⁷I will make Your name to be remembered in all generations;
Therefore the peoples will praise *and* give You thanks
forever and ever.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Adapting to Change

Everything changes except God, and letting all the changes in our lives upset us won't keep them from happening. People change, circumstances change, our bodies change, and our desires and passions change. There is one certainty in life: change!

Our thoughts are the first things we need to deal with during times of change, because thoughts directly affect our emotions and determine our behavior. The psalmist said, "Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change and though the mountains be shaken" (Ps. 46:2). When circumstances change, make the transition mentally and your emotions will be a lot easier to manage. If something changes that you are not ready for and did not choose, you will likely feel a variety of emotions about the change. By acting on God's Word and not merely reacting to the situation, you will be better able to manage your emotions instead of allowing them to control you.

Psalm 46

God the Refuge of His People.

To the Chief Musician. *A Psalm* of the sons of Korah, set to soprano voices. A Song.

¹GOD IS our refuge and strength [mighty and impenetrable],
A very present *and* well-proved help in trouble.

²Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change
And though the mountains be shaken *and* slip into the
heart of the seas,

³Though its waters roar and foam,
Though the mountains tremble at its roaring.

Selah.

⁴There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
The holy dwelling places of the Most High.

⁵God is in the midst of her [His city], she will not be moved;
God will help her when the morning dawns.

POWERPOINT

At times we need to be quiet and reverent before the Lord, but the Bible also instructs us to dance, to play musical instruments, and to outwardly express our worship to the Lord in other ways, as we read about in Psalm 47:1. Be expressive in your praise and worship—it brings a release in your life, it honors God, and it aids in defeating the devil.



⁶The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered *and* were moved;

He raised His voice, the earth melted.

⁷The LORD of hosts is with us;

The God of Jacob is our stronghold [our refuge, our high tower].

Selah.

⁸Come, behold the works of the LORD,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Be Still and Wait

When we encounter difficulties or need to know how to handle various situations, God will begin to give us instructions that will lead us to victory. Sometimes He will lead us to do specific things, but often He will tell us to simply stand still.

When God spoke to the people of Judah in the face of great opposition, He said, "Take your positions, stand and witness the salvation of the LORD" (2 Chr. 20:17, emphasis mine). In Psalm 46:10, God says, "Be still and know (recognize, understand) that I am God." During the battles we face in our lives, we would be wise to take some time and be still, waiting on the Lord to hear what He wants to say to us. In fact, we might even do absolutely nothing for a certain amount of time except say, "Lord, I am waiting on You. I worship You and wait for You to move against my enemies and bring forth my deliverance." However, the type of waiting that God desires is not at all passive. It is spiritually active! While we wait on God and are still in many ways, we should also be aggressively expecting Him to move on our behalf at any moment.

Who has wrought desolations *and* wonders in the earth.

⁹He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth;
He breaks the bow into pieces and snaps the spear in two;
He burns the chariots with fire.

¹⁰“Be still and know (recognize, understand) that I am God.
I will be exalted among the nations! I will be exalted in the
earth.”

¹¹The LORD of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our stronghold [our refuge, our high
tower].

Selah.

Psalm 47

God the King of the Earth.

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

¹O CLAP your hands, all you people;
Shout to God with the voice of triumph *and* songs of joy.

²For the LORD Most High is to be feared [and worshiped with
awe-inspired reverence and obedience]; He is a great King
over all the earth.

³He subdues peoples under us
And nations under our feet.

⁴He chooses our inheritance for us,
The glory *and* excellence of Jacob whom He loves. [1 Pet
1:4, 5]

Selah.

POWERPOINT

The psalmist wrote frequently about meditating on all the wonderful works of the Lord, and he specifically mentions thinking about God's lovingkindness in Psalm 48:9.

Never forget this: Your mind plays an important role in your victory. It is the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God that brings victory. And a large part of the work that needs to be done is for us to line up our thinking with God and His Word.



⁵God has ascended amid shouting,
The LORD with the sound of a trumpet.

⁶Sing praises to God, sing praises;
Sing praises to our King, sing praises.

⁷For God is the King of all the earth;

Sing praises in a skillful psalm *and* with understanding.
⁸God reigns over the nations;
God sits on His holy throne.
⁹The princes of the people have gathered together as the
people of the God of Abraham, For the shields of the earth
belong to God;
He is highly exalted.

Psalm 48

The Beauty and Glory of Zion.

A Song; a Psalm of the sons of Korah.

¹GREAT IS the LORD, and greatly to be praised,
In the city of our God, His holy mountain.
²Fair *and* beautiful in elevation, the joy of all the earth,
Is Mount Zion [the City of David] in the far north,
The city of the great King. [Matt 5:35]
³God, in her palaces,
Has made Himself known as a stronghold.
⁴For, lo, the kings assembled themselves,
They [came and] passed by together.
⁵They saw it, then they were amazed;
They were stricken with terror, they fled in alarm.
⁶Panic seized them there,
And pain, as that of a woman in childbirth.
⁷With the east wind
You shattered the ships of Tarshish.

⁸As we have heard, so have we seen
In the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God:
God will establish her forever.

Selah.

⁹We have thought of Your lovingkindness, O God,
In the midst of Your temple.

¹⁰As is Your name, O God,
So is Your praise to the ends of the earth;
Your right hand is full of righteousness (rightness, justice).

¹¹Let Mount Zion be glad,
Let the daughters of Judah rejoice
Because of Your [righteous] judgments.

¹²Walk about Zion, go all around her;
Count her towers,

¹³Consider her ramparts,
Go through her palaces,
That you may tell the next generation [about her glory].

¹⁴For this is God,
Our God forever and ever;
He will be our guide even until death.

Psalm 49

The Folly of Trusting in Riches.

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

¹HEAR THIS, all peoples;
Listen carefully, all inhabitants of the world,

²Both low and high,
Rich and poor together:

³My mouth will speak wisdom,
And the meditation of my heart will be understanding.

⁴I will incline my ear *and* consent to a proverb;
On the lyre I will unfold my riddle.

⁵Why should I fear in the days of evil,
When the wickedness of those who would betray me
surrounds me [on every side],

⁶Even those who trust in *and* rely on their wealth
And boast of the abundance of their riches?

⁷None of them can by any means redeem [either himself or]
his brother,
Nor give to God a ransom for him—

⁸For the ransom of his soul is too costly,
And he should cease *trying* forever—

⁹So that he should live on eternally,
That he should never see the pit (grave) *and* undergo
decay.

¹⁰For he sees *that even* wise men die;
The fool and the stupid alike perish
And leave their wealth to others. [Eccl 2:12–16]

¹¹Their inward thought is that their houses will continue
forever,
And their dwelling places to all generations;
They have named their lands after their own names

[ignoring God].

¹²But man, with all his [self] honor *and* pomp, will not endure;
He is like the beasts that perish.

¹³This is the fate of those who are foolishly confident,
And of those after them who approve [and are influenced
by] their words.

Selah.

¹⁴Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol (the nether world,
the place of the dead);
Death will be their shepherd;
And the upright shall rule over them in the morning,
And their form *and* beauty shall be for Sheol to consume,
So that they have no dwelling [on earth].

¹⁵But God will redeem my life from the power of Sheol,
For He will receive me.

Selah.

¹⁶Be not afraid when [an ungodly] man becomes rich,
When the wealth *and* glory of his house are increased;

¹⁷For when he dies he will carry nothing away;
His glory will not descend after him.

¹⁸Though while he lives he counts himself happy *and*
prosperous—
And though people praise you when you do well for
yourself—

¹⁹He shall go to the generation of his fathers;
They shall never again see the light.

²⁰ A man [who is held] in honor,
Yet who lacks [spiritual] understanding *and* a teachable
heart, is like the beasts that perish.

Psalm 50

God the Judge of the Righteous and the Wicked.

A Psalm of Asaph

¹ THE MIGHTY One, God, the LORD, has spoken,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

How To Handle a Day of Trouble

We all face a “day of trouble” at times (Ps. 50:15). Sometimes we consider the trouble somewhat minor, and sometimes it is very serious. When a day of trouble comes, stress always comes with it. In handling or overcoming stress, the first key is to recognize or admit we are under it. The second key is to identify and recognize the stressors that affect us most and learn how to respond to them with the right action. Another important key to relieving stress is obedience—always being willing to do anything God wants us to do.

We will have stressful circumstances come into our lives, but we can be on top of the stress, not under it. There is a big difference between being under stress and being on top of a situation! Even though we will sometimes experience stressful times, if we are obedient to God’s Word and to His promptings, we can win the victory.

We all have days seemingly filled with trouble or encounter situations we don’t like. But, with the power of God, we can go through them in peace. The Holy Spirit leads and guides us and often prompts us to think or do things that will relieve stress quickly.

Do you believe God is leading you into a place of victory, not into a place of defeat? Of course He is! When you feel stressed, listen to what God is saying to you and obey the promptings

of the Holy Spirit, and you'll soon find yourself in a place of peace, strength, and triumph.

And summoned the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting [from east to west].

²Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God has shone forth.

³May our God come and not keep silent;
Fire devours before Him,
And around Him a mighty tempest rages.

⁴He summons the heavens above,
And the earth, to judge His people:

⁵“Gather My godly ones to Me,
Those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.”

⁶And the heavens declare His righteousness,
For God Himself is judge.

Selah.

⁷“Hear, O My people, and I will speak;
O Israel, I will testify against you:
I am God, your God.

⁸“I do not reprove you for your sacrifices;
Your burnt offerings are continually before Me.

⁹“I will accept no young bull from your house
Nor male goat from your folds.

¹⁰“For every beast of the forest is Mine,
And the cattle on a thousand hills.

¹¹“I know every bird of the mountains,
And everything that moves in the field is Mine.

¹²“If I were hungry, I would not tell you,
For the world and all it contains are Mine. [1 Cor 10:26]

¹³“Shall I eat the flesh of bulls
Or drink the blood of male goats?

¹⁴“Offer to God the sacrifice of thanksgiving
And pay your vows to the Most High;

¹⁵Call on Me in the day of trouble;

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Dealing with Sin

The heading under Psalm 51 reads: “A Psalm of David; when Nathan the prophet came to him after he had sinned with Bathsheba.” David cried out for mercy because he had sinned with Bathsheba, and when he learned she was pregnant, he ensured that her husband would be murdered in battle.

When David realized what he had done, he was deeply repentant. Psalm 51 is a record of the prayer He cried out to God. God forgave David, but David had given God’s enemies a great opportunity to blaspheme Him. We too should remember that our disobedience not only affects us, it also affects our witness to others.

Whenever we fail God, not only do we harm ourselves, we also bring dishonor to His name. Whenever we make a mistake, there are those who gleefully point their finger.

The evil one also whispers, “See how bad you are. God won’t forgive you.” Don’t listen to those words, because there is no sin you’ve committed that God won’t forgive. God wipes away the sin.

There's something else to learn from this: It's necessary to face the truth. God desires truth in the inner being (see Ps. 51:6). When you have sinned, what will you do about your sin? David wrote: "For I am conscious of my transgressions *and* I acknowledge them; my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned and done that which is evil in Your sight." (Ps. 51:3–4).

It's easy for us to deceive ourselves, but God has called us to be totally, completely, and scrupulously honest in our inner being. We can't look at what others may get away with or how they justify their behavior. We can't blame others, the devil, or circumstances.

When you fail, remind yourself that the greatest king of Israel cried out to God and said, "My sin is always before me" (v. 3). Those sins, failures, or shortcomings will always be there until you admit them and confess them to the Lord. Strive to live with truth in your inner being (v. 6). You—you and God—are the only ones who know what's in your heart. Only when you are honest with yourself and with God can you know the joy of living in integrity and in truth.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Holy God, please help me to desire truth in my inner being, to live in such a way that I'm as honest and as open with You as I can be. I know that the life You honor is the life You bless. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

I will rescue you, and you shall honor *and* glorify Me.”

¹⁶But to the wicked God says:

“What right have you to recite My statutes
Or to take My covenant on your lips?

¹⁷“For you hate instruction *and* discipline
And cast My words behind you [discarding them].

¹⁸“When you see a thief, you are pleased with him *and*
condone his behavior,
And you associate with adulterers.

¹⁹“You give your mouth to evil
And your tongue frames deceit.

²⁰“You sit and speak against your brother;
You slander your own mother’s son.

²¹“These things you have done and I kept silent;
You thought that I was just like you.
Now I will reprimand *and* denounce you and state *the case*
in order before your eyes.

²²“Now consider this, you who forget God,
Or I will tear you in pieces, and there will be no one to
rescue [you].

²³“He who offers a sacrifice of praise *and* thanksgiving
honors Me;
And to him who orders his way rightly [who follows the
way that I show him],
I shall show the salvation of God.”

Psalm 51

A Contrite Sinner's Prayer for Pardon.

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David; when Nathan
the prophet came to him after he had sinned with
Bathsheba.

- ¹HAVE MERCY on me, O God, according to Your
lovingkindness;
According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my
transgressions.
- ²Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness *and* guilt
And cleanse me from my sin.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

A Clean Heart

In Psalm 51:6, 10, David tells us that having a clean heart means having truth in our innermost being, who we truly are inside. It's all about paying attention to our thought life, because out of it comes our words, our emotions, our attitudes, and our motives.

Purity and cleanness of heart is not natural to us. It is something that must be worked into our heart by the Holy Spirit. In 1 John 3:3, we read that those whose hope is confidently placed in God purify themselves because it is God's will, just as He is pure.

There is a price to pay to have a pure and clean heart, but there is also a reward. We will be blessed; we will see God (see Matt. 5:8)! We don't have to be afraid to make the commitment that allows God to do a deep work in us. We may not always feel comfortable about the truths He will bring to us, but if we will take care of our part, holding to purity, integrity, moral courage, and godly character, God will take care of making sure that we are blessed. He is an expert at removing worthless things out of our hearts and lives while retaining the valuable.

Speak God's Word

*God makes me to hear joy
and gladness and be
satisfied. God hides His face
from my sins and blots out all
my iniquities.*

| adapted from PSALM 51:8-9 |

³For I am conscious of my transgressions *and* I acknowledge them;

My sin is always before me.

⁴Against You, You only, have I sinned
And done that which is evil in Your sight,
So that You are justified when You speak [Your sentence]
And faultless in Your judgment. [Rom 3:4]

⁵I was brought forth in [a state of] wickedness;
In sin my mother conceived me [and from my beginning I,
too, was sinful]. [John 3:6; Rom 5:12; Eph 2:3]

⁶Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being,
And in the hidden part [of my heart] You will make me know
wisdom.

⁷Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean;

Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

⁸Make me hear joy and gladness *and* be satisfied;
Let the bones which You have broken rejoice.

⁹Hide Your face from my sins
And blot out all my iniquities.

¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a right *and* steadfast spirit within me.

¹¹Do not cast me away from Your presence
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

¹²Restore to me the joy of Your salvation
And sustain me with a willing spirit.

¹³Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners shall be converted *and* return to You.

¹⁴Rescue me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my
salvation;
Then my tongue will sing joyfully of Your righteousness
and Your justice.

¹⁵O Lord, open my lips,
That my mouth may declare Your praise.

¹⁶For You do not delight in sacrifice, or else I would give it;
You are not pleased with burnt offering. [1 Sam 15:22]

¹⁷My [only] sacrifice [acceptable] to God is a broken spirit;
A broken and contrite heart [broken with sorrow for sin,
thoroughly penitent], such, O God, You will not despise.

¹⁸By Your favor do good to Zion;

May You rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.
¹⁹Then will You delight in the sacrifices of righteousness,
In burnt offering and whole burnt offering;
Then young bulls will be offered on Your altar.

Psalm 52

Futility of Boastful Wickedness.

To the Chief Musician. A skillful song, *or* a didactic *or* reflective poem. *A Psalm* of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, “David has come to the house of Ahimelech.”

¹WHYDO you boast of evil, O mighty man?
The lovingkindness of God *endures* all day long.

²Your tongue devises destruction,
Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.

³You love evil more than good,
And falsehood more than speaking what is right.

Selah.

⁴You love all words that devour,
O deceitful tongue.

⁵But God will break you down forever;
He will take you away and tear you away from your tent,
And uproot you from the land of the living.

Selah.

⁶The righteous will see it and fear,
And will [scoffingly] laugh, *saying*,

⁷“Look, [this is] the man who would not make God his strength [his stronghold and fortress], But trusted in the abundance of his riches,
Taking refuge in his wealth.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Relax While God Works

If you know you can't fix the problem you have, why not relax while God works on it? It sounds easy, but it took many years for me to be able to do this. I know from experience that the ability to relax and accept whatever happens in life depends on our willingness to trust God completely (see Rom. 15:13).

If things don't go your way, instead of getting upset, start believing that your way was not what you needed and that God has something better in mind for you. God will give you what is best for you, even if it isn't what you think you want! "Trust [confidently] in the lovingkindness of God forever and ever" (Ps. 52:8). The minute you recognize He is in control and you put your trust in Him, your soul and body relax, and you will be able to enjoy life.

⁸But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust [confidently] in the lovingkindness of God forever and ever.

⁹I will thank You forever, because You have done it, [You have rescued me and kept me safe].

I will wait on Your name, for it is good, in the presence of Your godly ones.

Psalm 53

Folly and Wickedness of Men.

To the Chief Musician; in a mournful strain. A skillful song, *or* didactic *or* reflective poem of David.

¹THE [empty-headed] fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.”

They are corrupt *and* evil, and have committed repulsive injustice;

There is no one who does good.

²God has looked down from heaven upon the children of men

To see if there is anyone who understands,

Who seeks after God [who requires Him, who longs for Him as essential to life].

³Every one of them has turned aside *and* fallen away;
Together they have become filthy *and* corrupt;

There is no one who does good, no, not even one. [Rom 3:10–12]

⁴Have workers of wickedness no knowledge *or* no understanding?

They eat up My people *as though* they ate bread

POWERPOINT

Praise and thanksgiving are two spiritual weapons available to us. They defeat the devil more quickly than any other battle plan, but they must be genuine and heartfelt, not just lip service or a method being tried to see if it works. Also, giving thanks and praise involves God's Word. We thank God and praise Him according to His Word and His goodness.



KEYS to a Victorious Life

Tell God How You Really Feel

We can see from the opening verses in Psalm 55 that David was not hesitant when it came to telling God exactly how he felt. But he also followed up by saying he trusted God to be faithful to keep His promises. Often David would even remind God of something He had promised in His Word.

I believe it was spiritually and even physically healthy for David to express to God how he really felt. It was a way of releasing his negative feelings so they could not harm his inner man while he was waiting for God's deliverance. Sometimes we need an outlet for the pain we feel in life, and simply taking time to tell God all about it could prove very helpful. He already knows, but telling Him can be a good release for you. After telling Him all about how you feel, always follow up by telling Him you trust Him to make all things right and ask for His help to live by His Word, not by your feelings.

And have not called upon God.

⁵There they were, in great terror *and* dread, where there had been no terror *or* dread; For God scattered the bones of him who besieged you;
You have put them to shame, because God has rejected them.

⁶Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion!
When God restores [the fortunes of] His people,
Let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad.

Psalm 54

Prayer for Defense against Enemies.

To the Chief Musician; with stringed instruments. A skillful song, *or* a didactic *or* reflective poem, of David, when the Ziphites went and told Saul, “David is hiding among us.”

¹SAVE ME, O God, by Your name;
And vindicate me by Your [wondrous] power.

²Hear my prayer, O God;
Listen to the words of my mouth.

³For strangers have risen against me
And violent men have sought my life;
They have not set God before them.

Selah.

⁴Behold, God is my helper *and* ally;
The Lord is the sustainer of my soul [my upholder].

⁵He will pay back the evil to my enemies;
In Your faithfulness destroy them.

⁶With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to You;
I will give thanks *and* praise Your name, O LORD, for it is good.

⁷For He has rescued me from every trouble,

And my eye has looked *with satisfaction* (triumph) on my enemies.

Psalm 55

Prayer for the Destruction of the Treacherous.

To the Chief Musician; with stringed instruments. A skillful song, *or* a didactic *or* reflective poem, of David.

¹LISTEN TO my prayer, O God,
And do not hide Yourself from my plea.

²Listen to me and answer me;
I am restless *and* distraught in my complaint and distracted

³Because of the voice of the enemy,
Because of the pressure of the wicked;
For they bring down trouble on me,
And in anger they persecute me.

⁴My heart is in anguish within me,
And the terrors of death have fallen upon me.

⁵Fear and trembling have come upon me;
Horror has overwhelmed me.

⁶And I say, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove!
I would fly away and be at rest.

⁷"I would wander far away,
I would lodge in the [peace of the] wilderness.

Selah.

⁸"I would hurry to my refuge [my tranquil shelter far away]
From the stormy wind *and* from the tempest."

- ⁹ Confuse [my enemies], O Lord, divide their tongues
[destroying their schemes], For I have seen violence and
strife in the city.
- ¹⁰ Day and night they go around her walls;
Wickedness and mischief are in her midst.
- ¹¹ Destruction is within her;
Oppression and deceit do not depart from her streets *and*
market places.
- ¹² For it is not an enemy who taunts me—
Then I could bear it;
Nor is it one who has hated me who insolently exalts himself
against me—
Then I could hide from him.
- ¹³ But it is you, a man my equal *and* my counsel,
My companion and my familiar friend;
- ¹⁴ We who had sweet fellowship together,
Who walked to the house of God in company.
- ¹⁵ Let death come deceitfully upon them;
Let them go down alive to Sheol (the nether world, the place
of the dead),
For evil [of every kind] is in their dwelling *and* in their
hearts, in their midst.
- ¹⁶ As for me, I shall call upon God,
And the LORD will save me.

A Prayer To

Renew Your Mind



*I believe, Lord, that You will
redeem my life in peace from
every battle that is against
me.*

• adapted from Psalm 55:18

¹⁷Evening and morning and at noon I will complain and
murmur,
And He will hear my voice.

¹⁸He has redeemed my life in peace from the battle that was
against me,
For there were many against me.

¹⁹God will hear and humble them,
Even He who sits enthroned from old—

Selah.

Because in them there has been no change [of heart],
And they do not fear God [at all].

²⁰He [my companion] has put out his hands against those
who were at peace with him;
He has broken his covenant [of friendship and loyalty].

- ²¹The words of his mouth were smoother than butter,
But his heart was hostile;
His words were softer than oil,
Yet they were drawn swords.
- ²²Cast your burden on the LORD [release it] and He will
sustain *and* uphold you; He will never allow the
righteous to be shaken (slip, fall, fail). [1 Pet 5:7]
- ²³But You, O God, will bring down the wicked to the pit of
destruction;
Men of blood and treachery will not live out half their days.
But I will [boldly and unwaveringly] trust in You.

Psalm 56

Supplication for Rescue and Grateful Trust in God.

To the Chief Musician; set to [the tune of] “Silent Dove
Among Those Far Away.” A Mikhtam of David. [A record
of memorable thoughts] when the Philistines seized him in
Gath.

- ¹BE GRACIOUS to me, O God, for man has trampled on me;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

When You Are Afraid

In Psalm 56:3, David said, “When I am afraid...” He accepted the fact that fear is a human emotion; we all experience fear to some degree. But he added, “I will put my trust and faith in You.” David lived boldly and courageously because he knew God was always with him. We can live this same way. We can choose to not live according to the fear we feel.

God taught me to use what I call the “power twins” to help me defeat the spirit of fear. They are “I pray” and “I say.” When I feel fear, I begin to pray and ask for God’s help, then I say, “I will not fear!” I encourage you to also use these power twins as soon as you feel fearful about anything, and you will be able to keep fear from controlling you. We can learn to manage the emotion of fear and not let it control us.

All day long the adversary oppresses *and* torments me.

²My enemies have trampled upon me all day long,
For they are many who fight proudly against me.

³When I am afraid,
I will put my trust *and* faith in You.

⁴In God, whose word I praise;
In God I have put my trust;
I shall not fear.
What can mere man do to me?

- ⁵ All day long they twist my words *and* say hurtful things;
All their thoughts are against me for evil.
- ⁶ They attack, they hide *and* lurk,
They watch my steps,
As they have [expectantly] waited *to take* my life.
- ⁷ Cast them out because of their wickedness.
In anger bring down the peoples, O God!
- ⁸ You have taken account of my wanderings;
Put my tears in Your bottle.
Are they not recorded in Your book?
- ⁹ Then my enemies will turn back in the day when I call;
This I know, that God is for me. [Rom 8:31]
- ¹⁰ In God, *whose* word I praise,
In the LORD, *whose* word I praise,
- ¹¹ In God have I put my trust *and* confident reliance; I will not
be afraid.
What can man do to me?
- ¹² Your vows are *binding* upon me, O God;
I will give thank offerings to You.
- ¹³ For You have rescued my soul from death,
Yes, and my feet from stumbling,
So that I may walk before God
In the light of life.

Psalm 57

Prayer for Rescue from Persecutors.

To the Chief Musician; set to [the tune of] “Do Not Destroy.” A Mikhtam of David. [A record of memorable thoughts of David] when he fled from Saul in the cave.

¹BE GRACIOUS to me, O God, be gracious *and* merciful to me,
For my soul finds shelter *and* safety in You,
And in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge *and* be confidently secure
Until destruction passes by.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*When I am afraid, I will put
my trust and faith in You,
God, whose word I praise. In
You I have put my trust; I
shall not fear. What can mere
man do to me?*

• adapted from Psalm 56:3–4

²I will cry to God Most High,
Who accomplishes *all things* on my behalf [for He
completes my purpose in His plan].

³He will send from heaven and save me;
He calls to account him who tramples me down.

Selah.

God will send out His lovingkindness and His truth.

⁴My life is among lions;
I must lie among those who breathe out fire—
The sons of men whose teeth are spears and arrows,
And their tongue a sharp sword.

⁵Be exalted above the heavens, O God;
Let Your glory *and* majesty be over all the earth.

⁶They set a net for my steps;
My very life was bowed down.
They dug a pit before me;
Into the midst of it they themselves have fallen.

Selah.

⁷My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast *and*
confident!

I will sing, yes, I will sing praises [to You]!

⁸Awake, my glory!
Awake, harp and lyre!
I will awaken the dawn.

⁹I will praise *and* give thanks to You, O Lord, among the
people;
I will sing praises to You among the nations.

¹⁰For Your faithfulness *and* lovingkindness are great,
reaching to the heavens, And Your truth to the clouds.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

A Steadfast Heart

To have a steadfast and confident heart as described in Psalm 57:7 means that our mind is made up and we are not going to change it. If we are going to experience any kind of victory and remain positive in our lives, we must be determined to hold fast to God and His Word. If we are going to see the fulfillment of God's will, walk in or follow the leading of the Spirit, or accomplish anything worthwhile in this life, we need to set our face like flint and not waver. And we must understand that the devil is not going to roll out the red carpet for us just because we decide to get saved and serve God. He will oppose us at every turn.

Too often we are looking for something easy. But it's important to be willing to do the will of God at all costs, to stay positive and be content, and to walk in the peace of God. His will won't just happen in our lives. We are partners with God, and we must do our part. Part of what we need to do is to continue to be steadfast of heart. A steadfast heart seeks His kingdom and His righteousness first, and then God pours on all He has to give to us (see Matt. 6:33).

If you want to see God's plan fulfilled in your life, press on with "holy determination."

¹¹Be exalted above the heavens, O God;

Let Your glory *and* majesty be over all the earth.

Psalm 58

Prayer for the Punishment of the Wicked.

To the Chief Musician; set to [the tune of] “Do Not Destroy.” A Mikhtam of David. [A record of memorable thoughts of David.]

¹DO YOU indeed speak righteousness, O gods (heavenly beings)?

Do you judge fairly, O sons of men? [Ps 82:1, 2]

²No, in your heart you devise wrongdoing;
On earth you deal out the violence of your hands.

³The wicked are estranged from the womb;
These go astray from birth, speaking lies [even twisted partial truths].

⁴Their poison is like the venom of a serpent;
They are like the deaf horned viper that stops up its ear,

⁵So that it does not listen to the voice of charmers,
Or of the skillful enchanter casting [cunning] spells.

⁶O God, break their teeth in their mouth;
Break out the fangs of the young lions, O LORD.

⁷Let them flow away like water that runs off;
When he aims his arrows, let them be as headless shafts.

⁸*Let them be* as a snail which melts away (secretes slime) as it goes along, Like the miscarriage of a woman which never sees the sun.

- ⁹Before your cooking pots can feel the *fire of* thorns [burning under them as fuel], He will sweep them away with a whirlwind, the green and the burning ones alike.
- ¹⁰The [unyieldingly] righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance [of God]; He will wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.
- ¹¹Men will say, “Surely there is a reward for the righteous; Surely there is a God who judges on the earth.”

Psalm 59

Prayer for Rescue from Enemies.

To the Chief Musician; set to [the tune of] “Do Not Destroy.” A Mikhtam of David, [a record of memorable thoughts] when Saul sent men to watch his house in order to kill him.

- ¹DELIVER ME from my enemies, O my God;
Set me *securely* on an inaccessibly high place away from those who rise up against me.
- ²Deliver me from those who practice wrongdoing,
And save me from bloodthirsty men.
- ³Look! They lie in wait for my life;
Fierce *and* powerful men [are uniting together to] launch an attack against me,
Not for my wrongdoing nor for any sin of mine, O LORD.
- ⁴They run and set themselves against me though there is no guilt in me;

Stir Yourself to meet *and* help me, and see [what they are doing]!

⁵You, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel,
Arise to punish all the nations;
Spare no one *and* do not be merciful to any who
treacherously plot evil.

Selah.

⁶They return at evening, they howl *and* snarl like dogs,
And go [prowling] around the city.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*O God my strength, I will
watch for You. For You are my
stronghold, my refuge, and my
protector. In Your
lovingkindness You will meet
me. You will let me look
triumphantly on my enemies.*

• adapted from Psalm 59:9–10

⁷Look how they belch out [insults] with their mouths;
Swords [of sarcasm, ridicule, slander, and lies] are in their
lips,
For *they say*, “Who hears us?”

⁸But You, O LORD, will laugh at them [in scorn];
You scoff at *and* deride all the nations.

⁹O [God] my strength, I will watch for You;
For God is my stronghold [my refuge, my protector, my high
tower].

¹⁰My God in His [steadfast] lovingkindness will meet me;
God will let me look *triumphantly* on my enemies [who lie in
wait for me].

¹¹Do not kill them, or my people will forget;
Scatter them *and* make them wander [endlessly] back and
forth by Your power, and bring them down, O Lord our
shield!

¹²For the sin of their mouths and the words of their lips,
Let them even be trapped in their pride,
And on account of the curses and lies which they tell.

¹³Destroy *them* in wrath, destroy *them* so that they may be no
more;
Let them know that God rules over Jacob (Israel)
To the ends of the earth.

Selah.

¹⁴They return at evening, they howl *and* snarl like dogs,
And go [prowling] around the city.

¹⁵They wander around for food [to devour]

And growl all night if they are not satisfied.

- ¹⁶But as for me, I will sing of Your mighty strength *and* power;
Yes, I will sing joyfully of Your lovingkindness in the morning;
For You have been my stronghold
And a refuge in the day of my distress.
- ¹⁷To You, O [God] my strength, I will sing praises;
For God is my stronghold [my refuge, my protector, my high tower], the God who shows me [steadfast] lovingkindness.

Psalm 60

Lament over Defeat in Battle, and Prayer for Help.

To the Chief Musician; set to [the tune of] “The Lily of the Testimony.” A Mikhtam of David [intended to record memorable thoughts and] to teach; when he struggled with the Arameans of Mesopotamia and the Arameans of Zobah, and when Joab returned and struck twelve thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt.

- ¹O GOD, You have rejected us *and* cast us off. You have broken [down our defenses and scattered] us; You have been angry; O restore us *and* turn again to us.
- ²You have made the land quake, You have split it open;
Heal its rifts, for it shakes *and* totters.
- ³You have made Your people experience hardship;
You have given us wine to drink that makes us stagger *and* fall.

⁴You have set up a banner for those who fear You [with awe-inspired reverence and submissive wonder—a banner to shield them from attack], A banner that may be displayed because of the truth.

Selah.

⁵That Your beloved ones may be rescued,
Save with Your right hand and answer us.

⁶God has spoken in His holiness [in His promises]:
“I will rejoice, I will divide [the land of] Shechem and
measure out the Valley of Succoth [west to east].

⁷“Gilead is Mine, and Manasseh is Mine;
Ephraim is My helmet;
Judah is My scepter.

⁸“Moab is My washbowl;
Over Edom I shall throw My shoe [in triumph];
Over Philistia I raise the shout [of victory].”

⁹Who will bring me into the besieged city [of Petra]?
Who will lead me to Edom?

¹⁰Have You not rejected us, O God?
And will You not go out with our armies?

¹¹Give us help against the enemy,
For the help of man is worthless (ineffectual, without
purpose).

¹²Through God we will have victory,
For He will trample down our enemies.

Psalm 61

Confidence in God's Protection.

To the Chief Musician; on stringed instruments. *A Psalm*
of David.

¹HEAR MY cry, O God;
Listen to my prayer.

²From the end of the earth I call to You, when my heart is
overwhelmed *and* weak; Lead me to the rock that is higher
than I [a rock that is too high to reach without Your help].

³For You have been a shelter *and* a refuge for me,
A strong tower against the enemy.

⁴Let me dwell in Your tent forever;
Let me take refuge in the shelter of Your wings.

Selah.

⁵For You have heard my vows, O God;
You have given me the inheritance of those who fear Your
name [with reverence].

⁶You will prolong the king's life [adding days upon days];
His years will be like many generations.

⁷He will sit enthroned forever before [the face of] God;
Appoint lovingkindness and truth to watch over *and*
preserve him.

⁸So I will sing praise to Your name forever,
Paying my vows day by day.

Psalm 62

God Alone a Refuge from Treachery and Oppression.

To the Chief Musician; to Jeduthun [Ethan, the noted musician, founder of an official musical family]. A Psalm of David.

¹FOR GOD alone my soul *waits* in silence;
From Him comes my salvation.

²He alone is my rock and my salvation,
My defense *and* my strong tower; I will not be shaken *or*
disheartened.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

You're On Your Way

God's will is for us to live by faith. You may be thinking of how far you have to go in order to be all that God wants you to be, and you feel overwhelmed. Your mind wants to think, This is just too much; I will never be able to do all that He asks me to do.

This is where faith comes in. When David's heart was "overwhelmed," he cried out to God, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I [a rock that is too high to reach without Your help]" (Ps. 61:2–3). You can think, I don't know how I am going to do it, but I am expecting God's help. With God, all things are possible.

Just get started and keep going day after day. Refuse to be discouraged by how far you think you still have to go. God is pleased that you are on your way (see Phil. 3:12).

Speak God's Word

*For God alone my soul waits
in silence; from Him comes my
salvation. He only is my rock
and my salvation, my defense
and my strong tower; I will
not be shaken or
disheartened.*

| adapted from PSALM 62:1–2 |

- ³How long will you attack a man
So that you may murder him, all of you,
Like a leaning wall, like a tottering fence?
- ⁴They consult only to throw him down from his high
position [to dishonor him];
They delight in lies.
They bless with [the words of] their mouths,
But inwardly they curse.

Selah.

- ⁵For God alone my soul waits in silence *and* quietly submits
to Him, For my hope is from Him.
- ⁶He only is my rock and my salvation;

My fortress *and* my defense, I will not be shaken *or* discouraged.

⁷On God my salvation and my glory rest;
He is my rock of [unyielding] strength, my refuge is in God.

⁸Trust [confidently] in Him at all times, O people;
Pour out your heart before Him.
God is a refuge for us.

Selah.

⁹Men of low degree are only a breath (emptiness), and men of [high] rank are a lie (delusion).
In the balances they go up [because they have no measurable weight or value];
They are together lighter than a breath.

¹⁰Do not trust in oppression,
And do not vainly hope in robbery;
If riches increase, do not set your heart on them.

¹¹God has spoken once,
Twice I have heard this:
That power belongs to God.

¹²Also to You, O Lord, belong lovingkindness *and* compassion,
For You compensate every man according to [the value of] his work. [Jer 17:10; Rev 22:12]

Psalm 63

The Thirsting Soul Satisfied in God.

A Psalm of David; when he was in the wilderness of
Judah.

¹O GOD, You are my God; with deepest longing I will seek
You;

My soul [my life, my very self] thirsts for You, my flesh
longs *and* sighs for You,

In a dry and weary land where there is no water.

²So I have gazed upon You in the sanctuary,
To see Your power and Your glory. [Ps 42:1, 2]

³Because Your lovingkindness is better than life,
My lips shall praise You.

⁴So will I bless You as long as I live;
I will lift up my hands in Your name.

⁵My soul [my life, my very self] is satisfied as with marrow
and fatness,
And my mouth offers praises [to You] with joyful lips.

⁶When I remember You on my bed,
I meditate *and* thoughtfully focus on You in the night
watches,

⁷For You have been my help,
And in the shadow of Your wings [where I am always
protected] I sing for joy.

⁸My soul [my life, my very self] clings to You;
Your right hand upholds me.

⁹But those who seek my life to destroy it
Will [be destroyed and] go into the depths of the earth [into

the underworld].

¹⁰They will be given over to the power of the sword;
They will be a prey for foxes.

¹¹But the king will rejoice in God;
Everyone who swears by Him [honoring the true God,
acknowledging His authority and majesty] will glory, For
the mouths of those who speak lies will be stopped.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Enjoy the Ordinary

When David wrote Psalm 63, he was surrounded with difficulties in the wilderness of Judah, yet he could say, “My soul [my life, my very self] is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth offers praises [to You] with joyful lips” (v. 5).

There are dozens of things pertaining to ordinary, everyday life, and you can enjoy them all if you just make a decision to do so. Things like getting dressed, driving to work, going to the grocery store, running errands, keeping things organized, and so many other activities. After all, they are the things that make up life. Begin doing them for the love of God, and realize that through the Holy Spirit you can enjoy absolutely everything you do. Joy doesn't come merely from being entertained, but from a decision to appreciate each moment you are given as a rare and precious gift from God.

Psalm 64

Prayer for Protection from Secret Enemies.

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

¹HEAR MY voice, O God, in my complaint;
Guard my life from the terror of the enemy.

²Hide me from the secret counsel *and* conspiracy of the

- ungodly,
From the scheming of those who do wrong,
³Who have sharpened their tongues like a sword.
They aim venomous words as arrows,
⁴To shoot from ambush at the blameless [one];
Suddenly they shoot at him, without fear.
⁵They encourage themselves in [their pursuit of] an evil
agenda;
They talk of laying snares secretly;
They say, “Who will discover us?”
⁶They devise acts of injustice, *saying*,
“We are ready with a well-conceived plan.”
For the inward thought and the heart of a man are deep
(mysterious, unsearchable).
⁷But God will shoot them with an [unexpected] arrow;
Suddenly they will be wounded.
⁸So they will be caused to stumble;
Their own tongue is against them;
All who gaze at them will shake the head [in scorn].
⁹Then all men will fear [God’s judgment];
They will declare the work of God,
And they will consider *and* wisely acknowledge what He
has done.
¹⁰The righteous will rejoice in the LORD and take refuge in
Him; All the upright in heart will glory *and* offer praise.

Psalm 65

God's Abundant Favor to Earth and Man.

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. A Song.

¹TO YOU belongs silence [the submissive wonder of reverence], and [it bursts into] praise in Zion, O God; And to You the vow shall be performed.

²O You who hear prayer,
To You all mankind comes.

³Wickedness *and* guilt prevail against me;
Yet as for our transgressions,
You forgive them [removing them from Your sight].

⁴Blessed is the one whom You choose and bring near
To dwell in Your courts.
We will be filled with the goodness of Your house,
Your holy temple.

⁵By awesome *and* wondrous things You answer us in
righteousness, O God of our salvation, You who are the
trust *and* hope of all the ends of the earth and of the
farthest sea;

⁶Who creates the mountains by His strength,
Being clothed with power,

⁷Who stills the roaring of the seas,
The roaring of their waves,
And the tumult of the peoples,

⁸So they who dwell at the ends *of the earth* stand in awe of
Your signs [the evidence of Your presence]. [Mark 4:36–
41]

You make the dawn and the sunset shout for joy.

⁹You visit the earth and make it overflow [with water];
You greatly enrich it;
The stream of God is full of water;
You provide their grain, when You have prepared the earth.

¹⁰You water its furrows abundantly,
You smooth its ridges;
You soften it with showers,
You bless its growth.

¹¹You crown the year with Your bounty,
And Your paths overflow.

¹²The pastures of the wilderness drip [with dew],
And the hills are encircled with joy.

¹³The meadows are clothed with flocks
And the valleys are covered with grain;
They shout for joy and they sing.

! REMEMBER, any time the
enemy attacks your mind,
the battle belongs to the
Lord.

Psalm 66

Praise for God's Mighty Deeds and for His Answer to Prayer.

To the Chief Musician. A Song. A Psalm.

¹SHOUT JOYFULLY to God, all the earth;

²Sing of the honor *and* glory *and* magnificence of His name;
Make His praise glorious.

³Say to God, “How awesome *and* fearfully glorious are Your works!

Because of the greatness of Your power Your enemies will pretend to be obedient to You.

⁴“All the earth will [bow down to] worship You [in submissive wonder],

And will sing praises to You;

They will praise Your name in song.”

Selah.

⁵Come and see the works of God,

He is awesome in His deeds toward the children of men.

⁶He turned the sea into dry land;

They crossed through the river on foot;

There we rejoiced in Him. [Ex 14–15]

⁷Who rules by His might forever,

His eyes keep watch on the nations;

Do not let the rebellious exalt themselves.

Selah.

⁸Bless our God, O peoples,

And make the sound of His praise *be heard* abroad,

⁹Who keeps us among the living,

And does not allow our feet to slip *or* stumble.

¹⁰For You have tested us, O God;

You have refined us as silver is refined.

¹¹You brought us into the net;

You laid a heavy burden [of servitude] on us.

¹²You made men (charioteers) ride over our heads [in defeat];

We went through fire and through water,

Yet You brought us out into a [broad] *place of* abundance
[to be refreshed].

¹³I shall come into Your house with burnt offerings;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Coming Clean

Our prayers often remain unanswered because we regard iniquity in our heart. David said, “If I regard sin and baseness in my heart [that is, if I know it is there and do nothing about it], the Lord will not hear [me]” (Ps. 66:18). What that means, to put it plainly, is that the Lord will not hear us when we pray if we come before Him in prayer with sin hidden in our hearts.

If there is sin in our lives, we will not be able to pray boldly or with confidence. As we are praying, if we sense that we are not comfortable, we need to stop and ask God why. Ask God to reveal anything hidden. If He convicts us of something that is sinful, call it what it is—sin. God wants us to confess the sin so He may cleanse us and restore a clean conscience and then we may pray (see 1 John 1:9). There is power in truth and honesty when we come clean before the Lord and walk in the light.

Make sure your heart is pure before Him so your prayers are offered confidently and in active faith. God answers our prayers when we approach Him with boldness and with clean, pure hearts.

I shall pay You my vows,
¹⁴Which my lips uttered

And my mouth spoke as a promise when I was in distress.

- ¹⁵ I shall offer to You burnt offerings of fat lambs,
With the [sweet] smoke of rams;
I will offer bulls with male goats.

Selah.

- ¹⁶ Come and hear, all who fear God [and worship Him with awe-inspired reverence and obedience], And I will tell what He has done for me.

- ¹⁷ I cried aloud to Him;
He was highly praised with my tongue.

- ¹⁸ If I regard sin *and* baseness in my heart [that is, if I know it is there and do nothing about it], The Lord will not hear [me]; [Prov 15:29; 28:9; Is 1:15; John 9:31; James 4:3]

- ¹⁹ But certainly God has heard [me];
He has given heed to the voice of my prayer.

- ²⁰ Blessed be God,
Who has not turned away my prayer
Nor His lovingkindness from me.

Psalm 67

The Nations Exhorted to Praise God.

To the Chief Musician; on stringed instruments. A Psalm.
A Song.

- ¹ GOD BE gracious *and* kind-hearted to us and bless us,
And make His face shine [with favor] on us—

Selah.

²That Your way may be known on earth,
Your salvation *and* deliverance among all nations.

³Let the peoples praise You, O God;
Let all the peoples praise You.

⁴Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
For You will judge the people fairly
And guide the nations on earth.

Selah.

⁵Let the peoples praise You, O God;
Let all the peoples praise You.

⁶The earth has yielded its harvest [as evidence of His
approval];
God, our God, blesses us.

⁷God blesses us,
And all the ends of the earth shall fear Him [with awe-
inspired reverence and submissive wonder].

Psalm 68

The God of Sinai and of the Sanctuary.

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. A Song.

¹LET GOD arise, and His enemies be scattered;
Let those who hate Him flee before Him.

²As smoke is driven away, so drive *them* away;
As wax melts before the fire,
So let the wicked *and* guilty perish before [the presence of]
God.

³But let the righteous be glad; let them be in good spirits
before God,

Yes, let them rejoice with delight.

⁴Sing to God, sing praises to His name;
Lift up *a song* for Him who rides through the desert—
His name is the LORD—be in good spirits before Him.

⁵A father of the fatherless and a judge *and* protector of the
widows, Is God in His holy habitation.

⁶God makes a home for the lonely;
He leads the prisoners into prosperity,
Only the stubborn *and* rebellious dwell in a parched land.

⁷O God, when You went out before Your people,
When You marched through the wilderness,

Selah.

⁸The earth trembled;
The heavens also poured down *rain* at the presence of
God;
Sinai itself trembled at the presence of God, the God of
Israel.

⁹You, O God, sent abroad plentiful rain;
You confirmed Your inheritance when it was parched *and*
weary.

¹⁰Your flock found a dwelling place in it;
O God, in Your goodness You provided for the poor.

¹¹The Lord gives the command [to take Canaan];
The women who proclaim the good news are a great host

(army);

12“‘The kings of the [enemies’] armies flee, they flee,
And the beautiful woman who remains at home divides the
spoil [left behind].”

13When you lie down [to rest] among the sheepfolds,
You [Israel] are like the wings of a dove [of victory] overlaid
with silver,
Its feathers glistening with gold [trophies taken from the
enemy].

14When the Almighty scattered [the Canaanite] kings in the
land of Canaan,
It was snowing on Zalmon.

15A mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan;
A [high] mountain of many summits is Mount Bashan
[rising east of the Jordan].

16Why do you look with envy, mountains with many peaks,
At the mountain [of the city of Zion] which God has desired
for His dwelling place?
Yes, the LORD will dwell *there* forever.

17The chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon
thousands;
The Lord is among them as He was at Sinai, in holiness.

18You have ascended on high, You have led away captive
Your captives;
You have received gifts among men,
Even from the rebellious also, that the LORD God may dwell
there. [Eph 4:8]

¹⁹Blessed be the Lord, who bears our burden day by day,
The God who is our salvation!

Selah.

²⁰God is to us a God of acts of salvation;
And to GOD the Lord belong escapes from death [setting us
free].

²¹Surely God will shatter the head of His enemies,
The hairy scalp of one who goes on in his guilty ways.

²²The Lord said, “I will bring your enemies back from Bashan;
I will bring them back from the depths of the [Red] Sea,

POWERPOINT

According to the Amplified Bible's rendering of Psalm 68:26, to bless God is to "give thanks, gratefully praise Him." A lifestyle of gratitude requires a sacrifice of praise or thanksgiving. I would rather offer a sacrifice of my thanksgiving to God than sacrifice my joy to the enemy. Many doors are opened to the devil through complaining. When we get upset and refuse to give thanks, we end up giving up our joy. In other words, we will lose our joy to the spirit of complaining. Being thankful will help you keep your joy.



²³That your foot may crush them in blood,
That the tongue of your dogs *may have* its share from your

enemies.”

- ²⁴They have seen Your [solemn] procession, O God,
The procession of my God, my King, into the sanctuary [in
holiness].
- ²⁵The singers go in front, the players of instruments last;
Between them the maidens playing on tambourines.
- ²⁶Bless God in the congregations, [give thanks, gratefully
praise Him],
The LORD, *you who are* from [Jacob] the fountain of Israel.
- ²⁷The youngest is there, Benjamin, ruling them,
The princes of Judah and their company [the southern
tribes],
The princes of Zebulun and the princes of Naphtali [the
northern tribes].
- ²⁸Your God has commanded your strength [your power in His
service and your resistance to temptation]; Show
Yourself strong, O God, who acted on our behalf.
- ²⁹Because of Your temple at Jerusalem
[Pagan] kings will bring gifts to You [out of respect].
- ³⁰Rebuke the beasts [living] among the reeds [in Egypt],
The herd of bulls (the leaders) with the calves of the
peoples;
Trampling underfoot the pieces of silver;
He has scattered the peoples who delight in war.
- ³¹Princes *and* envoys shall come from Egypt;
Ethiopia will quickly stretch out her hands [with the

offerings of submission] to God.

- ³² Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth,
Sing praises to the Lord!

Selah.

- ³³ To Him who rides in the highest heavens, the ancient
heavens,
Behold, He sends out His voice, a mighty *and* majestic
voice.

- ³⁴ Ascribe strength to God;
His majesty is over Israel
And His strength is in the skies.

- ³⁵ O God, *You are* awesome *and* profoundly majestic from Your
sanctuary; The God of Israel gives strength and power to
His people.
Blessed be God!

Psalm 69

A Cry of Distress and Imprecation on Adversaries.

To the Chief Musician; set to [the tune of] “Lilies.” *A
Psalm of David.*

- ¹ SAVE ME, O God,
For the waters have threatened my life [they have come up
to my neck].
- ² I have sunk in deep mire, where there is no foothold;
I have come into deep waters, where a flood overwhelms
me.

- ³I am weary with my crying; my throat is parched;
My eyes fail while I wait [with confident expectation] for my
God.
- ⁴Those who hate me without cause are more than the hairs of
my head;
Those who would destroy me are powerful, being my
enemies wrongfully;
I am forced to restore what I did not steal. [John 15:25]
- ⁵O God, You know my folly;
My wrongs are not hidden from You.
- ⁶Do not let those who wait [confidently] for You be ashamed
through me, O Lord GOD of hosts; Do not let those who
seek You [as necessary for life itself] be dishonored
through me, O God of Israel, ⁷Because for Your sake I have
borne reproach;
Confusion *and* dishonor have covered my face.
- ⁸I have become estranged from my brothers
And an alien to my mother's sons. [John 7:3–5]
- ⁹For zeal for Your house has consumed me,
And the [mocking] insults of those who insult You have
fallen on me. [John 2:17; Rom 15:3]
- ¹⁰When I wept *and* humbled myself with fasting,
It became my reproach.
- ¹¹When I made sackcloth my clothing [as one in mourning],
I became a byword [a mere object of scorn] to them.
- ¹²They who sit in the [city's] gate talk about me *and* mock me,

And I am the song of the drunkards.

POWERPOINT

In Psalm 69:7, the psalmist writes about being confused. I have learned that I am much better off doing something positive than just wondering all the time about everything imaginable that could go wrong. Wondering leaves a person in indecision, and indecision causes confusion. Wondering, indecision, and confusion prevent people from receiving from God, by faith, the answer to their prayers or their needs. Jesus did not say, "Whatever you ask in prayer, wonder if you will get it." He told us to believe (see Matt. 21:22).



¹³But as for me, my prayer is to You, O LORD, at an acceptable

and opportune time; O God, in the greatness of Your favor *and* in the abundance of Your lovingkindness, Answer me with truth [that is, the faithfulness of Your salvation].

¹⁴ Rescue me from the mire and do not let me sink;
Let me be rescued from those who hate me and from the deep waters.

¹⁵ Do not let the floodwater overwhelm me,
Nor the deep waters swallow me up,
Nor the pit [of Sheol] shut its mouth over me.

¹⁶ Answer me, O LORD, for Your lovingkindness is sweet *and* good *and* comforting; According to the greatness of Your compassion, turn to me.

¹⁷ Do not hide Your face from Your servant,
For I am in distress; answer me quickly.

¹⁸ Draw near to my soul and redeem it;
Ransom me because of my enemies [so that they do not delight in my distress].

¹⁹ You know my reproach and my shame and my dishonor
[how I am insulted];
My adversaries are all before You [each one fully known].

²⁰ Reproach *and* insults have broken my heart and I am so sick.

I looked for sympathy, but there was none,
And for comforters, but I found none.

²¹ They (self-righteous hypocrites) also gave me gall

[poisonous and bitter] for my food, And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. [Matt 27:34, 48]

- ²²May their table [with all its abundance and luxury] become a snare [to them]; And when they are in peace [secure at their sacrificial feasts], *may it become* a trap.
- ²³May their eyes be dimmed so that they cannot see, And make their loins shake continually [in terror and weakness].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Be Difficult To Offend

There is no doubt—as long as we are in the world and around people, we will have opportunities to be offended. The temptation to become hurt, angry, or offended comes just as surely as any other temptation comes, but Jesus said we should pray that we will not give in to temptation (see Matt. 26:41). When David was surrounded by those who delighted in his hurt, his prayer was, “O LORD, come quickly to help me!” (Ps. 70:1).

People who want to live powerful lives can do so by becoming experts at forgiving those who offend and hurt them. When someone hurts your feelings or is rude and insensitive, quickly say, “I will not be offended.” If the person is in your presence, you can say these words quietly in your heart, but later when the memory of what he or she did returns to haunt you, repeat aloud, “I will not be offended,” and ask God to help you to forgive them.

²⁴Pour out Your indignation on them,
And let [the fierceness of] Your burning anger overtake
them.

²⁵May their encampment be desolate;
May no one dwell in their tents. [Matt 23:38; Acts 1:20]

²⁶For they have persecuted him whom You have struck,

And they tell of the pain of those whom You have pierced
and wounded.

²⁷ Add [unforgiven] iniquity to their iniquity [in Your book],
And may they not come into Your righteousness.

²⁸ May they be blotted out of the book of life [and their lives
come to an end]

And may they not be recorded with the righteous (those in
right standing with God). [Rev 3:4, 5; 20:12, 15; 21:27]

²⁹ But I am sorrowful and in pain;
May Your salvation, O God, set me [securely] on high.

³⁰ I will praise the name of God with song
And magnify Him with thanksgiving.

³¹ And it will please the LORD better than an ox
Or a young bull with horns and hoofs.

³² The humble have seen it and are glad;
You who seek God [requiring Him as your greatest need], let
your heart revive *and* live. [Ps 22:26; 42:1]

³³ For the LORD hears the needy
And does not despise His *who are* prisoners.

³⁴ Let heaven and earth praise Him,
The seas and everything that moves in them.

³⁵ For God will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah,
That His servants may remain there and possess it.

³⁶ The descendants of His servants will inherit it,
And those who love His name will dwell in it.

Psalm 70

Prayer for Help against Persecutors.

To the Chief Musician. *A Psalm* of David, to bring to remembrance.

- ¹O GOD, *come quickly* to save me;
O LORD, come quickly to help me!
- ²Let those be ashamed and humiliated
Who seek my life;
Let them be turned back and humiliated
Who delight in my hurt.
- ³Let them be turned back because of their shame *and*
disgrace
Who say, “Aha, aha!”
- ⁴May all those who seek You [as life’s first priority] rejoice
and be glad in You; May those who love Your salvation
say continually,
“Let God be magnified!”
- ⁵But I am afflicted and needy;
Come quickly to me, O God!
You are my help and my rescuer;
O LORD, do not delay.

Psalm 71

Prayer of an Old Man for Rescue.

- ¹IN YOU, O LORD, I have put my trust *and* confidently taken

refuge; Let me never be put to shame.

²In Your righteousness deliver me and rescue me;
Incline Your ear to me and save me.

³Be to me a rock of refuge *and* a sheltering stronghold to
which I may continually come; You have given the
commandment to save me,
For You are my rock and my fortress.

⁴Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked
(godless),
From the grasp of the unrighteous and ruthless man.

⁵For You are my hope;
O Lord GOD, *You are* my trust *and* the source of my
confidence from my youth.

⁶Upon You have I relied *and* been sustained from my birth;
You are He who took me from my mother's womb *and* You
have been my benefactor from that day.
My praise is continually of You.

⁷I am as a wonder to many,
For You are my strong refuge.

⁸My mouth is filled with Your praise
And with Your glory all day long.

⁹Do not cast me off *nor* send me away in the time of old age;
Do not abandon me when my strength fails *and* I am weak.

¹⁰For my enemies have spoken against me;
Those who watch for my life have consulted together,

¹¹Saying, "God has abandoned him;
Pursue and seize him, for there is no one to rescue *him*."

- ¹² O God, do not be far from me;
O my God, come quickly to help me!
- ¹³ Let those who attack my life be ashamed and consumed;
Let them be covered with reproach and dishonor, who seek
to injure me.
- ¹⁴ But as for me, I will wait *and* hope continually,
And will praise You yet more and more.
- ¹⁵ My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness
And of Your [deeds of] salvation all day long,
For their number is more than I know.
- ¹⁶ I will come with the mighty acts of the Lord GOD [and in His
strength]; I will make mention of Your righteousness,
Yours alone.
- ¹⁷ O God, You have taught me from my youth,
And I still declare Your wondrous works *and* miraculous
deeds.
- ¹⁸ And even when I am old and gray-headed, O God, do not
abandon me,
Until I declare Your [mighty] strength to this generation,
Your power to all who are to come.
- ¹⁹ Your righteousness, O God, *reaches* to the [height of the]
heavens,
You who have done great things;
O God, who is like You, [who is Your equal]?
- ²⁰ You who have shown me many troubles and distresses
Will revive *and* renew me again,
And will bring me up again from the depths of the earth.

²¹May You increase my greatness (honor)
And turn to comfort me.

²²I will also praise You with the harp,
Your truth *and* faithfulness, O my God;
To You I will sing praises with the lyre,
O Holy One of Israel.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Express Your Gratitude

God tells us to praise Him continually (see Ps. 71:6, 14). Once we seriously start praising Him, our burdens and our troubles seem to weigh less heavily on us. That's part of the power of being thankful. As we give thanks to God for what's good in our lives, it helps us not to focus excessively on our problems. I believe God wants us to be grateful people, filled with gratitude not only toward God, but also toward others.

When someone does something nice for you, let that person know you appreciate them and what they did. If your bus arrived on time today, did you thank the driver? When you ate at the restaurant, did you thank the waitress for filling your coffee cup? I could go on and on, but that's my point: We need to develop an attitude of gratitude toward the people in our lives.

Another way to express gratitude is to show appreciation toward your family members, especially your spouse. I appreciate Dave, and even though we've been married a long time, I still tell him I appreciate him. He's patient with me and

thoughtful. Just those few words of thanks are a great way to bless God and others.

When you express appreciation, it's good for the other person to hear the words, but remember that it also releases joy in you. You enrich both your life and another person's life, even when you show gratitude for something small or ordinary.

Another way to show your gratitude is to meditate daily on things for which you can be thankful. I have a friend who won't get out of bed in the morning until he has thanked God for at least ten things. At night he goes to sleep by focusing on at least three things that went well that day and thanking God for them.

You can also be thankful for the people who tell you the truth about yourself, even if it's not what you want to hear. I have another friend who says, "Only two people will tell you the truth about yourself: someone who's angry at you and someone who loves you very much." God uses both types of people in our lives. When you hear the truth—especially about something of which you're not aware, you can change. And after you've changed, isn't that just one more thing for which you can be thankful?

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God, thank You for all the good things You send into my life. Thank You for the people in my life who help me grow closer to You and become a more thankful person. In Jesus' name. Amen.

²³My lips will shout for joy when I sing praises to You,
And my soul, which You have redeemed.

²⁴My tongue also will speak of Your righteousness all day
long;
For they are ashamed, for they are humiliated who seek my
injury.

Psalm 72

The Reign of the Righteous King.

A Psalm of Solomon.

- ¹GIVE THE king [knowledge of] Your judgments, O God,
And [the spirit of] Your righteousness to the king's son [to
guide all his ways].
- ²May he judge Your people with righteousness,
And Your afflicted with justice. [1 Kin 3:1–5]
- ³The mountains will bring peace *and* prosperity to the
people,
And the hills, in [the establishment of] righteousness.
- ⁴May he bring justice to the poor among the people,
Save the children of the needy
And crush the oppressor,
- ⁵Let them fear You [with awe-inspired reverence and worship
You with obedience] while the sun endures, And as long
as the moon [reflects light], throughout all generations.
- ⁶May he come down like rain on the mown grass,
Like showers that water the earth.
- ⁷In his days may the righteous flourish,
And peace abound until the moon is no more. [Is 11:1–9]
- ⁸May he also rule from sea to sea
And from the River [Euphrates] to the ends of the earth.
[Zech 14:9]

- ⁹The nomads of the desert will bow before him,
And his enemies will lick the dust.
- ¹⁰The kings of Tarshish and of the islands will bring offerings;
The kings of Sheba and Seba will offer gifts.
- ¹¹Yes, all kings will bow down before him,
All nations will serve him. [Ps 138:4]
- ¹²For he will rescue the needy when he cries for help,
The afflicted *and* abused also, and him who has no helper.
- ¹³He will have compassion on the poor and needy,
And he will save the lives of the needy.
- ¹⁴He will redeem their life from oppression *and* fraud and
violence,
And their blood will be precious in His sight.
- ¹⁵So may he live, and may the gold of Sheba be given to him;
And let them pray for him continually;
Let them bless *and* praise him all day long.
- ¹⁶There will be an abundance of grain in the soil on the top of
the mountains; Its fruit will wave like [the cedars of]
Lebanon,
And those of the city will flourish like grass of the earth.
- ¹⁷May his name endure forever;
May his name continue as long as the sun;
And let men bless themselves by him;
Let all nations call him blessed.
- ¹⁸Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, Who alone
does wonderful things.

¹⁹Blessed be His glorious name forever;
And may the whole earth be filled with His glory.
Amen and Amen.

²⁰The prayers of David son of Jesse are ended.

BOOK THREE

Psalm 73

The End of the Wicked Contrasted with That of the Righteous.

A Psalm of Asaph.

- ¹TRULY GOD is good to Israel,
To those who are pure in heart.
- ²But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling,
My steps had almost slipped.
- ³For I was envious of the arrogant
As I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
- ⁴For there are no pains in their death,
Their body is fat *and* pampered.
- ⁵They are not in trouble *as other men*,
Nor are they plagued like mankind.
- ⁶Therefore pride is their necklace;
Violence covers them like a garment [like a long, luxurious robe].
- ⁷Their eye bulges from fatness [they have more than the heart desires];

- The imaginations of their mind run riot [with foolishness].
- ⁸They mock and wickedly speak of oppression;
They speak loftily [with malice].
- ⁹They set their mouth against the heavens,
And their tongue swaggers through the earth. [Rev 13:6]
- ¹⁰Therefore his people return to this place,
And waters of abundance [offered by the irreverent] are
[blindly] drunk by them.
- ¹¹They say, “How does God know?
Is there knowledge [of us] with the Most High?”
- ¹²Behold, these are the ungodly,
Who always prosper *and* are at ease [in the world]; they
have increased in wealth.
- ¹³Surely then in vain I have cleansed my heart
And washed my hands in innocence. [Mal 3:14]
- ¹⁴For all the day long have I been stricken,
And punished every morning.
- ¹⁵If I had said, “I will say this,” [and expressed my feelings],
I would have betrayed the generation of Your children.
- ¹⁶When I considered how to understand this,
It was too great an effort for me *and* too painful
- ¹⁷Until I came into the sanctuary of God;
Then I understood [for I considered] their end.
- ¹⁸Surely You set the wicked-minded *and* immoral on slippery
places;
You cast them down to destruction.

¹⁹How they are destroyed in a moment!

They are completely swept away by sudden terrors!

²⁰Like a dream [which seems real] until one awakens,

Speak God's Word

*My flesh and my heart may
fail, but God is the rock and
strength of my heart and my
portion forever.*

| *adapted from* PSALM 73:26 |

O Lord, when stirred, [You observe the wicked], You will
despise their image.

- ²¹When my heart was embittered
And I was pierced within [as with the fang of an adder],
- ²²Then I was senseless and ignorant;
I was like a beast before You.
- ²³Nevertheless I am continually with You;
You have taken hold of my right hand.
- ²⁴You will guide me with Your counsel,
And afterward receive me to honor *and* glory.
- ²⁵Whom have I in heaven [but You]?
And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.
- ²⁶My flesh and my heart may fail,
But God is the rock *and* strength of my heart and my

portion forever.

²⁷For behold, those who are far from You will perish;
You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful *and* have
abandoned You.

²⁸But as for me, it is good for me to draw near to God;
I have made the Lord GOD my refuge *and* placed my trust in
Him, That I may tell of all Your works.

Psalm 74

An Appeal against the Devastation of the Land by the Enemy.

A skillful song, *or* a didactic *or* reflective poem, of Asaph.

¹O GOD, why have You rejected us forever?
Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your
pasture?

²Remember Your congregation, which You have purchased
of old,
Which You have redeemed to be the tribe of Your
inheritance;
Remember Mount Zion, where You have dwelt.

³Turn your footsteps [quickly] toward the perpetual ruins;
The enemy has damaged everything within the sanctuary.

⁴In the midst of Your meeting place Your enemies have
roared [with their battle cry]; They have set up their own
emblems for signs [of victory].

⁵It seems as if one had lifted up
An axe in a forest of trees [to set a record of destruction].

- ⁶And now all the carved work [of the meeting place]
They smash with hatchets and hammers.
- ⁷They have burned Your sanctuary to the ground;
They have profaned the dwelling place of Your name.
- ⁸They said in their heart, “Let us completely subdue them.”
They have burned all the meeting places of God in the land.
- ⁹We do not see our symbols;
There is no longer any prophet [to guide us],
Nor does any among us know for how long.
- ¹⁰O God, how long will the adversary scoff?
Is the enemy to revile Your name forever?
- ¹¹Why do You withdraw Your hand, even Your right hand
[from judging the enemy]?
Remove Your hand from Your chest, destroy them!
- ¹²Yet God is my King of old,
Working salvation in the midst of the earth.
- ¹³You divided the [Red] Sea by Your strength;
You broke the heads of the sea monsters in the waters. [Ex
14:21]
- ¹⁴You crushed the heads of Leviathan (Egypt);
You gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.
[Job 41:1]
- ¹⁵You broke open fountains and streams;
You dried up ever-flowing rivers. [Ex 17:6; Num 20:11; Josh
3:13]
- ¹⁶The day is Yours, the night also is Yours;

You have established *and* prepared the [heavenly] light and the sun.

¹⁷You have defined *and* established all the borders of the earth [the divisions of land and sea and of the nations];
You have made summer and winter. [Acts 17:26]

¹⁸Remember this, O LORD, the enemy has scoffed, And a foolish *and* impious people has spurned Your name.

¹⁹Oh, do not hand over the soul of your turtledove to the wild beast;

Do not forget the life of Your afflicted forever.

²⁰Consider the covenant [You made with Abraham],
For the dark places of the land are full of the habitations of violence.

²¹Let not the oppressed return dishonored;
Let the afflicted and needy praise Your name.

²²Arise, O God, plead Your own cause;
Remember how the foolish man scoffs at You all day long.

²³Do not forget the [clamoring] voices of Your adversaries,
The uproar of those who rise against You, which ascends continually [to Your ears].

Psalm 75

God Abases the Proud, but Exalts the Righteous.

To the Chief Musician; set to [the tune of] “Do Not Destroy.” A Psalm of Asaph. A Song.

¹WE GIVE thanks *and* praise to You, O God, we give thanks,

For Your [wonderful works declare that Your] name is near;
People declare Your wonders.

²“When I select an appointed time,
I will judge with equity,” [says the LORD].

³“The earth and all the inhabitants of it melt [in tumultuous
times].

It is I who will steady its pillars.

Selah.

⁴“I said to the arrogant, ‘Do not boast,’
And to the wicked, ‘Do not lift up the horn [of self-
glorification].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Be Thankful and Say So

The Bible teaches us repeatedly to give thanks, to be thankful, and to have heartfelt gratitude (see Ps. 75:1). To help you achieve and maintain a new level of contentment in your life, I encourage you to make a list of everything for which you are thankful. It should be a long list, one that includes little things as well as big things. Why should it be long? Because we all have a lot to be thankful for if we just look for it.

The next time you have lunch or coffee with a friend, resolve to talk about the things for which you are thankful. The Bible says we are to be thankful and to say so. Meditating on what you have to be thankful for every day and verbalizing it will be amazingly helpful to you.

⁵“Do not lift up your [defiant and aggressive] horn on high,
Do not speak with a stiff neck.”

⁶For not from the east, nor from the west,
Nor from the desert comes exaltation. [Is 14:13]

⁷But God is the Judge;
He puts down one and lifts up another.

⁸For a cup [of His wrath] is in the hand of the LORD, and the wine foams; It is well mixed *and* fully spiced, and He pours out from it;

And all the wicked of the earth must drain it and drink down
to its dregs. [Ps 60:3; Jer 25:15; Rev 14:9, 10; 16:19]

⁹But as for me, I will declare it *and* rejoice forever;
I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.

¹⁰All the horns of the wicked He will cut off,
But the horns of the righteous will be lifted up.

Psalm 76

The Victorious Power of the God of Jacob.

To the Chief Musician; on stringed instruments. A Psalm
of Asaph. A Song.

¹GOD IS known in Judah;
His name is great in Israel.

²His tabernacle is in Salem (Jerusalem);
His dwelling place is in Zion.

³There He broke the flaming arrows,
The shield, the sword, and the weapons of war.

Selah.

⁴You are glorious *and* resplendent,
More majestic than the mountains of prey.

⁵The stouthearted have been stripped of their spoil,
They have slept the sleep [of death];
And none of the warriors could use his hands.

⁶At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob,
Both rider and horse were cast into a dead sleep [of death].
[Ex 15:1, 21; Nah 2:13; Zech 12:4]

⁷You, even You, are to be feared [with the submissive wonder of reverence];

Who may stand in Your presence when once You are angry?

⁸You caused judgment to be heard from heaven;
The earth feared and was quiet

⁹When God arose to [establish] judgment,
To save all the humble of the earth.

Selah.

¹⁰For the wrath of man shall praise You;
With a remnant of wrath You will clothe *and* arm Yourself.

¹¹Make vows to the LORD your God and fulfill them; Let all
who are around Him bring gifts to Him who is to be feared
[with awe-inspired reverence].

¹²He will cut off the spirit of princes;
He is awesome *and* feared by the kings of the earth.

Psalm 77

Comfort in Trouble from Recalling God's Mighty Deeds.

To the Chief Musician; according to Jeduthun [one of David's three chief musicians, founder of an official musical family]. A Psalm of Asaph.

¹MY VOICE rises to God, and I will cry aloud;
My voice rises to God, and He will hear me.

²In the day of my trouble I [desperately] sought the Lord;
In the night my hand was stretched out [in prayer] without

weariness;

My soul refused to be comforted.

³I remember God; then I am disquieted *and* I groan;
I sigh [in prayer], and my spirit grows faint.

Selah.

⁴You have held my eyelids open;
I am so troubled that I cannot speak.

⁵I have considered the ancient days,
The years [of prosperity] of long, long ago.

⁶I will remember my song in the night;
I will meditate with my heart,
And my spirit searches:

⁷Will the Lord reject forever?
And will He never be favorable again?

⁸Has His lovingkindness ceased forever?
Have His promises ended for all time?

⁹Has God forgotten to be gracious?
Or has He in anger withdrawn His compassion?

Selah.

¹⁰And I said, “This is my grief,
That the right hand of the Most High has changed [and His
lovingkindness is withheld].”

¹¹I will [solemnly] remember the deeds of the LORD; Yes, I will
[wholeheartedly] remember Your wonders of old.

¹²I will meditate on all Your works

KEYS to a Victorious Life

As Your Thoughts Change, Your Life Changes

When we define what it means to meditate (see Ps. 77:12), we generally mean that we choose what we want to think about and roll it over and over in our minds until it becomes a part of us.

Consider this quote: “If you continue to believe as you have always believed, you will continue to act as you have always acted. If you continue to act as you have always acted, you will continue to get what you have always gotten. If you want different results in your life, all you have to do is change your mind” (Anonymous).

You will never do what you need to do until you think what you need to think. God’s Word will renew your mind, so love the Word, live the Word, speak the Word, meditate on the Word—and things will begin to change (see Josh. 1:8).

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Victory over Nighttime Battles

What is it about nighttime that makes us more vulnerable to the enemy's attacks? My theory is that by evening, most of us are weary and just want to drift into peaceful sleep. One of Satan's favorite times to wage the battle for our minds is when we need rest.

If we recognize that we're more susceptible to the enemy's attacks when we're tired, we can take steps to prepare to stand against him. Some people find it helpful to meditate on scriptures or to claim the promise of Isaiah 26:3: "You will keep in perfect *and* constant peace *the one* whose mind is steadfast [that is, committed and focused on You.]" These words enable us to remain vigilant even in the dark hours of night.

By arming ourselves with the Word and spending time in prayer, we can avoid getting trapped in Satan's plan when he brings to mind some troublesome event of the day and asks, "Why did you say or do that?" His trick is to cause us to focus on the problems of the day, suggesting that we must immediately settle the issue. Thus he robs us of the peaceful

rest our bodies need.

The psalmist said, “In the night my hand was stretched out [in prayer] without weariness; my soul refused to be comforted” (Ps. 77:2). I experience nights like this at times and I haven’t always won the battle, but I have learned some valuable lessons. One lesson I have learned is that we don’t need to try and solve our problems in the middle of the night. Another lesson learned is that it is not wise to make decisions in the middle of the night. Most decisions can wait until the next day and should not take on such urgency that we believe we will not sleep unless we settle the issue *immediately*.

When Satan tries to pull that nighttime trick on you, learn to say, “I’ll deal with this issue in the morning, when the sun is shining. After I’ve rested, I can cope.” You can also say, “Lord, I surrender this to You. Give me Your rest, Your peace, and help me to make the right decision in the morning.”

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Holy Spirit, thank You for being with me, for protecting me, and for guiding my life. When I face those dark nights and the enemy tries to attack my mind, protect me. I trust You and ask You to keep me in Your perfect peace. Amen.

And thoughtfully consider all Your [great and wondrous] deeds.

¹³Your way, O God, is holy [far from sin and guilt].
What god is great like our God?

¹⁴You are the [awesome] God who works [powerful] wonders;
You have demonstrated Your power among the people.

¹⁵You have with Your [great] arm redeemed Your people,
The sons of Jacob and Joseph.

Selah.

¹⁶The waters [of the Red Sea] saw You, O God;
The waters saw You, they were in anguish;
The deeps also trembled.

¹⁷The clouds poured down water;
The skies sent out a sound [of rumbling thunder];
Your arrows (lightning) flashed here and there.

¹⁸The voice of Your thunder was in the whirlwind;
The lightnings illumined the world;
The earth trembled and shook.

¹⁹Your way [of escape for Your people] was through the sea,
And Your paths through the great waters,
And Your footprints were not traceable.

²⁰You led Your people like a flock
By the hand of Moses and Aaron [to the promised goal].

Psalm 78

God's Guidance of His People in Spite of Their Unfaithfulness.

A skillful song, *or* a didactic *or* reflective poem, of Asaph.

¹LISTEN, O my people, to my teaching;

Incline your ears to the words of my mouth [and be willing to learn].

²I will open my mouth in a parable [to instruct using examples];

I will utter dark *and* puzzling sayings of old [that contain important truth]—[Matt 13:34, 35]

³Which we have heard and known,

And our fathers have told us.

POWERPOINT

Psalm 78:8 describes the rebellious Israelites. For them, this same cycle of stubborn disobedience, crying out to God to get them out of trouble, and going right back into rebellion when their circumstances improved is repeated and recorded so many times in the Old Testament that it is almost unbelievable. Victorious living means that we learn to give up our own ways and be pliable and moldable in God's hands.



⁴We will not hide them from their children,
But [we will] tell to the generation to come the praiseworthy
deeds of the LORD, And [tell of] His great might *and*
power and the wonderful works that He has done.

⁵For He established a testimony (a specific precept) in Jacob

And appointed a law in Israel,
Which He commanded our fathers
That they should teach to their children [the great facts of
God's transactions with Israel],

⁶That the generation to come might know them, that the
children still to be born

May arise and recount them to their children,

⁷That they should place their confidence in God
And not forget the works of God,
But keep His commandments,

⁸And not be like their fathers—
A stubborn and rebellious generation,
A generation that did not prepare its heart to know *and*
follow God,
And whose spirit was not faithful to God.

⁹The sons of Ephraim were armed as archers and carrying
bows,
Yet they turned back in the day of battle.

¹⁰They did not keep the covenant of God
And refused to walk according to His law;

¹¹And they forgot His [incredible] works
And His miraculous wonders that He had shown them.

¹²He did marvelous things in the sight of their fathers
In the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan [where Pharaoh
resided].

¹³He divided the [Red] Sea and allowed them to pass through
it,

And He made the waters stand up like [water behind] a dam.
[Ex 14:22]

¹⁴In the daytime He led them with a cloud
And all the night with a light of fire. [Ex 13:21; 14:24]

¹⁵He split rocks in the wilderness
And gave *them* abundant [water to] drink like the ocean depths.

¹⁶He brought streams also from the rock [at Rephidim and Kadesh]
And caused waters to run down like rivers. [Ex 17:6; Num 20:11]

¹⁷Yet they still continued to sin against Him
By rebelling against the Most High in the desert.

¹⁸And in their hearts they put God to the test
By asking for food according to their [selfish] appetite.

¹⁹Then they spoke against God;
They said, “Can God prepare [food for] a table in the wilderness?

²⁰“Behold, He struck the rock so that waters gushed out
And the streams overflowed;
Can He give bread also?
Or will He provide meat for His people?”

²¹Therefore, when the LORD heard, He was full of wrath; A fire was kindled against Jacob,
And His anger mounted up against Israel,

²²Because they did not believe in God [they did not rely on

Him, they did not adhere to Him], And they did not trust
in His salvation (His power to save).

²³ Yet He commanded the clouds from above
And opened the doors of heaven;

²⁴ And He rained down manna upon them to eat
And gave them the grain of heaven. [Ex 16:14; John 6:31]

²⁵ Man ate the bread of angels;
God sent them provision in abundance.

²⁶ He caused the east wind to blow in the heavens
And by His [unlimited] power He guided the south wind.

²⁷ He rained meat upon them like the dust,
And winged birds (quail) like the sand of the seas. [Num
11:31]

²⁸ And He let them fall in the midst of their camp,
Around their tents.

²⁹ So they ate and were well filled,
He gave them what they craved.

³⁰ Before they had satisfied their desire,
And while their food was in their mouths, [Num 11:33]

³¹ The wrath of God rose against them
And killed some of the strongest of them,
And subdued the choice young men of Israel.

³² In spite of all this they still sinned,
For they did not believe in His wonderful *and* extraordinary
works.

³³ Therefore He consumed their days like a breath [in
emptiness and futility]

And their years in sudden terror.

³⁴When He killed [some of] them, then those remaining
sought Him,
And they returned [to Him] and searched diligently for God
[for a time].

³⁵And they remembered that God was their rock,
And the Most High God their Redeemer.

³⁶Nevertheless they flattered Him with their mouths
And lied to Him with their tongues.

³⁷For their heart was not steadfast toward Him,
Nor were they faithful to His covenant. [Acts 8:21]

³⁸But He, the source of compassion *and* lovingkindness,
forgave their wickedness and did not destroy them;
Many times He restrained His anger
And did not stir up all His wrath.

³⁹For He [graciously] remembered that they were mere
[human] flesh,
A wind that goes and does not return.

⁴⁰How often they rebelled against Him in the wilderness
And grieved Him in the desert!

⁴¹Again and again they tempted God,
And distressed the Holy One of Israel.

⁴²They did not remember [the miracles worked by] His
[powerful] hand,
Nor the day when He redeemed them from the enemy,

⁴³How He worked His miracles in Egypt

And His wonders in the field of Zoan [where Pharaoh resided],

⁴⁴And turned their rivers into blood,

And their streams, so that they could not drink.

⁴⁵He sent among them swarms of flies which devoured them,
And frogs which destroyed them.

⁴⁶He also gave their crops to the grasshopper,
And the fruit of their labor to the locust.

⁴⁷He destroyed their vines with [great] hailstones
And their sycamore trees with frost.

⁴⁸He gave over their cattle also to the hailstones,
And their flocks *and* herds to thunderbolts. [Ex 9:18–21]

⁴⁹He sent upon them His burning anger, [Ex 12:23]
His fury and indignation and distress,
A band of angels of destruction [among them].

⁵⁰He leveled a path for His anger [to give it free run];
He did not spare their souls from death,
But turned over their lives to the plague.

⁵¹He killed all the firstborn in Egypt,
The first and best of their strength in the tents [of the land
of the sons] of Ham.

⁵²But God led His own people forward like sheep
And guided them in the wilderness like [a good shepherd
with] a flock.

⁵³He led them safely, so that they did not fear;
But the sea engulfed their enemies. [Ex 14:27, 28]

- ⁵⁴ So He brought them to His holy land,
To this mountain [Zion] which His right hand had acquired.
- ⁵⁵ He also drove out the nations before the sons of Israel
And allotted *their land* as an inheritance, measured out *and*
partitioned;
And He had the tribes of Israel dwell in their tents [the tents
of those who had been dispossessed].
- ⁵⁶ Yet they tempted and rebelled against the Most High God
And did not keep His testimonies (laws).
- ⁵⁷ They turned back and acted unfaithfully like their fathers;
They were twisted like a warped bow [that will not respond
to the archer's aim].
- ⁵⁸ For they provoked Him to [righteous] anger with their high
places [devoted to idol worship]
And moved Him to jealousy with their carved images [by
denying Him the love, worship, and obedience that is
rightfully and uniquely His].
- ⁵⁹ When God heard this, He was filled with [righteous] wrath;
And utterly rejected Israel, [greatly hating her ways],
- ⁶⁰ So that He abandoned the tabernacle at Shiloh,
The tent in which He had dwelled among men,
- ⁶¹ And gave up His strength *and* power (the ark of the
covenant) into captivity, And His glory into the hand of
the enemy (the Philistines). [1 Sam 4:21]
- ⁶² He also handed His people over to the sword,
And was infuriated with His inheritance (Israel). [1 Sam 4:10]
- ⁶³ The fire [of war] devoured His young men,

- And His [bereaved] virgins had no wedding songs.
64 His priests [Hophni and Phinehas] fell by the sword,
And His widows could not weep. [1 Sam 4:11, 19, 20]
- 65 Then the Lord awakened as from sleep,
Like a [mighty] warrior who awakens from the sleep of wine
[fully conscious of his power].
- 66 He drove His enemies backward;
He subjected them to lasting shame *and* dishonor.
- 67 Moreover, He rejected the tent of Joseph,
And did not choose the tribe of Ephraim [in which the
tabernacle stood].
- 68 But He chose the tribe of Judah [as Israel's leader],
Mount Zion, which He loved [to replace Shiloh as His
capital].
- 69 And He built His sanctuary [exalted] like the heights [of the
heavens],
Like the earth which He has established forever.
- 70 He also chose David His servant
And took him from the sheepfolds; [1 Sam 16:11, 12]
- 71 From tending the ewes with nursing young He brought him
To shepherd Jacob His people,
And Israel His inheritance. [2 Sam 7:7, 8]
- 72 So David shepherded them according to the integrity of his
heart;
And guided them with his skillful hands.

Psalm 79

A Lament over the Destruction of Jerusalem, and Prayer for Help.

A Psalm of Asaph.

- ¹O GOD, the nations have invaded [the land of Your people]
Your inheritance;
They have defiled Your sacred temple;
They have laid Jerusalem in ruins.
- ²They have given the dead bodies of Your servants as food
to the birds of the heavens, The flesh of Your godly ones
to the beasts of the earth.
- ³They have poured out their blood like water all around
Jerusalem,
And there was no one to bury them.
- ⁴We have become an object of taunting to our neighbors
[because of our humiliation], A derision and mockery to
those who encircle us.
- ⁵How long, O LORD? Will You be angry forever?
Will Your jealousy [which cannot endure a divided
allegiance] burn like fire?
- ⁶Pour out Your wrath on the [Gentile] nations that do not
know You,
And on the kingdoms that do not call on Your name. [2
Thess 1:8]
- ⁷For they have devoured Jacob
And made his pasture desolate.
- ⁸O do not remember against us the sins *and* guilt of our

forefathers.

Let Your compassion *and* mercy come quickly to meet us,
For we have been brought very low.

⁹Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name;
Rescue us, forgive us our sins for Your name's sake.

¹⁰Why should the [Gentile] nations say, "Where is their
God?"

Let there be known [without delay] among the nations in
our sight [and to this generation],
Your vengeance for the blood of Your servants which has
been poured out.

¹¹Let the groaning *and* sighing of the prisoner come before
You;
According to the greatness of Your power keep safe those
who are doomed to die.

¹²And return into the lap of our neighbors sevenfold
The taunts with which they have taunted You, O Lord.

¹³So we Your people, the sheep of Your pasture,
Will give You thanks forever;
We will declare *and* publish Your praise from generation to
generation.

Psalm 80

God Implored to Rescue His People from Their Calamities.

To the Chief Musician; set to [the tune of] "Lilies, a
Testimony." A Psalm of Asaph.

¹HEAR US O Shepherd of Israel,

You who lead Joseph like a flock;
You who sit enthroned above the cherubim [of the ark of the
covenant], shine forth!

POWERPOINT

God is always able to restore us (see Ps. 80:7). When you fall, as we all do, that doesn't mean you are a failure. It simply means that you don't do everything right. Along with strengths we also have weaknesses. Let Jesus Christ be strong in your weaknesses; let Him shine His face on you with favor and approval on your weak days. Do not receive condemnation. Your victory will come, but it may take time.



- ²Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up Your power
And come to save us!
- ³Restore us, O God;
Cause Your face to shine on us [with favor and approval],
and we will be saved.

- ⁴O LORD God of hosts,
How long will You be angry with the prayers of Your
people?
- ⁵You have fed them the bread of tears,
And You have made them drink [bitter] tears in abundance.
- ⁶You make us an object of contention to our neighbors,
And our enemies laugh [at our suffering] among
themselves.
- ⁷Restore us, O God of hosts;
And cause Your face to shine on us [with favor and
approval], and we will be saved.
- ⁸You uprooted a vine (Israel) from Egypt;
You drove out the [Canaanite] nations and planted the vine
[in Canaan].
- ⁹You cleared away *the ground* before it,
And it took deep root and filled the land.
- ¹⁰The mountains were covered with its shadow,
And its branches were like the cedars of God.
- ¹¹Israel sent out its branches to the [Mediterranean] Sea,
And its branches to the [Euphrates] River. [1 Kin 4:21]
- ¹²Why have You broken down its walls *and* hedges,
So that all who pass by pick its fruit?
- ¹³A boar from the woods eats it away,
And the insects of the field feed on it.
- ¹⁴Turn again [in favor to us], O God of hosts;
Look down from heaven and see, and take care of this vine,

- ¹⁵ Even the stock which Your right hand has planted,
And [look down on] the son that You have reared *and*
strengthened for Yourself.
- ¹⁶ It is burned with fire, it is cut down;
They perish at the rebuke of Your [angry] appearance.
- ¹⁷ Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand,
Upon the son of man whom You have made strong for
Yourself.
- ¹⁸ Then we shall not turn back from You;
Revive us and we will call on Your name.
- ¹⁹ Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
Cause Your face to shine on us [in favor and approval], and
we shall be saved.

Psalm 81

God's Goodness and Israel's Waywardness.

To the Chief Musician; set to the Philistine lute. *A Psalm*
of Asaph.

- ¹ SING ALOUD to God our strength;
Shout for joy to the God of Jacob (Israel).
- ² Raise a song, sound the timbrel,
The sweet sounding lyre with the harp.
- ³ Blow the trumpet at the New Moon,
At the full moon, on our feast day.
- ⁴ For this is a statute for Israel,
An ordinance of the God of Jacob.

⁵He established it for a testimony in Joseph
When He went throughout the land of Egypt.
I heard the language [of One whom] I did not know, *saying*,

⁶“I removed the burden from his shoulder;
His hands were freed from the basket.

⁷“You called in [the time of] trouble and I rescued you;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Take Time for God

We all have the same amount of time each day, but some people find time regularly to spend with God while others do not. I have found that when we say we “don’t have time to spend with God,” it’s simply an excuse.

The truth is that we make time for what is most important to us. At this moment, you are as close to God as you want to be. What you sow, you will reap. If you want a bigger harvest, you can simply sow more seed. If you want a closer relationship with God, spend more time with Him. God has said, “Open your mouth wide and I will fill it... I would feed Israel with the finest of the wheat; and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you” (Ps. 81:10, 16). He wants you to find great peace and joy in His presence.

I answered you in the secret place of thunder;
I tested you at the waters of Meribah. [Num 20:3, 13, 24]

Selah.

⁸“Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you—
O Israel, if you would listen to Me!

⁹“Let there be no strange god among you,
Nor shall you worship any foreign god.

¹⁰“I am the LORD your God,
Who brought you up from the land of Egypt.

Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.

¹¹“But My people would not listen to My voice,
And Israel did not [consent to] obey Me.

¹²“So I gave them up to the stubbornness of their heart,
To walk in [the path of] their own counsel. [Acts 7:42, 43;
14:16; Rom 1:24, 26]

¹³“Oh, that My people would listen to Me,
That Israel would walk in My ways!

¹⁴“Then I would quickly subdue *and* humble their enemies
And turn My hand against their adversaries;

¹⁵Those who hate the LORD would pretend obedience to Him
and cringe before Him, And their time *of punishment*
would be forever.

¹⁶“But I would feed Israel with the finest of the wheat;
And with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.”

Psalm 82

Unjust Judgments Rebuked.

A Psalm of Asaph.

¹GOD STANDS in the divine assembly;
He judges among the gods (divine beings).

²How long will you judge unjustly
And show partiality to the wicked?

Selah.

³Vindicate the weak and fatherless;
Do justice *and* maintain the rights of the afflicted and

destitute.

⁴Rescue the weak and needy;
Rescue them from the hand of the wicked.

⁵The rulers do not know nor do they understand;
They walk on in the darkness [of complacent satisfaction];
All the foundations of the earth [the fundamental principles
of the administration of justice] are shaken.

⁶I said, “You are gods;
Indeed, all of you are sons of the Most High. [Gen 6:1–4;
John 10:34–36; Rom 13:1, 2]

⁷“Nevertheless you will die like men
And fall like any one of the princes.”

⁸Arise, O God, judge the earth!
For to You belong all the nations. [Matt 28:18–20; Rev 11:15]

Psalm 83

God Implored to Confound His Enemies.

A Song. A Psalm of Asaph.

¹DO NOT keep silent, O God;
Do not hold Your peace or be still, O God.

²For behold, Your enemies are in tumult,
And those who hate You have raised their heads [in hatred
of You]. [Acts 4:25, 26]

³They concoct crafty schemes against Your people,
And conspire together against Your hidden *and* precious
ones.

⁴They have said, “Come, and let us wipe them out as a nation;

Let the name of Israel be remembered no more.”

⁵For they have conspired together with one mind;
Against You they make a covenant—

⁶The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites,
Of Moab and the Hagrites,

⁷Gebal and Ammon and Amalek,
Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre.

⁸Assyria also has joined with them;
They have helped the children of Lot [the Ammonites and the Moabites] *and* have been an arm [of strength] to them.

Selah.

⁹Deal with them as [You did] with Midian,
As with Sisera and Jabin at the brook of Kishon, [Judg 4:12–24]

¹⁰Who were destroyed at En-dor,
Who became like dung for the earth.

¹¹Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb
And all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna, [Judg 7:23–25; 8:10–21]

¹²Who said, “Let us possess for ourselves
The pastures of God.”

¹³O my God, make them like whirling dust,
Like chaff before the wind [worthless and without

substance].

- ¹⁴Like fire consumes the forest,
And like the flame sets the mountains on fire,
¹⁵So pursue them with Your tempest
And terrify them with [the violence of] Your storm.
¹⁶Fill their faces with shame *and* disgrace,
That they may [persistently] seek Your name, O LORD.
¹⁷Let them be ashamed and dismayed forever;
Yes, let them be humiliated and perish,
¹⁸That they may know that You alone, whose name is the
LORD, Are the Most High over all the earth.

Psalm 84

Longing for the Temple Worship.

To the Chief Musician; set to a Philistine lute. A Psalm of
the sons of Korah.

- ¹HOW LOVELY are Your dwelling places,
O LORD of hosts!
²My soul (my life, my inner self) longs for and greatly desires
the courts of the LORD; My heart and my flesh sing for joy
to the living God.
³The bird has found a house,
And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her
young—
Even Your altars, O LORD of hosts,
My King and my God.

⁴Blessed *and* greatly favored are those who dwell in Your house *and* Your presence; They will be singing Your praises all the day long.

Selah.

⁵Blessed *and* greatly favored is the man whose strength is in You, In whose heart are the highways *to Zion*.

⁶Passing through the Valley of Weeping (Baca), they make it a place of springs;
The early rain also covers it with blessings.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord God, that
You are a sun and shield; You
bestow grace and favor and
honor; no good thing will
You withhold from me,
because I walk uprightly.*

• adapted from Psalm 84:11

⁷They go from strength to strength [increasing in victorious power];

Each of them appears before God in Zion.

⁸O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; Listen, O God of Jacob!

Selah.

⁹See our shield, O God,
And look at the face of Your anointed [the king as Your representative].

¹⁰For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand
[anywhere else];
I would rather stand [as a doorkeeper] at the threshold of
the house of my God
Than to live [at ease] in the tents of wickedness.

¹¹For the LORD God is a sun and shield;
The LORD bestows grace *and* favor and honor;
No good thing will He withhold from those who walk
uprightly.

¹²O LORD of hosts,
How blessed *and* greatly favored is the man who trusts in
You [believing in You, relying on You, and committing
himself to You with confident hope and expectation].

Psalm 85

Prayer for God's Mercy upon the Nation.

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

¹O LORD, You have [at last] shown favor to Your land [of Canaan]; You have restored [from Babylon] the captives of Jacob (Israel).

²You have forgiven the wickedness of Your people;
You have covered all their sin.

Selah.

³You have withdrawn all Your wrath,
You have turned away from Your burning anger.

⁴Restore us, O God of our salvation,
And cause Your indignation toward us to cease.

⁵Will You be angry with us forever?
Will You prolong Your anger to all generations?

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Wants To Bless You

Being able to maintain a good attitude during times of suffering is a virtue, and it is very important, but continual suffering is not God's will for anybody. The apostle Paul said he had times of being abased and times of abounding (see Phil. 4:12). We will go through difficulties in this life, but we can, and should, expect God's deliverance along with a return to the abundant life.

The psalmist said, "The LORD bestows grace and favor and honor; no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly" (Ps. 84:11). During times when we don't get what we want when we want it, God has a good reason. Perhaps the timing isn't right, or we are not mature enough to handle it yet, or He has something better in mind, but it is never because He doesn't want us to be blessed. That thought simply isn't consistent with who He is.

POWERPOINT

If you have no idea what God's will for you is at this point, you can start thinking, *Well, I don't know God's plan, but I know that He loves me. Whatever He does will be good, and I'll be blessed.* Practice being positive in every situation, as the psalmist was when he said, "I will hear [with expectant hope] what God the LORD will say" (Ps. 85:8). Even if whatever is taking place in your life at the moment does not seem so good, expect God to speak to you and to bring good out of it, as He has promised in His Word.



⁶Will You not revive us *and* bring us to life again,
That Your people may rejoice in You?

- ⁷Show us Your lovingkindness, O LORD,
And grant us Your salvation.
- ⁸I will hear [with expectant hope] what God the LORD will say,
For He will speak peace to His people, to His godly ones—
But let them not turn again to folly.
- ⁹Surely His salvation is near to those who [reverently] fear
Him [and obey Him with submissive wonder], That glory
[the manifest presence of God] may dwell in our land.
- ¹⁰Steadfast love and truth *and* faithfulness meet together;
Righteousness and peace kiss each other.
- ¹¹Truth springs from the earth,
And righteousness looks down from heaven.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Teach me Your way, O Lord, I
will walk and live in Your
truth; direct my heart to fear
Your name with awe-inspired
reverence and submissive*

wonder:

• *adapted from Psalm 86:11*

- ¹²Indeed, the LORD will give what is good,
And our land will yield its produce.
- ¹³Righteousness will go before Him
And will make His footsteps into a way [in which to walk].

Psalm 86

A Psalm of Supplication and Trust.

A Prayer of David.

- ¹INCLINE YOUR ear, O LORD, and answer me,
For I am distressed and needy [I long for Your help].
- ²Protect my life (soul), for I am godly *and* faithful;
O You my God, save Your servant, who trusts in You
[believing in You and relying on You, confidently
committing everything to You].
- ³Be gracious *and* merciful to me, O Lord,
For to You I cry out all the day long.
- ⁴Make Your servant rejoice,
For to You, O Lord, I lift up my soul [all that I am—in
prayer].
- ⁵For You, O Lord, are good, and ready to forgive [our sins,
sending them away, completely letting them go forever and
ever]; And abundant in lovingkindness *and* overflowing
in mercy to all those who call upon You.

⁶Hear, O LORD, my prayer;
And listen attentively to the voice of my supplications
(specific requests)!

⁷In the day of my trouble I will call upon You,
For You will answer me.

⁸There is no one like You among the gods, O Lord,
Nor are there any works [of wonder and majesty] like Yours.

⁹All nations whom You have made shall come and kneel
down in worship before You, O Lord, And they shall
glorify Your name.

¹⁰For You are great and do wondrous works!
You alone are God.

¹¹Teach me Your way, O LORD,
I will walk *and* live in Your truth;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Becoming More Like God

Ephesians 5:1 teaches us to be imitators of God. So however God is, that is the way we should desire to be. God sees the desires of our hearts and will help us become more and more like He is in our behavior.

God's nature is joyful, not sad or depressed, and He is strong; therefore, we should imitate Him. He is also merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness (see Ps. 86:15). If you become angry with people over an injustice, one way to get over the anger is to imitate God and choose to give them mercy. You can choose to forgive them even if you don't think they deserve it, just as God forgives us when we don't deserve it.

You and I can become more and more like God because His power and character are in us (see 2 Pet. 1:3–4). Begin to imitate God in your life, doing what you believe He would do in situations, instead of what you feel like doing.

Direct my heart to fear Your name [with awe-inspired reverence and submissive wonder]. [Ps 5:11; 69:36]

¹²I will give thanks *and* praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart;

And will glorify Your name forevermore.

¹³For great is Your lovingkindness *and* graciousness toward

- me;
And You have rescued my life from the depths of Sheol
[from death].
- ¹⁴O God, arrogant *and* insolent men have risen up against me;
A band of violent men have sought my life,
And they have not set You before them.
- ¹⁵But You, O Lord, are a God [who protects and is] merciful
and gracious,
Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness and truth.
- ¹⁶Turn to me, and be gracious to me;
Grant Your strength [Your might and the power to resist
temptation] to Your servant,
And save the son of Your handmaid.
- ¹⁷Show me a sign of [Your] goodwill,
That those who hate me may see it and be ashamed,
Because You, O LORD, helped and comforted me.

Psalm 87

The Privileges of Citizenship in Zion.

A Psalm of the sons of Korah. A Song.

- ¹HIS FOUNDATION is on the holy mountain.
- ²The LORD loves the gates of Zion
More than all the dwellings of Jacob (Israel).
- ³Glorious things are spoken of you,
O city of God [Jerusalem].

Selah.

⁴“I will mention Rahab (Egypt) and Babylon among those who know Me—

Behold, Philistia and Tyre with Ethiopia (Cush)—

‘This one was born there.’”

⁵But of Zion it will be said, “This one and that one were born in her,”

And the Most High Himself will establish her.

⁶The LORD will count, when He registers the peoples, “This one was born there.”

Selah.

⁷The singers as well as the players of flutes *will say*,

“All my springs *and* sources of joy are in you [Jerusalem, city of God].”

Psalm 88

A Petition to Be Saved from Death.

A Song. A Psalm of the sons of Korah. To the Chief Musician; set to chant mournfully. A didactic *or* reflective poem of Heman the Ezrahite.

¹O LORD, the God of my salvation,
I have cried out [for help] by day and in the night before
You. [Luke 18:7]

²Let my prayer come before You *and* enter into Your
presence;
Incline Your ear to my cry!

³For my soul is full of troubles,
And my life draws near the grave (Sheol, the place of the

dead).

⁴I am counted among those who go down to the pit (grave);
I am like a man who has no strength [a mere shadow],

⁵Cast away [from the living] *and* abandoned among the
dead,

Like the slain who lie in a [nameless] grave,
Whom You no longer remember,
And they are cut off from Your hand.

⁶You have laid me in the lowest pit,
In dark places, in the depths.

⁷Your wrath has rested heavily upon me,
And You have afflicted me with all Your waves. [Ps 42:7]

Selah.

⁸You have put my friends far from me;
You have made me an object of loathing to them.
I am shut up and I cannot go out.

⁹My eye grows dim with sorrow.
O LORD, I have called on You every day;
I have spread out my hands to You [in prayer].

¹⁰Will You perform wonders for the dead?
Shall the departed spirits arise and praise You?

Selah.

¹¹Will Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave
Or Your faithfulness in Abaddon (the underworld)?

¹²Will Your wonders be known in the darkness?
And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness [where
the dead forget and are forgotten]?

- ¹³ But I have cried out to You, O LORD, for help; And in the morning my prayer will come to You.
- ¹⁴ O LORD, why do You reject me?
Why do You hide Your face from me? [Matt 27:46]
- ¹⁵ I was afflicted and close to death from my youth on;
I suffer Your terrors; I am overcome.
- ¹⁶ Your fierce wrath has swept over me;
Your terrors have destroyed me.
- ¹⁷ They have surrounded me like flood waters all day long;
They have completely encompassed me.
- ¹⁸ Lover and friend You have placed far from me;
My familiar friends are in darkness.

Psalm 89

The LORD's Covenant with David, and Israel's Afflictions.

A skillful song, *or* a didactic *or* reflective poem, of Ethan the Ezrahite.

- ¹ I WILL sing of the goodness *and* lovingkindness of the LORD forever; With my mouth I will make known Your faithfulness from generation to generation.
- ² For I have said, "Goodness *and* lovingkindness will be built up forever;
In the heavens [unchangeable and majestic] You will establish Your faithfulness."
- ³ [God has said] "I have made a covenant with My chosen one;

I have sworn to David My servant,
⁴I will establish your seed forever
And I will build up your throne for all generations.” [Is 9:7;
Jer 33:14–26; Luke 1:32, 33; Gal 3:16]

Selah.

⁵The heavens (angels) praise Your wonders, O LORD, Your
faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones.

POWERPOINT

Perhaps like me, you have known people who were not faithful. But I have also known the faithfulness of God. Indeed, God is not like people, and His faithfulness surrounds Him (see Ps. 89:8). God promises to not ever leave you or forsake you, but to be with you until the very end (see Matt. 28:20). He is with you in your times of need, and He is planning to provide for all your needs (see Heb. 13:5). God is with you when you're going through trials, and He is planning your breakthrough (see 1 Cor. 10:13). When all others forsake you, God will stand by you (see 2 Tim. 4:16–17).



⁶For who in the heavens can be compared to the LORD?

- Who among the divine beings is like the LORD,
⁷A God greatly feared *and* reverently worshiped in the
council of the holy [angelic] ones, And awesome above all
those who are around Him?
- ⁸O LORD God of hosts, who is like You, O mighty LORD?
Your faithfulness surrounds You [as an intrinsic,
unchangeable part of Your very being].
- ⁹You rule the swelling of the sea;
When its waves rise, You still them. [Ps 65:7; 107:29; Mark
4:39]
- ¹⁰You have crushed Rahab (Egypt) like one who is slain;
You have scattered Your enemies with Your mighty arm.
- ¹¹The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours;
The world and all that is in it, You have founded *and*
established them. [Gen 1:3]
- ¹²The north and the south, You have created them;
Mount Tabor and Mount Hermon shout for joy at Your
name.
- ¹³You have a strong arm;
Mighty is Your hand, Your right hand is exalted.
- ¹⁴Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your
throne;
Lovingkindness and truth go before You.
- ¹⁵Blessed *and* happy are the people who know the joyful
sound [of the trumpet's blast]!
They walk, O LORD, in the light *and* favor of Your
countenance!

- ¹⁶In Your name they rejoice all the day,
And in Your righteousness they are exalted.
- ¹⁷For You are the glory of their strength [their proud
adornment],
And by Your favor our horn is exalted.
- ¹⁸For our shield belongs to the LORD,
And our king to the Holy One of Israel.
- ¹⁹Once You spoke in a vision to Your godly ones,
And said, "I have given help to one who is mighty [giving
him the power to be a champion for Israel]; I have exalted
one chosen from the people.
- ²⁰"I have found David My servant;
With My holy oil I have anointed him, [Acts 13:22]
- ²¹With whom My hand shall be established *and* steadfast;
My arm also shall strengthen him.
- ²²"The enemy will not outwit him,
Nor will the wicked man afflict *or* humiliate him.
- ²³"I will crush his adversaries before him,
And strike those who hate him.
- ²⁴"My faithfulness and My steadfast lovingkindness shall be
with him,
And in My name shall his horn be exalted [great power and
prosperity shall be conferred upon him].
- ²⁵"I will also set his hand on the [Mediterranean] sea,
And his right hand on the rivers [the tributaries of the
Euphrates].

²⁶“He will cry to Me, ‘You are my Father,
My God, and the rock of my salvation.’

²⁷“I will also make him My firstborn (preeminent),

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Justifies and Vindicates

The psalmist said of the Lord, “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne” (Ps. 89:14). Justice is one of God’s amazing and admirable character traits. He brings justice as we wait on Him and trust Him to be our Vindicator when we have been hurt or offended or wronged. In the face of cruel accusations, Job said so powerfully, “I know that my Redeemer and Vindicator lives, and at the last He will take His stand upon the earth” (Job 19:25).

God simply asks us to pray and forgive—and He does the rest. He makes even our pain work out for our good (see Rom. 8:28). He justifies, vindicates, and recompenses us. He pays us back for our pain if we follow His commands to forgive our enemies, and He even gives us double for our trouble (see Isa. 61:7; Job 42:10). Refuse to live in unforgiveness, and trust God to reward you for any mistreatment you have endured.

The highest of the kings of the earth. [Rev 1:5]

²⁸“My lovingkindness I will keep for him forevermore,
And My covenant will be confirmed to him.

²⁹“His descendants I will establish forever,
And his throne [will endure] as the days of heaven. [Is 9:7;
Jer 33:14–26; Gal 3:16]

- 30“If his children turn away from My law
And do not walk in My ordinances,
31If they break My statutes
And do not keep My commandments,
32Then I will punish their transgression with the rod [of
discipline],
And [correct] their wickedness with stripes. [2 Sam 7:14]
33“Nevertheless, I will not break off My lovingkindness from
him,
Nor allow My faithfulness to fail.
34“My covenant I will not violate,
Nor will I alter the utterance of My lips.
35“Once [for all] I have sworn by My holiness, [My vow
which cannot be violated];
I will not lie to David.
36“His descendants shall endure forever
And his throne [will continue] as the sun before Me. [Is 9:7;
Jer 33:14–26; Gal 3:16]
37“‘It shall be established forever like the moon,
And the witness in the heavens is ever faithful.’” [Rev 1:5;
3:14]

Selah.

- 38But [in apparent contradiction of all this] You [the faithful
LORD] have cast off and rejected; You have been full of
wrath against Your anointed.
39You have spurned *and* repudiated the covenant with Your
servant;

- You have profaned his crown [by casting it] in the dust.
40 You have broken down all his [city] walls;
You have brought his strongholds to ruin.
41 All who pass along the road rob him;
He has become the scorn of his neighbors.
42 You have exalted the right hand of his foes;
You have made all his enemies rejoice.
43 Also, You have turned back the edge of his sword
And have not made him [strong enough] to stand in battle.
44 You have put an end to his splendor
And have hurled his throne to the ground.
45 You have shortened the days of his youth;
You have covered him with shame.

Selah.

- 46 How long, O LORD?
Will You hide Yourself forever?
Will Your wrath burn like fire?
47 Remember how fleeting my lifetime is;
For what vanity, [for what emptiness, for what futility, for
what wisp of smoke] You have created all the sons of
men!
48 What man can live and not see death?
Can he rescue his soul from the [powerful] hand of Sheol
(the nether world, the place of the dead)?

Selah.

- 49 O Lord, where are Your former lovingkindnesses [so

abundant in the days of David and Solomon], Which You swore to David in Your faithfulness?

⁵⁰Remember, O Lord, the reproach of Your servants [scorned, insulted, and disgraced]; How I bear in my heart the reproach of all the many peoples,

⁵¹With which Your enemies have taunted, O LORD,
With which they have mocked the footsteps of Your anointed.

⁵²Blessed be the LORD forevermore!
Amen and Amen.

BOOK FOUR

Psalms 90

God's Eternity and Man's Transitoriness.

A Prayer of Moses the man of God.

¹LORD, YOU have been our dwelling place [our refuge, our sanctuary, our stability] in all generations.

²Before the mountains were born
Or before You had given birth to the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are [the eternal]
God.

³You turn man back to dust,
And say, "Return [to the earth], O children of [mortal] men!"

⁴For a thousand years in Your sight

Are like yesterday when it is past,
Or as a watch in the night. [2 Pet 3:8]

⁵You have swept them away like a flood, they fall asleep
[forgotten as soon as they are gone]; In the morning they
are like grass which grows anew— ⁶In the morning it
flourishes and springs up;
In the evening it wilts and withers away.

⁷For we have been consumed by Your anger
And by Your wrath we have been terrified.

⁸You have placed our wickedness before you,
Our secret *sins* [which we tried to conceal, You have placed]
in the [revealing] light of Your presence.

⁹For all our days pass away in Your wrath;
We have finished our years like a whispered sigh. [Num
14:26–35]

¹⁰The days of our life are seventy years—
Or even, if because of strength, eighty years;
Yet their pride [in additional years] is only labor and sorrow,
For it is soon gone and we fly away.

¹¹Who understands the power of Your anger? [Who connects
this brevity of life among us with Your judgment of sin?]
And Your wrath, [who connects it] with the [reverent] fear
that is due You?

¹²So teach us to number our days,
That we may cultivate *and* bring to You a heart of wisdom.

¹³Turn, O LORD [from Your fierce anger]; how long will it be?

Be compassionate toward Your servants—revoke Your sentence.

¹⁴O satisfy us with Your lovingkindness in the morning [now, before we grow older],

That we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

¹⁵Make us glad in proportion to the days You have afflicted us,

And the years we have suffered evil.

¹⁶Let Your work [the signs of Your power] be revealed to Your servants And Your [glorious] majesty to their children.

¹⁷And let the [gracious] favor of the Lord our God be on us; Confirm for us the work of our hands—

Yes, confirm the work of our hands.

Psalm 91

Security of the One Who Trusts in the LORD.

¹HE WHO dwells in the shelter of the Most High
Will remain secure *and* rest in the shadow of the Almighty
[whose power no enemy can withstand].

²I will say of the LORD, “He is my refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust [with great confidence, and on whom I rely]!”

³For He will save you from the trap of the fowler,
And from the deadly pestilence.

⁴He will cover you *and* completely protect you with His pinions,
And under His wings you will find refuge;

His faithfulness is a shield and a wall.

⁵You will not be afraid of the terror of night,

Nor of the arrow that flies by day,

⁶Nor of the pestilence that stalks in darkness,

Nor of the destruction (sudden death) that lays waste at
noon.

⁷A thousand may fall at your side

And ten thousand at your right hand,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The Shelter of the Most High

Psalm 91:1 says that God has a place of shelter where we may dwell in peace and safety. The shelter is the place of rest in God, a place of peace and comfort in Him. This secret place is a “spiritual place” where worry is vanquished and peace reigns. It is the shelter of God’s presence. When we spend time praying and seeking God, dwelling in His presence, we are in the secret place, or shelter, of the Most High.

When you and I dwell in Christ or dwell in “the shelter of the Most High” (Ps. 91:1), we do not just visit there occasionally; we take up permanent residence in the shadow of the Almighty.

The shelter of the Most High is a hiding place, a private place, a place of refuge. It is our shelter when we are hurting, overwhelmed, or feeling faint. It is our dwelling place where we are secure and find rest beneath the shadow of the Almighty whose power no enemy can withstand. We experience the sheltering of God against our enemy when we are mistreated or persecuted, when we are in great need, or when we feel we just cannot take it anymore.

We can be firmly planted in God. We can know the source of our help in every situation and in every circumstance. We can have our own secret place of peace and security. We can rely on God and trust Him completely.

God invites us to take refuge under the protective shadow of His wings, and He wants us to remain there always.

POWERPOINT

In the Psalms, David frequently makes statements such as, “I will say of the LORD, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust [with great confidence, and on whom I rely]!’” (Ps. 91:2). Perhaps we should regularly ask ourselves, “What am I saying about the Lord?” We need to *say* right things, not just think them. A person may think, *I believe good things about the Lord*, but it’s important to also speak those things. People often claim to believe something, yet everything they say indicates they believe the opposite! Words have power, so when we have right beliefs about God, we need to be sure to speak them.



But danger will not come near you.

⁸You will only [be a spectator as you] look on with your eyes
And witness the [divine] repayment of the wicked [as you
watch safely from the shelter of the Most High].

⁹Because you have made the LORD, [who is] my refuge, Even
the Most High, your dwelling place, [Ps 91:1, 14]

¹⁰No evil will befall you,
Nor will any plague come near your tent.

Speak God's Word

*I dwell in the shelter of the
Most High and remain secure
and rest under the shadow of
the Almighty whose power no
enemy can withstand. He will
cover me and completely
protect me with His pinions,
and under His wings I will
find refuge; His faithfulness is
a shield and a wall.*

| adapted from PSALM 91:1, 4|

- ¹¹For He will command His angels in regard to you,
To protect *and* defend *and* guard you in all your ways [of
obedience and service].
- ¹²They will lift you up in their hands,
So that you do not [even] strike your foot against a stone.
[Luke 4:10, 11; Heb 1:14]
- ¹³You will tread upon the lion and cobra;
The young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.
[Luke 10:19]
- ¹⁴“Because he set his love on Me, therefore I will save him;

I will set him [securely] on high, because he knows My name [he confidently trusts and relies on Me, knowing I will never abandon him, no, never].

¹⁵“He will call upon Me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble;
I will rescue him and honor him.

¹⁶“With a long life I will satisfy him
And I will let him see My salvation.”

Psalm 92

Praise for the LORD's Goodness.

A Psalm. A Song for the Sabbath day.

¹IT IS a good *and* delightful thing to give thanks to the LORD, To sing praises to Your name, O Most High,

²To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning
And Your faithfulness by night,

³With an instrument of ten strings and with the harp,
With a solemn sound on the lyre.

⁴For You, O LORD, have made me glad by Your works;
At the works of Your hands I joyfully sing.

⁵How great are Your works, O LORD!
Your thoughts are very deep [beyond man's understanding].

⁶A senseless man [in his crude and uncultivated state] knows nothing,
Nor does a [self-righteous] fool understand this:

⁷That though the wicked sprout up like grass

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

God's Angelic Protection

Psalm 91:9–13 shows us clearly that the Lord promises angelic protection and deliverance to those who serve Him and are walking in obedience to Him. Verse 13 says, “You will tread upon the lion and cobra; the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.” Jesus makes a similar statement to His disciples in Luke 10:19 when He says: “Listen carefully: I have given you authority [that you now possess] to tread on serpents and scorpions, and [the ability to exercise authority] over all the power of the enemy (Satan); and nothing will [in any way] harm you.” These words describe our place in God. As believers, we are in a position of power and authority over the enemy and his demons and his deceptive ways. We are also in a position of favor and influence with God.

Saying we have angelic protection does not mean we will never experience any trial or affliction. It means we are protected from whatever the enemy ultimately plans for us as long as we keep our trust in God and believe and speak of Him in accordance with His Word.

One important thing we learn about this angelic protection and our deliverance is that we don't always experience an immediate breakthrough, so we need to be patient. The Lord promises in Psalm 91:15 that when we call on Him, He will answer us and be with us in our troubles; He will strengthen us

and accompany us through our difficulties to victory, deliverance, and honor. It took many years for me to see the following pattern: God is with me in my trials and troubles, then He begins to deliver me out of them, and afterward He honors me. This is a progression, and we will develop peace and joy in the Lord as we go through it. Going through things with God helps us to develop a more intimate relationship with Him.

Psalm 91:14–16 assures us that we have been given His precious promises because of our personal knowledge of God and of His mercy, love, and kindness, and because we trust and rely on Him, knowing He will never leave us or forsake us. These promises include the fact that He will be with us, answer us, deliver us, and honor us with long and abundant life. These assurances give us great peace and enable us to live without worry.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Thank You, God, for the assurance of Your angelic protection and for Your promises to be with me, to answer me, deliver me, and honor me with long and abundant life. In Jesus' name. Amen.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Happy Thoughts, Happy Words, Happy Life

The more we speak about something, the more we will have of it. For example, if you talk about the people and things you don't like, you will dislike them even more, but talking about the people and things you love will increase the ability to love in your life.

Very few people learn this blessed lesson: Love the life you have and never compare yourself, or what you have, to anyone else and you will “flourish and be vital and fresh [rich in trust and love and contentment]” (Ps. 92:14). Learn to love everything except evil. If you dislike something, change it if you can, but if you cannot then trust God and stay happy. If you don't like your job, you can look for a different one. If you don't like your neighborhood, you can move. If you don't like the weather, realize you can't change it and change your attitude toward it.

The more you are filled with loving thoughts and the more you speak loving words, the happier you will be.

And all evildoers flourish,
They will be destroyed forever.

⁸But You, LORD, are on high forever.

⁹For behold, Your enemies, O LORD,
For behold, Your enemies will perish;

All who do evil will be scattered.

¹⁰But my horn [my emblem of strength and power] You have exalted like that of a wild ox; I am anointed with fresh oil [for Your service].

¹¹My eye has looked on my foes;
My ears hear of the evildoers who rise up against me.

¹²The righteous will flourish like the date palm [long-lived, upright and useful];
They will grow like a cedar in Lebanon [majestic and stable].

¹³Planted in the house of the LORD,
They will flourish in the courts of our God.

¹⁴[Growing in grace] they will still thrive *and* bear fruit *and* prosper in old age; They will flourish *and* be vital and fresh [rich in trust and love and contentment];

¹⁵[They are living memorials] to declare that the LORD is upright *and* faithful [to His promises]; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him. [Rom 9:14]

Psalm 93

The Majesty of the LORD.

¹THE LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty *and* splendor;
The LORD has clothed and encircled Himself with strength;
the world is firmly established, it cannot be moved.

²Your throne is established from of old;
You are from everlasting.

³The floods have lifted up, O LORD,
The floods have lifted up their voice;
The floods lift up their pounding waves.

⁴More than the sounds of many waters,
More than the mighty breakers of the sea,
The LORD on high is mighty.

⁵Your precepts are fully confirmed *and* completely reliable;
Holiness adorns Your house,
O LORD, forever.

Psalm 94

The LORD Implored to Avenge His People.

¹O LORD God, You to whom vengeance belongs,
O God, You to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth [in
judgment]!

²Rise up, O Judge of the earth;
Give to the proud a fitting compensation.

- ³O LORD, how long will the wicked,
How long will the wicked rejoice in triumph?
- ⁴They pour out *words*, speaking arrogant things;
All who do evil boast proudly. [Jude 14, 15]
- ⁵They crush Your people, O LORD,
And afflict *and* abuse Your heritage.
- ⁶They kill the widow and the alien
And murder the fatherless.
- ⁷Yet they say, “The LORD does not see,
Nor does the God of Jacob (Israel) notice it.”
- ⁸Consider thoughtfully, you senseless (stupid ones) among
the people;
And you [dull-minded] fools, when will you become wise
and understand?
- ⁹He who made the ear, does He not hear?
He who formed the eye, does He not see?
- ¹⁰He who instructs the nations,
Does He not rebuke *and* punish,
He who teaches man knowledge?
- ¹¹The LORD knows the thoughts of man,
That they are a mere breath (vain, empty, futile). [1 Cor 3:20]
- ¹²Blessed [with wisdom and prosperity] is the man whom You
discipline *and* instruct, O LORD,

Speak God's Word

I am blessed with wisdom and prosperity because the Lord disciplines and instructs me.

| *adapted from* PSALM 94:12 |

Speak God's Word

*God grants me power to calm
myself and find peace in the
days of adversity, until the pit
is dug for the wicked and
ungodly.*

| adapted from PSALM 94:13 |

- And whom You teach from Your law,
¹³That You may grant him [power to calm himself and find]
peace in the days of adversity,
Until the pit is dug for the wicked *and* ungodly.
¹⁴For the LORD will not abandon His people,
Nor will He abandon His inheritance.
¹⁵For judgment will again be righteous,
And all the upright in heart will follow it.
¹⁶Who will stand up for me against the evildoers?
Who will take a stand for me against those who do
wickedness?
¹⁷If the LORD had not been my help,
I would soon have dwelt in [the land of] silence.
¹⁸If I say, "My foot has slipped,"

Your compassion *and* lovingkindness, O LORD, will hold me up.

¹⁹When my anxious thoughts multiply within me,
Your comforts delight me.

²⁰Can a throne of destruction be allied with You,
One which frames *and* devises mischief by decree [under
the sacred name of law]?

²¹They band themselves together against the life of the
righteous
And condemn the innocent to death.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*When I make a mistake, Your
compassion and
lovingkindness, O Lord, hold
me up. When my anxious
thoughts multiply within me,
Your comforts delight me.*

• *adapted from Psalm 94:18–19*

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Finding Peace in Adversity

We all have a tipping point in our lives when we recognize we are under so much pressure that we are on the verge of losing our peace and are about to start behaving badly. The psalmist asked the Lord to grant His people “[power to calm himself and find] peace in the days of adversity” (Ps. 94:13). Here are some steps that will hopefully help the process: *Step 1* —When we feel overwhelmed, we usually start talking to anyone who will listen. We will never regain control unless we stop talking and regroup!

Step 2—Be realistic about what is really happening. Is the problem really as bad as you are imagining it to be? Are you worrying about things that have not even happened yet and may never happen?

Step 3—As you begin to calm down, ask yourself if any of the things you feel overloaded with can be put off until later or perhaps handed off to someone else. Is help available if you ask for it? If you truly want change within your circumstances, you will need to be willing to make some changes yourself.

Step 4—Think about what you are thinking about that is frustrating you and stop thinking about it. Cast your care on God and let Him show you what He can do. Keep saying, “God, I let this go. I trust You!” until you feel yourself calming down.

Step 5—We can manage our emotions and learn to live beyond our feelings. Being the master or mistress of yourself under God’s leadership is entirely possible, but it will not happen as long as you let raw emotion rule. We cannot prevent feelings from coming, but we are totally capable of using self-control even in the midst of the wildest emotion.

Step 6—Resist the devil at his onset! The root source of all lack of peace is the devil, not people or even circumstances. It is the devil’s working through the people or the circumstance. The devil has set you up to be upset, and the sooner you take action and resist him, the easier it will be.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God of all peace, I thank You for granting me the power to calm myself and find peace in the midst of troubling situations. Give me the wisdom I need to manage my emotions and resist the enemy’s attacks to get me to be upset. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

First Response

When we worry, we are focusing on our problems. When we are anxious about things, we talk about them incessantly. Why? Because what is in our heart eventually comes out of our mouth (see Matt. 12:34). The more we think and talk about our problems, the larger they become. Rather than meditating on the problems, we can meditate on the faithfulness of God and remind ourselves there is no need to worry. The psalmist said, “When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Your comforts delight me” (Ps. 94:19).

I have heard many people say, “I just can’t help it, I am a worrier.” The truth is that people often choose to worry because they do not know how to trust God. We become good at worrying because we practice at it; therefore, we can become good at trusting God if we practice. Let your first response in any situation be to trust God.

²²But the LORD has become my high tower *and* defense, And my God the rock of my refuge.

²³He has turned back their own wickedness upon them And will destroy them by means of their own evil; The LORD our God will wipe them out.

Psalm 95

Praise to the LORD, and Warning against Unbelief.

- ¹O COME, let us sing joyfully to the LORD;
Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation.
- ²Let us come before His presence with a song of
thanksgiving;
Let us shout joyfully to Him with songs.
- ³For the LORD is a great God
And a great King above all gods,
- ⁴In whose hand are the depths of the earth;
The peaks of the mountains are His also.
- ⁵The sea is His, for He made it [by His command];
And His hands formed the dry land. [Gen 1:9]
- ⁶O come, let us worship and bow down,
Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker [in reverent praise
and prayer].
- ⁷For He is our God
And we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His
hand.
Today, if you will hear His voice, [Heb 3:7–11]
- ⁸Do not harden your hearts *and* become spiritually dull as at
Meribah [the place of strife], And as at Massah [the place
of testing] in the wilderness, [Ex 17:1–7; Num 20:1–13;
Deut 6:16]

⁹“When your fathers tested Me,
They tried Me, even though they had seen My work [of
miracles].

¹⁰“For forty years I was grieved *and* disgusted with that
generation,
And I said, ‘They are a people who err in their heart,

Speak God's Word

*Today, if I hear God's voice, I
will not harden my heart or
become spiritually dull.*

| *adapted from* PSALM 95:7-8 |

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Live in the Now

Psalm 95:7 says, “Today, if you will hear His voice.” We need to understand that God wants us to focus on each day as it comes and to learn how to be “now” people.

The choices we make today will determine whether we will enjoy every moment in our lives or waste them by being anxious or upset. Sometimes we end up missing part of today because we are too concerned about tomorrow. We need to keep our minds focused on what God wants us to be doing now.

For years, this has been my definition of anxiety: “Anxiety is caused by trying to mentally or emotionally get into things that are not here yet (the future) or things that have already been (the past).” We often spend our mental time in the past or in the future, instead of living in the moment we have now. When we don’t truly give ourselves to what we are doing at the moment, we become prone to anxiety. If we live in the now, we will find the Lord there with us. Regardless of the situations life brings our way, God has promised never to leave us or forsake us but to always be with us and help us (see Heb. 13:5; Matt. 28:20). Don’t waste your precious “now” worrying about yesterday or tomorrow. Live today!

And they do not acknowledge or regard My ways.’

- ¹¹“Therefore I swore [an oath] in My wrath,
‘They absolutely shall not enter My rest [the land of
promise].’” [Heb 4:3–11]

Psalm 96

A Call to Worship the LORD the Righteous Judge.

¹O SING to the LORD a new song;
Sing to the LORD, all the earth!

²Sing to the LORD, bless His name;
Proclaim good news of His salvation from day to day.

³Declare His glory among the nations,
His marvelous works *and* wonderful deeds among all the
peoples.

⁴For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised;
He is to be feared above all gods. [Deut 6:5; Rev 14:7]

⁵For all the gods of the peoples are [worthless, lifeless] idols,
But the LORD made the heavens.

⁶Splendor and majesty are before Him;
Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.

⁷Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, Ascribe to
the LORD glory and strength.

⁸Ascribe to the LORD the glory of His name;
Bring an offering and come into His courts.

⁹Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness;
Tremble [in submissive wonder] before Him, all the earth.

- ¹⁰Say among the nations, “The LORD reigns;
Indeed, the world is firmly *and* securely established, it shall
not be moved;
He will judge *and* rule the people with fairness.” [Rev 11:15;
19:6]
- ¹¹Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
Let the sea roar, and all the things it contains;
- ¹²Let the field be exultant, and all that is in it.
Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy
- ¹³Before the LORD, for He is coming,
For He is coming to judge the earth.
He will judge the world with righteousness
And the peoples in His faithfulness. [1 Chr 16:23–33; Rev
19:11]

Psalm 97

The LORD’s Power and Dominion.

- ¹THE LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice;
Let the many islands *and* coastlands be glad.
- ²Clouds and thick darkness surround Him [as at Sinai];
Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.
[Ex 19:9]
- ³Fire goes before Him
And burns up His adversaries on all sides.
- ⁴His lightnings have illuminated the world;
The earth has seen and trembled.

- ⁵The mountains melted like wax at the presence of the LORD,
At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.
- ⁶The heavens declare His righteousness,
And all the peoples see His glory *and* brilliance.
- ⁷Let all those be [deeply] ashamed who serve carved images,
Who boast in idols.
Worship Him, all you gods! [Heb 1:6]
- ⁸Zion heard this and was glad,
And the daughters (cities) of Judah rejoiced [in relief]
Because of Your judgments, O LORD.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that light is
sown like seed for the
righteous and illuminates our
path. And irrepressible joy is
spread for the upright in
heart who delight in Your
favor and protection.*

⁹For You are the LORD Most High over all the earth;
You are exalted far above all gods.

¹⁰You who love the LORD, hate evil;
He protects the souls of His godly ones (believers),
He rescues them from the hand of the wicked. [Rom 8:13–17]

¹¹Light is sown [like seed] for the righteous *and* illuminates
their path,
And [irrepressible] joy [is spread] for the upright in heart
[who delight in His favor and protection].

¹²Rejoice in the LORD, you righteous ones [those whose moral
and spiritual integrity places them in right standing with
God], And praise *and* give thanks at the remembrance of
His holy name.

Psalm 98

A Call to Praise the LORD for His Righteousness.

A Psalm

¹O SING to the LORD a new song,
For He has done marvelous *and* wonderful things;
His right hand and His holy arm have gained the victory for
Him.

²The LORD has made known His salvation;
He has [openly] revealed His righteousness in the sight of
the nations. [Luke 2:30, 31]

³He has [graciously] remembered His lovingkindness and His faithfulness to the house of Israel; All the ends of the earth have witnessed the salvation of our God. [Acts 13:47; 28:28]

⁴Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth; Shout [in jubilation] and sing for joy and sing praises.

⁵Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre,
With the lyre and the sound of melody.

⁶With trumpets and the sound of the horn
Shout with joy before the King, the LORD.

⁷Let the sea thunder *and* roar, and all the things it contains,
The world and those who dwell in it.

⁸Let the rivers clap their hands;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Your Thoughts Reveal Themselves

Your thought life is directly related to your attitude. In other words, what you think secretly in your heart is expressed in your words, facial expressions, and attitudes. Would you rather be around people who have negative attitudes or around people with humble attitudes, thankful attitudes, positive attitudes, and responsible attitudes?

Let me encourage you to take an attitude inventory. If your attitude were a song, would it be “Make the World Go Away,” “Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head,” “I Did It My Way,” or “Oh, What a Beautiful Morning”?

The psalmist’s attitude was, “O sing to the LORD a new song, for He has done marvelous and wonderful things” (Ps. 98:1). Fresh, new ways of thinking will produce a fresh, new attitude that will enable you to sing to the Lord a new song.

Let the mountains sing together for joy *and* delight
⁹Before the LORD, for He is coming to judge the earth;
He will judge the world with righteousness
And the peoples with fairness.

Psalm 99

Praise to the LORD for His Fidelity to Israel.

¹THE LORD reigns, let the peoples tremble [with submissive wonder]!

He sits enthroned above the cherubim, let the earth shake!

²The LORD is great in Zion,

And He is exalted *and* magnified above all the peoples.

³Let them [reverently] praise Your great and awesome name;
Holy is He. [Rev 15:4]

⁴The strength of the King loves justice *and* righteous judgment;

You have established fairness;

You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob
(Israel).

⁵Exalt the LORD our God

And worship at His footstool;

Holy is He.

⁶Moses and Aaron were among His priests,

And Samuel was among those who called on His name;

They called upon the LORD and He answered them.

⁷He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud;

POWERPOINT

Here is a powerful thought to think: *I believe God. I believe He is working in me no matter what I may feel or how the situation may look.* I

recommend that you purposely think right thoughts and that you also go the extra mile and speak them out loud as your confession—“call upon the Lord” as Moses, Aaron, and Samuel did (see Ps. 99:6).

Remember that God is delivering you, little by little, so don't be discouraged. Be patient with yourself.



They kept His testimonies

And the statutes that He gave them. [Ps 105:9, 10]

⁸You answered them, O LORD our God;

You were a forgiving God to them,

And yet an avenger of their *evil* practices.

⁹Exalt the LORD our God

And worship at His holy hill [Zion, the temple mount],

For the LORD our God is holy.

Psalm 100

All Men Exhorted to Praise God.

A Psalm of Thanksgiving.

¹SHOUT JOYFULLY to the LORD, all the earth.

²Serve the LORD with gladness *and* delight;

Come before His presence with joyful singing.

³Know *and* fully recognize with gratitude that the LORD

Himself is God; It is He who has made us, not we
ourselves [and we are His].

We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. [Eph 2:10]

⁴Enter His gates with a song of thanksgiving

And His courts with praise.

Be thankful to Him, bless *and* praise His name.

⁵For the LORD is good;

His mercy *and* lovingkindness are everlasting,

His faithfulness [endures] to all generations.

Psalm 101

The Psalmist's Profession of Uprightness.

A Psalm of David.

¹I WILL sing of [steadfast] lovingkindness and justice;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Look for Something To Be Thankful For

Prayer often goes unanswered because of an ungrateful heart. There are people who are grumblers, murmurers, faultfinders, and complainers. We must be careful not to be like that. We need to be the kind of people who are thankful for what God is doing. Complaining and being ungrateful are major hindrances to answered prayers.

If we want to see God at work in our spouse, our children, our finances, our circumstances, our job, we can start by being grateful for what we already have.

The Holy Spirit once impressed on me the idea that when people pray and ask God for things but don't have a thankful heart, it's a clear indication that they're not ready for something else because they won't be thankful for that either. The devil's whole plan is to keep us dissatisfied with something all the time. Being ungrateful is a symptom of a lack of spiritual maturity.

God wants us to grow in maturity and become more like His Son, Jesus. God's answer to ingratitude is a life filled with thanksgiving and praise.

Look for something today to be thankful for and offer up a prayer of praise and thanksgiving (see Ps. 100:4).

KEYS to a Victorious Life

A Humble Heart

God hates pride, and it is something we need to be quick to recognize in our thoughts, words, and attitudes. Every human will have to confront pride at various times in life. Pride makes us think we are better than others; it causes us to judge and criticize; and it makes us unwilling to listen to and respect the ideas and opinions of others. These are just a few of the problems pride creates.

God's Word teaches us that God helps the humble (see 1 Pet. 5:5), but He is unable to help those who are proud because they don't think they need help. They are independent, but God wants us to be totally dependent on Him.

If we want to follow God's advice and humble ourselves under His mighty hand (see 1 Pet. 5:6), we need to learn to say, "Apart from Jesus I can do nothing" (see John 15:5). Ask God to work in your life in such a way that you develop the same humble attitude that Jesus has.

To You, O LORD, I will sing praises.

²I will behave wisely *and* follow the way of integrity.

When will You come to me?

I will walk in my house in integrity *and* with a blameless heart.

³I will set no worthless *or* wicked thing before my eyes.

I hate the practice of those who fall away [from the right path];

It will not grasp hold of me.

⁴A perverse heart shall depart from me;

I will not tolerate evil.

⁵Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will silence;

The one who has a haughty look and a proud (arrogant) heart I will not tolerate.

⁶My eyes will be on the faithful (honorable) of the land, that they may dwell with me; He who walks blamelessly is the one who will minister to *and* serve me.

⁷He who practices deceit will not dwell in my house; He who tells lies *and* half-truths will not continue [to remain] in my presence.

⁸Morning after morning I will destroy all the wicked in the land,

That I may cut off from the city of the LORD all those who do evil.

Psalm 102

Prayer of an Afflicted Man for Mercy on Himself and on Zion.

A Prayer of the afflicted; when he is overwhelmed and pours out his complaint to God.

¹HEAR MY prayer, O LORD,

And let my cry for help come to You!

²Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my distress!

- Incline Your ear to me;
In the day when I call, answer me quickly.
- ³For my days have vanished in smoke,
And my bones have been scorched like a hearth.
- ⁴My heart has been struck like grass and withered,
Indeed, [absorbed by my heartache] I forget to eat my food.
- ⁵Because of the sound of my groaning [in suffering and
trouble]
My bones cling to my flesh.
- ⁶I am like a [mournful] vulture of the wilderness;
I am like a [desolate] owl of the wasteland.
- ⁷I am sleepless *and* lie awake [mourning],
I have become like a lonely bird on a housetop.
- ⁸My enemies taunt me all day long;
Those who ridicule me use my *name* as a curse.
- ⁹For I have eaten ashes like bread,
And have mingled my drink with tears [Is 44:20]
- ¹⁰Because of Your indignation and Your wrath,
For You have lifted me up and thrown me away.
- ¹¹My days are like an evening shadow that lengthens *and*
vanishes [with the sun];
And as for me, I wither away like grass.
- ¹²But You, O LORD, are enthroned forever [ruling eternally as
sovereign]; And [the fame and glory of] Your name
[endures] to all generations.
- ¹³You will arise and have compassion on Zion,

POWERPOINT

Those who are afflicted and going through very difficult situations can expect God to bring deliverance to them. He will never allow more to come to us than we can bear, and He always provides a way out of temptation (see 1 Cor. 10:13).

You can be confident that at the exact right moment God will arise and have mercy and compassion on you. Whenever you experience a difficult or a trying time, be encouraged that God sees your situation. Know that as long as you put your trust in Him, you will definitely see victory. Stay in faith and be patient. God won't be late.



For it is time to be gracious *and* show favor to her;
Yes, the appointed time [the moment designated] has come.

[Ps 12:5; 119:126]

- ¹⁴For Your servants find [melancholy] pleasure in the stones
[of her ruins]
And feel pity for her dust.
- ¹⁵So the nations will fear the name of the LORD,
And all the kings of the earth [will recognize] Your glory. [Ps
96:9]
- ¹⁶For the LORD has built up Zion;
He has appeared in His glory *and* brilliance;
- ¹⁷He has regarded the prayer of the destitute,
And has not despised their prayer.
- ¹⁸Let this be recorded for the generation to come,
That a people yet to be created will praise the LORD.
- ¹⁹For He looked down from His holy height [of His
sanctuary],
From heaven the LORD gazed on the earth,
- ²⁰To hear the sighing of the prisoner,
To set free those who were doomed to death,
- ²¹So that people may declare the name of the LORD in Zion
And His praise in Jerusalem,
- ²²When the peoples are gathered together,
And the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.
- ²³He has exhausted my strength [humbling me with sorrow] in
the way;
He has shortened my days.
- ²⁴I said, "O my God, do not take me away in the midst of my

days;

Your years are [eternal] throughout all generations.

²⁵“At the beginning You founded the earth;

The heavens are the work of Your hands.

²⁶“Even they will perish, but You endure;

Yes, all of them will wear out like a garment.

Like clothing You will change them and they shall be changed.

²⁷“But You remain the same,

And Your years will never end. [Heb 1:10–12]

²⁸“The children of Your servants will continue,

And their descendants will be established before You.”

Psalm 103

Praise for the LORD's Mercies.

A Psalm of David.

¹BLESS *AND* affectionately praise the LORD, O my soul, And all that is [deep] within me, *bless* His holy name.

²Bless *and* affectionately praise the LORD, O my soul, And do not forget any of His benefits;

³Who forgives all your sins,
Who heals all your diseases;

⁴Who redeems your life from the pit,
Who crowns you [lavishly] with lovingkindness and tender mercy;

⁵Who satisfies your years with good things,

So that your youth is renewed like the [soaring] eagle. [Is
40:31]

⁶The LORD executes righteousness
And justice for all the oppressed.

⁷He made known His ways [of righteousness and justice] to
Moses,
His acts to the children of Israel.

⁸The LORD is merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger and abounding in compassion *and*
lovingkindness. [James 5:11]

Speak God's Word

*I bless and praise the Lord,
and I do not forget any of His
benefits. He forgives all my
sins; He heals all my
diseases; He redeems my life
from the pit. He crowns me
with lovingkindness and
tender mercy. He satisfies my
years with good things, so
that my youth is renewed like
the eagle.*

| *adapted from* PSALM 103:2-5 |

POWERPOINT

Psalm 103:14 reminds us that
God understands our
weaknesses. He knows we will
at times succumb to
temptations and wrong
behavior, but He is also a
compassionate, loving Father
Who stands ready to forgive
everything. The very fact that
we cannot do everything right
is the reason God sent Jesus to
pay the price for our
redemption.



- ⁹He will not always strive *with us*,
Nor will He keep *His anger* forever.
- ¹⁰He has not dealt with us according to our sins [as we
deserve],
Nor rewarded us [with punishment] according to our
wickedness.
- ¹¹For as the heavens are high above the earth,

So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear *and* worship Him [with awe-filled respect and deepest reverence].

¹²As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

¹³Just as a father loves his children,
So the LORD loves those who fear *and* worship Him [with awe-filled respect and deepest reverence].

¹⁴For He knows our [mortal] frame;
He remembers that we are [merely] dust.

¹⁵As for man, his days are like grass;
Like a flower of the field, so he flourishes.

¹⁶For the wind passes over it and it is no more,
And its place knows it no longer.

¹⁷But the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who [reverently] fear Him, And His righteousness to children's children, [Deut 10:12]

¹⁸To those who honor *and* keep His covenant,

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Don't Let Your Thoughts Drain Your Energy

I believe God gives each of us abilities and corresponding energy to help us fulfill our destiny. If you are lacking energy, it may be due to faulty thinking in some area of your life. Negative thoughts—fear, bitterness, guilt, discouragement, resentment, unforgiveness, and others—always steal energy.

Some of the most energy-draining kinds of thoughts are those about past mistakes, failures, and sins, which produce guilt and condemnation. The enemy loves to fill our minds with thoughts of past failures that we cannot do anything about. But we can choose which way we think. We can think about the past and what we have lost or we can think about the future and the opportunities in front of us. We can think about our sins, or we can think about God's grace manifested by His sending Jesus to pay for our sins and remove them "as far as the east is from the west" (Ps. 103:12).

We cannot pay for our sins with feelings of guilt, because

Jesus already paid for our sins when He died on the cross. His sacrifice is good for all time (see Heb. 9:28; 10:10). There is nothing we can add to what Jesus has done. We can only humbly and gratefully accept the complete forgiveness He offers and refuse the guilt.

People who love God often suffer terribly with guilty thoughts and feelings over every tiny thing they do wrong. For years I was one of those people, but learning to line up my thinking with God's Word has set me free. When I sin, I am quick to repent and receive forgiveness. When guilt comes, I simply think or sometimes say, "I am forgiven completely and there is no guilt or condemnation for those who are in Christ" (see Rom. 8:1). The mind is the battlefield, and if we want victory and enjoyment in life, we need to be willing to learn how to control and properly manage our thoughts.

God did not design us to continually feel bad about ourselves. We are not built for guilt! God loves us and wants us to keep our hearts light and free. Thoughts that produce guilt or condemnation should immediately be resisted in Jesus' name.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord Jesus, because of Your suffering and death, I am forgiven completely and I have no guilt or condemnation for past failures and sins. Thank You that I can bring my thoughts into obedience to You and live in the freedom of Your grace and power. Amen.

And remember to do His commandments [imprinting His word on their hearts].

¹⁹The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, And His sovereignty rules over all [the universe].

²⁰Bless the LORD, you His angels,
You mighty ones who do His commandments,
Obeying the voice of His word!

²¹Bless the LORD, all you His hosts,
You who serve Him and do His will.

²²Bless the LORD, all you works of His, in all places of His dominion; Bless *and* affectionately praise the LORD, O my soul!

Psalm 104

The LORD's Care over All His Works.

- ¹BLESS *AND* affectionately praise the LORD, O my soul!
O LORD my God, You are very great;
You are clothed with splendor and majesty,
²[You are the One] who covers Yourself with light as with a garment,
Who stretches out the heavens like a tent curtain,
³Who lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters
[above the firmament],
Who makes the clouds His chariot,
Who walks on the wings of the wind,
⁴Who makes winds His messengers,
Flames of fire His ministers. [Heb 1:7]
- ⁵He established the earth on its foundations,
So that it will not be moved forever and ever. [Job 38:4, 6]
- ⁶You covered it with the deep as with a garment;
The waters were standing above the mountains. [Gen 1:2; 2 Pet 3:5]
- ⁷At Your rebuke they fled;
At the sound of Your thunder they hurried away.
- ⁸The mountains rose, the valleys sank down
To the place which You established for them.
- ⁹You set a boundary [for the waters] that they may not cross

over,
So that they will not return to cover the earth.

- ¹⁰You send springs into the valleys;
Their waters flow among the mountains.
- ¹¹They give drink to every beast of the field;
The wild donkeys quench their thirst there.
- ¹²Beside them the birds of the heavens have their nests;
They lift up their voices *and* sing among the branches.
[Matt 13:32]
- ¹³He waters the mountains from His upper chambers;
The earth is satisfied with the fruit of His works.
- ¹⁴He causes grass to grow for the cattle,
And all that the earth produces for cultivation by man,
So that he may bring food from the earth—
- ¹⁵And wine which makes the heart of man glad,
So that he may make his face glisten with oil,
And bread to sustain *and* strengthen man's heart.
- ¹⁶The trees of the LORD drink their fill,
The cedars of Lebanon which He has planted,
- ¹⁷Where the birds make their nests;
As for the stork, the fir trees are her house.
- ¹⁸The high mountains are for the wild goats;
The rocks are a refuge for the shepherim.
- ¹⁹He made the moon for the seasons;
The sun knows the [exact] place of its setting.

- ²⁰You [O LORD] make darkness and it becomes night,
In which prowls about every wild beast of the forest.
- ²¹The young lions roar after their prey
And seek their food from God.
- ²²When the sun arises, they withdraw
And lie down in their dens.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Old Things Have Passed Away

As “a new creation” in Christ, you don’t have to allow the old things that happened to you to keep affecting you. The old things have passed away. You’re a new person with a new life in Christ (see 2 Cor. 5:17). You can begin to have your mind renewed by studying God’s Word and learning about His good plan for you. Good things are going to happen to you, and you can start believing that you will be “filled and satisfied with good [things]” (Ps. 104:28).

Even if your reality is filled with negatives, you can still have a positive attitude toward it. In every situation, trust God and know that He loves you. Believe that He works good out of all things (see Rom. 8:28).

Rejoice! It’s a new day, a day for good things!

²³Man goes out to his work

And remains at his labor until evening.

²⁴O LORD, how many *and* varied are Your works!

In wisdom You have made them all;

The earth is full of Your riches *and* Your creatures.

²⁵There is the sea, great and broad,

In which are swarms without number,

Creatures both small and great.

- ²⁶There the ships [of the sea] sail,
And Leviathan [the sea monster], which You have formed to
play there.
- ²⁷They all wait for You
To give them their food in its appointed season.
- ²⁸You give it to them, they gather it up;
You open Your hand, they are filled *and* satisfied with good
[things].
- ²⁹You hide Your face, they are dismayed;
You take away their breath, they die
And return to their dust.
- ³⁰You send out Your Spirit, they are created;
You renew the face of the ground.
- ³¹May the glory of the LORD endure forever; May the LORD
rejoice *and* be glad in His works— ³²He looks at the
earth, and it trembles;
He touches the mountains, and they smoke.
- ³³I will sing to the LORD as long as I live;
I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.
- ³⁴May my meditation be sweet *and* pleasing to Him;
As for me, I will rejoice *and* be glad in the LORD.
- ³⁵Let sinners be consumed from the earth,
And let the wicked be no more.
Bless *and* affectionately praise the LORD, O my soul.
Praise the LORD! (Hallelujah!)

Psalm 105

The LORD's Wonderful Works in Behalf of Israel.

¹O GIVE thanks to the LORD, call upon His name;
Make known His deeds among the people.

²Sing to Him, sing praises to Him;
Speak of all His wonderful acts *and* devoutly praise them.

³Glory in His holy name;
Let the hearts of those who seek *and* require the LORD [as
their most essential need] rejoice.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Be Full of God

Does God want us to be full of ourselves? No! According to Ephesians 3:19, we are supposed to be full of God! We are to get our minds off of ourselves and fill them instead with the “fullness of God.” Let your mind and mouth and your entire body be “completely filled and flooded with God Himself!” We can do this by thinking about Him, talking about Him, and letting our actions glorify Him.

I encourage you to follow David’s instruction in Psalm 105:4: “Seek and deeply long for the LORD and His strength [His power, His might]; seek and deeply long for His face and His presence continually.” The one thing that David wanted was God!

⁴Seek *and* deeply long for the LORD and His strength [His power, His might]; Seek *and* deeply long for His face *and* His presence continually.

⁵Remember [with awe and gratitude] the wonderful things which He has done,
His amazing deeds and the judgments uttered by His mouth
[on His enemies, as in Egypt], [Ps 78:43–51]

⁶O you offspring of Abraham, His servant,
O you sons of Jacob, His chosen ones!

- ⁷He is the LORD our God;
His judgments are in all the earth.
- ⁸He has remembered His covenant forever,
The word which He commanded *and* established to a
thousand generations,
- ⁹*The covenant* which He made with Abraham,
And His sworn oath to Isaac, [Luke 1:72, 73]
- ¹⁰Which He confirmed to Jacob as a statute,
To Israel as an everlasting covenant,
- ¹¹Saying, “To you I will give the land of Canaan
As the measured portion of your inheritance.”
- ¹²When there were only a few men in number,
Very few [in fact], and strangers in it;
- ¹³And they wandered from one nation to another,
From one kingdom to another people,
- ¹⁴He allowed no man to oppress them;
He rebuked kings for their sakes, *saying*, [Gen 12:17; 20:3–7]
- ¹⁵“Do not touch My anointed ones,
And do My prophets no harm.” [1 Chr 16:8–22]
- ¹⁶And He called for a famine upon the land [of Egypt];
He cut off every source of bread. [Gen 41:54]
- ¹⁷He sent a man before them,
Joseph, who was sold as a slave. [Gen 45:5; 50:20, 21]
- ¹⁸His feet they hurt with shackles;
He was put in chains of iron,

- ¹⁹Until the time that his word [of prophecy regarding his
brothers] came true,
The word of the LORD tested *and* refined him.
- ²⁰The king sent and released him,
The ruler of the peoples [of Egypt], and set him free.
- ²¹He made Joseph lord of his house
And ruler of all his possessions, [Gen 41:40]
- ²²To imprison his princes at his will,
That he might teach his elders wisdom.
- ²³Israel also came into Egypt;
Thus Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. [Gen 46:6]
- ²⁴There the LORD greatly increased [the number of] His
people, And made them more powerful than their
enemies.
- ²⁵He turned the heart [of the Egyptians] to hate His people,
To deal craftily with His servants.
- ²⁶He sent Moses His servant,
And Aaron, whom He had chosen.
- ²⁷They exhibited His wondrous signs among them,
Great miracles in the land of Ham (Egypt).
- ²⁸He sent [thick, oppressive] darkness and made *the land*
dark;
And Moses and Aaron did not rebel against His words. [Ex
10:22; Ps 99:7]
- ²⁹He turned Egypt's waters into blood
And caused their fish to die. [Ex 7:20, 21]

- ³⁰ Their land swarmed with frogs,
Even in the chambers of their kings. [Ex 8:6]
- ³¹ He spoke, and there came swarms of flies
And gnats in all their territory. [Ex 8:17, 24]
- ³² He gave them hail for rain,
With flaming fire in their land. [Ex 9:23, 25]
- ³³ He struck their vines also and their fig trees,
And shattered the [ice-laden] trees of their territory. [Ps
78:47]
- ³⁴ He spoke, and the [migratory] locusts came,
And the young locusts, even without number, [Ex 10:4, 13,
14]
- ³⁵ And ate up all the vegetation in their land,
And devoured the fruit of their ground.
- ³⁶ He also struck down all the firstborn in their land,
The first fruits *and* chief substance of all their strength. [Ex
12:29; Ps 78:51]
- ³⁷ He brought the sons of Israel out [of Egypt] with silver and
gold,
And among their tribes there was not one who stumbled.
[Ex 12:35]
- ³⁸ Egypt was glad when they departed,
For the dread *and* fear of them had fallen on the Egyptians.
[Ex 12:33]
- ³⁹ The LORD spread a cloud as a covering [by day],
And a fire to illumine the night. [Ex 13:21]

- ⁴⁰The Israelites asked, and He brought quail,
And satisfied them with the bread of heaven. [Ex 16:12–15]
- ⁴¹He opened the rock and water flowed out;
It ran in the dry places like a river. [Ex 17:6; Num 20:11]
- ⁴²For He remembered His holy word
To Abraham His servant; [Gen 15:14]
- ⁴³He brought out His people with joy,
And His chosen ones with a joyful shout,
- ⁴⁴He gave them the lands of the nations [of Canaan],
So that they would possess *the fruits of* those peoples' labor, [Deut 6:10, 11]
- ⁴⁵So that they might observe His precepts
And keep His laws [obediently accepting and honoring and valuing them].
Praise the LORD! (Hallelujah!)

Psalm 106

Israel's Rebelliousness and the LORD's Deliverances.

- ¹PRAISE THE LORD! (Hallelujah!)
Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;
For His mercy *and* lovingkindness endure forever! [1 Chr 16:34]
- ²Who can put into words the mighty deeds of the LORD?
Or who can proclaim all His praise [that is due Him]?
- ³Blessed are those who observe justice [by honoring God's precepts],

Who practice righteousness at all times.

- ⁴Remember me, O LORD, when You favor Your people.
Visit me with Your salvation [when You rescue them],
- ⁵That I may see the prosperity of Your chosen ones,
That I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation,
That I may glory with Your inheritance.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Are You Believing God's Word?

When the people of Israel were delivered from Egypt, they “believed in [the validity of] His words; they sang His praise. But they quickly forgot His works... did not believe His word nor rely on it, but they sulked and complained” (Ps. 106:12–13, 24–25).

When you feel frustrated or upset or have lost your peace and your joy, ask yourself this: Am I believing God's Word? The only way to be free from struggling with these negative feelings or losses is to believe the Word and obey whatever Jesus puts in your heart to do (see Heb. 4:3). Believing God's Word delivers you from struggling so you can rest in the promises of God.

If your thoughts have become negative and you are full of doubt, the reason may be that you have stopped believing God's Word and trusting Him. As soon as you start believing God's Word, your joy will return and you will be at ease once again (see Rom. 15:13).

⁶We have sinned like our fathers;
We have committed iniquity, we have behaved wickedly.
[Lev 26:40–42]

⁷Our fathers in Egypt did not understand *nor* appreciate
Your miracles;

They did not remember the abundance of Your mercies *nor*
imprint Your lovingkindnesses on their hearts, But they
were rebellious at the sea, at the Red Sea. [Ex 14:21]

⁸Nevertheless He saved them for His name's sake,
That He might make His [supreme] power known.

⁹He rebuked the Red Sea, and it dried up;
And He led them through the depths as through a pasture.
[Ex 14:21]

¹⁰So He saved them from the hand of the one that hated them,
And redeemed them from the hand of the [Egyptian] enemy.
[Ex 14:30]

¹¹And the waters covered their adversaries;
Not one of them was left. [Ex 14:27, 28; 15:5]

¹²Then Israel believed in [the validity of] His words;
They sang His praise.

¹³But they quickly forgot His works;
They did not [patiently] wait for His counsel *and* purpose
[to be revealed regarding them],

¹⁴But lusted intensely in the wilderness
And tempted God [with their insistent desires] in the desert.
[Num 11:4]

¹⁵So He gave them their request,
But sent a wasting disease among them. [Ps 78:29–31]

¹⁶They envied Moses in the camp,
And Aaron [the high priest], the holy one of the LORD,
[Num 16:1–32]

- ¹⁷Therefore the earth opened and swallowed Dathan,
And engulfed the company of Abiram. [Num 16:31, 32]
- ¹⁸And a fire broke out in their company;
The flame consumed the wicked. [Num 16:35, 46]
- ¹⁹They made a calf in Horeb (Sinai)
And worshiped a cast image. [Ex 32:4]
- ²⁰Thus they exchanged [the true God who was] their glory
For the image of an ox that eats grass.
- ²¹They forgot God their Savior,
Who had done such great things in Egypt,
- ²²Wonders in the land of Ham,
Awesome things at the Red Sea.
- ²³Therefore He said He would destroy them,
[And He would have done so] had not Moses, His chosen
one, stepped into the gap before Him,
To turn away His wrath from destroying them. [Ex 32:10, 11,
32]
- ²⁴Then they despised the pleasant land [of Canaan];
They did not believe in His word *nor* rely on it,
- ²⁵But they sulked *and* complained in their tents;
They did not listen to the voice of the LORD.
- ²⁶Therefore He lifted up His hand [swearing] to them,
That He would cause them to fall in the wilderness,
- ²⁷And that He would cast out their descendants among the
nations
And scatter them in the lands [of the earth].

- ²⁸They joined themselves also to [the idol] Baal of Peor,
And ate sacrifices offered to the dead.
- ²⁹Thus they provoked Him to anger with their practices,
And a plague broke out among them.
- ³⁰Then Phinehas [the priest] stood up and interceded,
And so the plague was halted. [Num 25:7, 8]
- ³¹And that was credited to him for righteousness,
To all generations forever.
- ³²They provoked Him to anger at the waters of Meribah,
So that it went hard with Moses on their account; [Num
20:3–13]
- ³³Because they were rebellious against His Spirit,
Moses spoke recklessly with his lips.
- ³⁴They did not destroy the [pagan] peoples [in Canaan],
As the LORD commanded them,
- ³⁵But they mingled with the [idolatrous] nations
And learned their ways,
- ³⁶And served their idols,
Which became a [dreadful] snare to them.
- ³⁷They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to
demons [Deut 32:17; 2 Kin 16:3]
- ³⁸And shed innocent blood,
Even the blood of their sons and of their daughters,
Whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan;
And the land was polluted with their blood.
- ³⁹In this way they became unclean in their practices;

They played the prostitute in their own deeds [by giving their worship, which belongs to God alone, to other “gods”].

⁴⁰Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against His people And He detested His own inheritance. [Deut 32:17]

⁴¹He gave them into the hands of the nations,
And those who hated them ruled over them.

⁴²Their enemies also oppressed them,
And they were subdued under the [powerful] hand of their enemies.

⁴³Many times He rescued them;
But they were rebellious in their counsel,
And sank down in their wickedness.

⁴⁴Nevertheless He looked [sympathetically] at their distress
When He heard their cry;

⁴⁵And He remembered His covenant for their sake,
And relented [rescinding their sentence] according to the greatness of His lovingkindness [when they cried out to Him], ⁴⁶He also made them *objects* of compassion
Among those who had carried them away captive. [2 Kin 25:27–30]

⁴⁷Save us, O LORD our God,
And gather us from among the nations,
That we may give thanks to Your holy name
And glory in praising You.

⁴⁸Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
From everlasting even to everlasting.
And let all the people say, “Amen.”
Praise the LORD! (Hallelujah!) [1 Chr 16:35, 36]

BOOK FIVE

Psalm 107

The LORD Rescues People from Many Troubles.

¹O GIVE thanks to the LORD, for He is good;
For His compassion *and* lovingkindness endure forever!

²Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,
Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary,

³And gathered them from the lands,
From the east and from the west,
From the north and from the south.

⁴They wandered in the wilderness in a [solitary] desert
region;
And did not find a way to an inhabited city.

⁵Hungry and thirsty,
They fainted.

⁶Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble,
And He rescued them from their distresses.

⁷He led them by the straight way,
To an inhabited city [where they could establish their
homes].

⁸Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Speak the Word

When you realize that the enemy is trying to distract you, you can either allow him to beat you up with worry and negative thoughts or you can stand up to him. One way to stand against him is to open your mouth and begin to confess your authority in Christ (see Ps. 107:2).

Sometimes while I am preparing to speak at a church or seminar, negative thoughts begin to occur to me. When that happens, I encourage myself with my own mouth and say out loud, "Everything is going to be all right."

Satan places anxious and worried thoughts in our minds, sometimes actually bombarding our minds with them. He hopes we will receive them and begin speaking them. If we do, he then has material to actually create in our lives the very circumstances he has been giving us anxious thoughts about.

Once we recognize anxious thoughts, we can take authority over them, asking for God's help and being determined to live the good life God wants us to live.

Let me encourage you not to be the devil's mouthpiece. Don't speak the lies he puts into your mind. Find out what God's Word promises you and begin to declare His Word, which is "living and active and full of power... sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb. 4:12). As we speak the Word with our mouths in faith, we wield a mighty sword that penetrates and

exposes the enemy's tactics and lies.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Confession and Possession

What do you say about yourself and about your life? When I hear people make comments about themselves that remind me of statements I used to make about myself, it makes me sad to hear them. They say such things as, “I never get anything right” or “I am addicted to sweets” or “I worry all the time” or “My problems are overwhelming.” People who speak this way are saying what they really think. The problem is, what they are saying does not agree with God’s Word.

Psalm 107:2 says that those of us who are redeemed should “say so.” You and I are “the redeemed of the LORD.” We are not hoping or waiting to be redeemed; Jesus has already paid the price for our redemption. It is ours, and we need to learn to agree with it.

If we truly live by faith and believe God’s promises, our confession needs to change so that our words line up with our beliefs. You can start “saying so” by declaring by faith, “I am redeemed from sin, guilt, and condemnation.” “I am redeemed from bondage to food.” “I am redeemed from anger, bitterness,

and resentment.” “I am redeemed from worry, anxiety, and fear.” “I am redeemed from envy and jealousy.” Because these statements are true, you can also declare, “I am free to love God, to love myself, and to love other people” and “Even when I face challenges, I can do whatever I need to do in life through Christ Who gives me strength” (see Phil. 4:13).

We can begin speaking by faith because we believe God’s Word is true, and in God’s perfect timing, we will see His promises manifested in our lives. In God’s kingdom, we first believe and then we receive. I said thousands of times by faith, “God loves me” before I ever truly felt His love.

We choose to believe what God says and then we say the same thing by faith. The result is that our confession of God’s promises releases our faith and causes us to possess them experientially.

God’s principle of faith is the exact opposite of what the world teaches. The world says, “Don’t believe anything you can’t see, smell, taste, or touch.” God’s Word says “we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7).

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord, I pray that I will grow more and more in faith as I study Your Word and that my confession of your Word will help to renew my mind. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Speak God's Word

*I give thanks to the Lord for
His lovingkindness and for
His wonderful acts. He
satisfies the parched throat,
and fills the hungry appetite
with what is good.*

| adapted from PSALM 107:8-9 |

And for His wonderful acts to the children of men!

⁹For He satisfies the parched throat,
And fills the hungry appetite with what is good.

¹⁰Some dwelt in darkness and in the deep (deathly) darkness,
Prisoners [bound] in misery and chains, [Luke 1:79]

¹¹Because they had rebelled against the precepts of God
And spurned the counsel of the Most High.

¹²Therefore He humbled their heart with hard labor;
They stumbled and there was no one to help.

¹³Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble,
And He saved them from their distresses.

¹⁴He brought them out of darkness and the deep (deathly)
darkness

And broke their bonds apart. [Ps 68:6; Acts 12:7; 16:26]

¹⁵Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness,
And for His wonderful acts to the children of men!

¹⁶For He has shattered the gates of bronze
And cut the bars of iron apart.

¹⁷Fools, because of their rebellious way,
And because of their sins, were afflicted.

¹⁸They detested all kinds of food,
And they drew near to the gates of death.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God's Word Brings Healing

Psalm 107:20 is an important scripture to me because I have experienced firsthand that there is power in God's Word to heal us everywhere we hurt. After being abused during my childhood years, I had many wrong mind-sets. I frequently verbalized the defeated life I had and expected to continue having, and I truly had no hope of change. I was bitter, resentful, and filled with hatred toward those who had hurt me.

As God's Word renewed my mind (see Rom. 12:2), I began to think differently and talk differently. Eventually my attitude changed, and I finally began behaving differently. The same outcome will happen for anyone who truly studies and believes God's Word. His Word has power inherent in it to change lives.

Before our lives can change, our thinking must change. Satan attempts to build strongholds in our minds from the time we are very young. A stronghold is an area in which an enemy occupies and hides, and from that place makes his attack. We learn in God's Word that we can tear down strongholds by believing God's Word. Truth always defeats lies! Always remember that there is no pit so deep that God cannot reach down into it and lift us out. He is our Healer, and He delights in making us whole.

- ¹⁹Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, And He saved them from their distresses.
- ²⁰He sent His word and healed them,
And rescued them from their destruction. [2 Kin 20:4, 5; Matt 8:8]
- ²¹Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness,
And for His wonderful acts to the children of men! [Heb 13:15]
- ²²And let them offer the sacrifices of thanksgiving,
And speak of His deeds with shouts of joy!
- ²³Those who go down to the sea in ships,
Who do business on great waters;
- ²⁴They have seen the works of the LORD,
And His wonders in the deep.
- ²⁵For He spoke and raised up a stormy wind,
Which lifted up the waves of the sea.
- ²⁶They went up toward the heavens [on the crest of the wave], they went down again to the depths [of the watery trough]; Their courage melted away in their misery.
- ²⁷They staggered and trembled like a drunken man,
And were at their wits' end [all their wisdom was useless].
- ²⁸Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble,
And He brought them out of their distresses.
- ²⁹He hushed the storm to a gentle whisper,
So that the waves of the sea were still. [Ps 65:7; 89:9; Matt 8:26]

- ³⁰Then they were glad because of the calm,
And He guided them to their desired haven (harbor).
- ³¹Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness,
And for His wonderful acts to the children of men!
- ³²Let them exalt Him also in the congregation of the people,
And praise Him at the seat of the elders.
- ³³He turns rivers into a wilderness,
And springs of water into a thirsty ground; [1 Kin 17:1, 7]
- ³⁴A productive land into a [barren] salt waste,
Because of the wickedness of those who dwell in it. [Gen
13:10; 14:3; 19:25]
- ³⁵He turns a wilderness into a pool of water
And a dry land into springs of water; [Is 41:18]
- ³⁶And there He has the hungry dwell,
So that they may establish an inhabited city,
- ³⁷And sow fields and plant vineyards,
And produce an abundant harvest.
- ³⁸Also He blesses them so that they multiply greatly,
And He does not let [the number of] their cattle decrease.
- ³⁹When they are diminished and bowed down (humbled)
Through oppression, misery, and sorrow,
- ⁴⁰He pours contempt on princes
And makes them wander in a pathless wasteland.
- ⁴¹Yet He sets the needy securely on high, away from
affliction,
And makes their families like a flock.

- ⁴²The upright see it and rejoice;
But all unrighteousness shuts its mouth.
- ⁴³Who is wise? Let him observe *and* heed these things;
And [thoughtfully] consider the lovingkindness of the
LORD.

Psalm 108

Praise and Supplication to God for Victory.

A Song. A Psalm of David.

- ¹O GOD, my heart is steadfast [with confident faith];
I will sing, I will sing praises, even with my soul.
- ²Awake, harp and lyre;
I will awaken the dawn!
- ³I will praise *and* give thanks to You, O LORD, among the
people; And I will sing praises to You among the nations.
- ⁴For Your lovingkindness is great *and* higher than the
heavens;
Your truth *reaches* to the skies. [Ps 57:7–11]
- ⁵Be exalted [in majesty], O God, above the heavens,
And Your glory above all the earth.
- ⁶That Your beloved [ones] may be rescued,
Save with Your right hand, and answer me!
- ⁷God has spoken in His holiness:
“I will rejoice, I will portion out Shechem [as I divide Canaan
among My people],
And measure out the Valley of Succoth.
- ⁸“Gilead is Mine, Manasseh is Mine;
Ephraim also is the helmet of My head [My stronghold, My
defense];
Judah is My scepter. [Gen 49:10]

- ⁹“Moab is My washbowl;
Over Edom I will throw My shoe [to show Edom is Mine];
Over Philistia I will shout [in triumph].”
- ¹⁰Who will bring me into the fortified city [of Petra]?
Who will lead me to Edom?
- ¹¹Have You not rejected us, O God?
And will You not go out, O God, with our armies?
- ¹²Give us help against the adversary,
For deliverance by man is in vain [a worthless hope].
- ¹³With God we will do valiantly,
For it is He who will trample down our enemies. [Ps 60:5–12]

Psalm 109

Vengeance Invoked upon Adversaries.

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

- ¹O GOD of my praise!
Do not keep silent,
- ²For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful
are opened against me;
They have spoken against me with a lying tongue.
- ³They have also surrounded me with words of hatred,
And have fought against me without a cause.
- ⁴In return for my love, they attack me,
But I am in prayer.
- ⁵They have repaid me evil for good,
And hatred for my love.

- ⁶Appoint a wicked man against him,
And let an attacker stand at his right hand [to kill him].
- ⁷When he enters into dispute, let wickedness come about.
Let his prayer [for help] result [only] in sin.
- ⁸Let his days be few;
And let another take his office. [Acts 1:20]
- ⁹Let his children be fatherless
And his wife a widow.
- ¹⁰Let his children wander and beg;
Let them seek their food *and* be driven far from their ruined
homes. [Gen 4:12]
- ¹¹Let the creditor seize all that he has,
And let strangers plunder the product of his labor.
- ¹²Let there be no one to extend kindness to him,
Nor let anyone be gracious to his fatherless children.
- ¹³Let his descendants be cut off,
And in the following generation let their name be blotted
out.
- ¹⁴Let the wickedness of his fathers be remembered by the
LORD; And do not let the sin of his mother be blotted out.
- ¹⁵Let them be before the LORD continually,
That He may cut off their memory from the earth;
- ¹⁶Because the man did not remember to show kindness,
But persecuted the suffering and needy man,
And the brokenhearted, to put them to death.
- ¹⁷He also loved cursing, and it came [back] to him;

He did not delight in blessing, so it was far from him.

¹⁸He clothed himself with cursing as with his garment,
And it seeped into his inner self like water

POWERPOINT

If you have a wounded heart
(see Ps. 109:22), you can
receive God's healing and move
forward with your life. I have
found that when I have a
relationship problem, or get
wounded, or when someone
hurts my feelings, these
circumstances will take away
my strength and affect my faith
unless I am quick to forgive.
Ask God to help you forgive
and heal you everywhere you
hurt.



And like [anointing] oil into his bones.

¹⁹Let it be to him as a robe with which he covers himself,
And as a sash with which he is constantly bound.

²⁰Let this be the reward of my attackers from the LORD,
And of those who speak evil against my life.

²¹But You, O GOD, the Lord, show *kindness* to me, for Your name's sake; Because Your lovingkindness (faithfulness, compassion) is good, O rescue me;

²²For I am suffering and needy,
And my heart is wounded within me.

²³I am vanishing like a shadow when it lengthens *and* fades;
I am shaken off like the locust.

²⁴My knees are unsteady from fasting;
And my flesh is gaunt and without fatness.

²⁵I also have become a reproach *and* an object of taunting to others;
When they see me, they shake their heads [in derision].
[Matt 26:39]

²⁶Help me, O LORD my God;
Save me according to Your lovingkindness—

²⁷And let them know that this is Your hand;
You, LORD, have done it.

²⁸Let them curse, but You bless.
When adversaries arise, let them be ashamed,
But let Your servant rejoice.

²⁹Let my attackers be clothed with dishonor,
And let them cover themselves with their own shame as with a robe.

³⁰I will give great praise *and* thanks to the LORD with my mouth;
And in the midst of many I will praise Him.

³¹For He will stand at the right hand of the needy,

To save him from those who judge his soul.

Psalm 110

The LORD Gives Dominion to the King.

A Psalm of David.

- ¹THE LORD (Father) says to my Lord (the Messiah, His Son),
“Sit at My right hand
Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet
[subjugating them into complete submission].” [Josh 10:24; Matt 26:64; Acts 2:34; 1 Cor 15:25; Col 3:1; Heb 12:2]
- ²The LORD will send the scepter of Your strength from Zion,
saying,
“Rule in the midst of Your enemies.” [Rom 11:26, 27]
- ³Your people will offer themselves willingly [to participate in Your battle] in the day of Your power; In the splendor of holiness, from the womb of the dawn,
Your young men are to You as the dew.
- ⁴The LORD has sworn [an oath] and will not change His mind: “You are a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek.” [Heb 5:10; 7:11, 15, 21]
- ⁵The LORD is at Your right hand,
He will crush kings in the day of His wrath.
- ⁶He will execute judgment [in overwhelming punishment]

among the nations;
He will fill them with corpses,
He will crush the chief men over a broad country. [Ezek
38:21, 22; 39:11, 12]
⁷He will drink from the brook by the wayside;
Therefore He will lift up His head [triumphantly].

Psalm 111

The LORD Praised for His Goodness.

¹PRAISE THE LORD! (Hallelujah!)
I will give thanks to the LORD with all my heart,
In the company of the upright and in the congregation.
²Great are the works of the LORD,
Studied by all those who delight in them.
³Splendid and majestic is His work,
And His righteousness endures forever.
⁴He has made His wonderful acts to be remembered;
The LORD is gracious and merciful *and* full of loving
compassion.
⁵He has given food to those who fear Him [with awe-inspired
reverence];
He will remember His covenant forever. [Deut 10:12; Ps 96:9]
⁶He has declared *and* made known to His people the power
of His works,
In giving them the heritage of the nations.
⁷The works of His hands are truth and [absolute] justice;

All His precepts are sure (established, reliable, trustworthy).

⁸They are upheld forever and ever;

They are done in [absolute] truth and uprightness.

⁹He has sent redemption to His people;

He has ordained His covenant forever;

Holy and awesome is His name—[inspiring reverence and
godly fear].

Speak God's Word

I know that the reverent fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. I possess a good understanding and a teachable heart as I do God's will.

| adapted from PSALM 111:10 |

¹⁰The [reverent] fear of the LORD is the beginning (the prerequisite, the absolute essential, the alphabet) of wisdom; A good understanding *and* a teachable heart are possessed by all those who do *the will of the LORD*; His praise endures forever. [Job 28:28; Prov 1:7; Matt 22:37, 38; Rev 14:7]

Psalm 112

Prosperity of the One Who Fears the LORD.

¹PRAISE THE LORD! (Hallelujah!)

Blessed [fortunate, prosperous, and favored by God] is the man who fears the LORD [with awe-inspired reverence and worships Him with obedience], Who delights greatly in

His commandments. [Deut 10:12]

²His descendants will be mighty on earth;
The generation of the upright will be blessed.

³Wealth and riches are in his house,
And his righteousness endures forever.

⁴Light arises in the darkness for the upright;
He is gracious and compassionate and righteous (upright—
in right standing with God).

⁵It is well with the man who is gracious and lends;
He conducts his affairs with justice. [Ps 37:26; Luke 6:35;
Col 4:5]

⁶He will never be shaken;
The righteous will be remembered forever. [Prov 10:7]

⁷He will not fear bad news;
His heart is steadfast, trusting [confidently relying on and
believing] in the LORD.

⁸His heart is upheld, he will not fear
While he looks [with satisfaction] on his adversaries.

⁹He has given freely to the poor;
His righteousness endures forever;
His horn will be exalted in honor. [2 Cor 9:9]

¹⁰The wicked will see it and be angered,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Trusting God with Our Minds

Many times we say that we are trusting God, but our minds are busy worrying. Proverbs 3:5 confirms that we are to trust the Lord not only with our hearts, but also with our minds.

What do you allow your mind to do when you have problems? Do you worry and try to figure things out, or do you leave them in God's capable hands? If you operate with the mind of the Spirit, trusting God instead of worrying, you can have "the peace of God which transcends all understanding" (Phil. 4:7); you can have inexpressible and glorious joy (see 1 Pet. 1:8) right in the middle of terrible trials and tribulations; you "will not fear bad news," because your "heart is steadfast, trusting [confidently relying on and believing] in the LORD" (Ps. 112:7). Trusting God instead of worrying releases joy in us and provides answers to our problems.

He will gnash his teeth and melt away [in despair and death];

The desire of the wicked will perish *and* come to nothing.

Psalm 113

The LORD Exalts the Humble.

¹PRAISE THE LORD! (Hallelujah!)

Praise, O servants of the LORD,
Praise the name of the LORD.

²Blessed be the name of the LORD
From this time forth and forever.

³From the rising of the sun to its setting
The name of the LORD is to be praised [with awe-inspired
reverence].

⁴The LORD is high above all nations,
And His glory above the heavens.

⁵Who is like the LORD our God,
Who is enthroned on high,

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that You
raise the poor out of the dust
and lift the needy from the ash
heap.*

• adapted from Psalm 113:7

- ⁶Who humbles Himself to regard
The heavens and the earth? [Ps 138:6; Is 57:15]
- ⁷He raises the poor out of the dust
And lifts the needy from the ash heap,
- ⁸That He may seat them with princes,
With the princes of His people.
- ⁹He makes the barren woman live in the house
As a joyful mother of children.
Praise the LORD! (Hallelujah!)

Psalm 114

God's Rescue of Israel from Egypt.

- ¹WHEN ISRAEL came out of Egypt,
The house of Jacob from a people of strange language,
- ²Judah became His sanctuary,
And Israel His dominion. [Ex 29:45, 46; Deut 27:9]
- ³The [Red] Sea looked and fled;
The Jordan turned back. [Ex 14:21; Josh 3:13, 16; Ps 77:16]
- ⁴The mountains leaped like rams,
The [little] hills, like lambs.
- ⁵What ails you, O sea, that you flee?
O Jordan, that you turn back?
- ⁶O mountains, that you leap like rams,
O [little] hills, like lambs?
- ⁷Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord,

At the presence of the God of Jacob (Israel),
⁸Who turned the rock into a pool of water,
The flint into a fountain of water. [Ex 17:6; Num 20:11]

Psalm 115

Pagan Idols Contrasted with the LORD.

- ¹NOT TO us, O LORD, not to us,
But to Your name give glory
Because of Your lovingkindness, because of Your truth *and*
faithfulness.
- ²Why should the nations say,
“Where, now, is their God?”
- ³But our God is in heaven;
He does whatever He pleases.
- ⁴The idols [of the nations] are silver and gold,
The work of man’s hands.
- ⁵They have mouths, but they cannot speak;
They have eyes, but they cannot see;
- ⁶They have ears, but they cannot hear;

POWERPOINT

God gives us understanding on many issues, but we do not have to understand everything in order to walk with the Lord and be obedient to His will.

There are times when God leaves huge question marks as tools to stretch our faith because He sees things from a heavenly perspective and does what He pleases (see Ps. 115:3). Unanswered questions crucify the fleshly life. It is difficult for us to give up reasoning and simply trust God, but once the process is accomplished, the mind enters into a place of rest.



They have noses, but they cannot smell;

⁷They have hands, but they cannot feel;

They have feet, but they cannot walk;

- Nor can they make a sound with their throats.
- ⁸Those who make them will become like them,
Everyone who trusts in them. [Ps 135:15–18]
- ⁹O Israel, trust *and* take refuge in the LORD! [Be confident in
Him, cling to Him, rely on His word!]
He is their help and their shield.
- ¹⁰O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD;
He is their help and their shield.
- ¹¹You who [reverently] fear the LORD, trust in LORD; He is their
help and their shield.
- ¹²The LORD has been mindful of us; He will bless,
He will bless the house of Israel;
He will bless the house of Aaron.
- ¹³He will bless those who fear *and* worship the LORD [with
awe-inspired reverence and submissive wonder], Both
the small and the great. [Ps 103:11; Rev 11:18; 19:5]
- ¹⁴May the LORD give you [great] increase,
You and your children.
- ¹⁵May you be blessed of the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.
- ¹⁶The heavens are the heavens of the LORD, But the earth He
has given to the children of men.
- ¹⁷The dead do not praise the LORD,
Nor do any who go down into silence;
- ¹⁸But as for us, we will bless *and* affectionately and gratefully
praise the LORD

From this time forth and forever.
Praise the LORD! (Hallelujah!)

Psalm 116

Thanksgiving for Rescue from Death.

- ¹I LOVE the LORD, because He hears [and continues to hear]
My voice and my supplications (my pleas, my cries, my
specific needs).
²Because He has inclined His ear to me,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Thanksgiving Destroys Discontent

When the apostle Paul said he had learned to be content, he was saying he still trusted God even if he did not particularly like the situation in which he found himself (see Phil. 4:12). Therefore, his trust kept him in perfect peace. When our minds are fixed on the Lord, we are content and peaceful.

Trusting God and refusing to complain in hard times greatly honors Him. There is no value in saying how much we trust God when all is well if, when the test comes, we can't say and sincerely mean, "I trust You, Lord." The psalmist said, "I believed [and clung to my God] when I said, 'I am greatly afflicted'" (Ps. 116:10). Through gratitude and thanksgiving, you can close the destructive doors of discontentment. Don't wait until everything is perfect before you decide to enjoy your everyday life.

Therefore I will call on Him as long as I live.

³The cords *and* sorrows of death encompassed me,
And the terrors of Sheol came upon me;
I found distress and sorrow.

⁴Then I called on the name of the LORD:
"O LORD, please save my life!"

⁵Gracious is the LORD, and [consistently] righteous; Yes, our

God is compassionate.

⁶The LORD protects the simple (childlike);
I was brought low [humbled and discouraged], and He
saved me.

⁷Return to your rest, O my soul,
For the LORD has dealt bountifully with you. [Matt 11:29]

⁸For You have rescued my life from death,
My eyes from tears,
And my feet from stumbling *and* falling.

⁹I will walk [in submissive wonder] before the LORD
In the land of the living.

¹⁰I believed [and clung to my God] when I said,
“I am greatly afflicted.” [2 Cor 4:13]

¹¹I said in my alarm,
“All men are liars.”

¹²What will I give to the LORD [in return]
For all His benefits toward me?
[How can I repay Him for His precious blessings?]

¹³I will lift up the cup of salvation
And call on the name of the LORD.

¹⁴I will pay my vows to the LORD,
Yes, in the presence of all His people.

¹⁵Precious [and of great consequence] in the sight of the
LORD
Is the death of His godly ones [so He watches over them].

¹⁶O LORD, truly I am Your servant;

I am Your servant, the son of Your handmaid;
You have unfastened my chains.

¹⁷I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving,
And will call on the name of the LORD.

¹⁸I will pay my vows to the LORD,
Yes, in the presence of all His people,

¹⁹In the courts of the LORD's house (temple)—
In the midst of you, O Jerusalem.
Praise the LORD! (Hallelujah!)

Psalm 117

A Psalm of Praise.

¹O PRAISE the LORD, all you nations!
Praise Him, all you people! [Rom 15:11]

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that Your
lovingkindness prevails over
me. I triumph and overcome*

*through You. And Your truth
endures forever.*

• adapted from Psalm 117:2

²For His lovingkindness prevails over us [and we triumph
and overcome through Him],
And the truth of the LORD endures forever.
Praise the LORD! (Hallelujah!)

Psalm 118

Thanksgiving for the LORD's Saving Goodness.

¹O GIVE thanks to the LORD, for He is good;
For His lovingkindness endures forever.

²Oh let Israel say,
“His lovingkindness endures forever.”

³Oh let the house of Aaron say,
“His lovingkindness endures forever.”

⁴Oh let those who [reverently] fear the LORD, say,
“His lovingkindness endures forever.”

⁵Out of my distress I called on the LORD; The LORD answered
me and set me free.

⁶The LORD is on my side; I will not fear.
What can [mere] man do to me? [Heb 13:6]

⁷The LORD is on my side, He is among those who help me;
Therefore I will look [in triumph] on those who hate me.

- ⁸It is better to take refuge in the LORD
Than to trust in man.
- ⁹It is better to take refuge in the LORD
Than to trust in princes.
- ¹⁰All nations encompassed me;
In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off.
- ¹¹They encompassed me, yes, they surrounded me [on every
side];
In the name of the LORD I will cut them off.
- ¹²They swarmed around me like bees;
They flare up *and* are extinguished like a fire of thorns;
In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off. [Deut
1:44]
- ¹³You [my enemy] pushed me violently so that I was falling,
But the LORD helped me.
- ¹⁴The LORD is my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation.
- ¹⁵The sound of joyful shouting and salvation is in the tents of
the righteous: The right hand of the LORD does valiantly.
- ¹⁶The right hand of the LORD is exalted;
The right hand of the LORD does valiantly.
- ¹⁷I will not die, but live,
And declare the works *and* recount the illustrious acts of
the LORD.
- ¹⁸The LORD has disciplined me severely,
But He has not given me over to death. [2 Cor 6:9]

- ¹⁹Open to me the [temple] gates of righteousness;
I shall enter through them, I shall give thanks to the LORD.
- ²⁰This is the gate of the LORD;
The righteous will enter through it. [Ps 24:7]
- ²¹I will give thanks to You, for You have heard *and* answered
me;
And You have become my salvation [my Rescuer, my
Savior].
- ²²The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief corner *stone*.
- ²³This is from the LORD *and* is His doing;
It is marvelous in our eyes. [Matt 21:42; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet 2:7]
- ²⁴This [day in which God has saved me] is the day which the
LORD has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
- ²⁵O LORD, save now, we beseech You;
O LORD, we beseech You, send now prosperity *and* give us
success!
- ²⁶Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD;
We have blessed you from the house of the LORD [you who
come into His sanctuary under His guardianship]. [Mark
11:9, 10]

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Rejoice in Today

Winning the battle of the mind involves learning to relax and take things as they come without becoming stressed or fearful. In spite of troubling events taking place around us, we can learn to embrace each day, confessing and believing, “This [day in which God has saved me] is the day which the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it” (Ps. 118:24).

When the psalmist writes, “*This* is the day which the LORD has made” he is encouraging us to embrace and enjoy the present moment. We often postpone our rejoicing and our being glad until we think certain circumstances are perfect. The fact is, perfection will never happen in this life; we will always be hoping for and praying about something.

If we wait until we think everything in our lives is ideal before we rejoice, we will miss a lot of the joy and blessing that God has for us. We need to learn to enjoy each day and every moment. Even in circumstances that are difficult, when we rejoice and are thankful in “this,” whatever “this” situation may be, we will grow in spiritual maturity and be happier, more

peaceful people.

People often say, “I will be so happy when...” Almost everyone can fill in the blank after “when.” “When I get married,” “when I don’t have to drive my teenagers everywhere they want to go,” “when my bills are paid off,” or “when I get a promotion at work.” People who are always waiting for *when*, miss so much of *this*.

Those who think they will be glad when God does something specific for them may rejoice when they get what they want; but typically it is not long before they once again cannot be glad until He does something else for them. Then they become anxious about that next thing, and could easily spend their entire lives waiting for another time to be glad, never experiencing the peace that is available to them each day. Psalm 118:24 teaches us that *today* is the day to rejoice and be glad, no matter what is going on or what we hope will happen tomorrow, next week, next month, or next year.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Heavenly Father; help me to be content with who I am and what I have, no matter what my circumstances are right now. I choose to rejoice in this day, and not to miss any of the peace or blessing You have for me today. Amen.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Have an Extraordinary Day

The psalmist said, “This is the day which the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it” (Ps. 118:24). I believe he discovered the secret to living ordinary days with extraordinary enthusiasm. He simply decided and declared that since the Lord had made each day, and that it was a gift to him, he would enjoy it and be glad. He made a decision that produced the feelings he wanted rather than waiting to see how he felt.

God’s presence makes life exciting if we have a proper understanding of life as a whole. Everything we do is sacred and amazing if we do it as unto the Lord and believe He is with us. Ask yourself right now whether you truly believe that God is with you even in the midst of very ordinary tasks. If your answer is yes, you can have an extraordinary day!

²⁷The LORD is God, and He has given us light [illuminating us with His grace and freedom and joy].

Bind the festival sacrifices with cords to the horns of the altar.

²⁸You are my God, and I give thanks to You;
[You are] my God, I extol You.

²⁹O give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;
For His lovingkindness endures forever.

Psalm 119

Meditations and Prayers Relating to the Law of God.

⌘

Aleph.

¹HOW BLESSED *and* favored by God are those whose way is blameless [those with personal integrity, the upright, the guileless], Who walk in the law [and who are guided by the precepts and revealed will] of the LORD.

²Blessed *and* favored by God are those who keep His testimonies,
And who [consistently] seek Him *and* long for Him with all their heart.

³They do no unrighteousness;
They walk in His ways. [1 John 3:9; 5:18]

⁴You have ordained Your precepts,
That we should follow them with [careful] diligence.

⁵Oh, that my ways may be established
To observe *and* keep Your statutes [obediently accepting and honoring them]!

⁶Then I will not be ashamed
When I look [with respect] to all Your commandments [as my guide].

⁷I will give thanks to You with an upright heart,
When I learn [through discipline] Your righteous judgments [for my transgressions].

⁸I shall keep Your statutes;
Do not utterly abandon me [when I fail].

Speak God's Word

*I consistently seek God and
long for Him with all my
heart. I do no
unrighteousness; I walk in
His ways.*

| *adapted from* PSALM 119:2-3 |

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Choose To Study the Word

David said, “Blessed and favored by God are those who keep His testimonies, and who [consistently] seek Him and long for Him with all their heart” (Ps. 119:2). In order to know God—what to expect from Him and what He expects from you—you must know His Word. It’s not possible for God to say one thing but do another. He cannot lie, and He’s always faithful to perform what He has promised.

I know many people who would like their lives to improve but they won’t discipline themselves to study and learn the Word or to speak the Word. Spending time with God by studying the Word is your choice, and only you can make it. When you make that choice to seek Him with your whole heart, it won’t take long before your desires will begin to change and God will become more important to you than anything else.

ב

Beth.

⁹How can a young man keep his way pure?

By keeping watch [on himself] according to Your word
[conforming his life to Your precepts].

¹⁰With all my heart I have sought You, [inquiring of You and
longing for You];

Do not let me wander from Your commandments [neither through ignorance nor by willful disobedience]. [2 Chr 15:15]

¹¹Your word I have treasured *and* stored in my heart,
That I may not sin against You.

¹²Blessed *and* reverently praised are You, O LORD;
Teach me Your statutes.

¹³With my lips I have told of
All the ordinances of Your mouth.

¹⁴I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies,
As much as in all riches.

¹⁵I will meditate on Your precepts
And [thoughtfully] regard Your ways [the path of life
established by Your precepts]. [Ps 104:34]

¹⁶I will delight in Your statutes;
I will not forget Your word.



Gimel.

¹⁷Deal bountifully with Your servant,
That I may live and keep Your word [treasuring it and being
guided by it day by day]. [Ps 119:97–101]

¹⁸Open my eyes [to spiritual truth] so that I may behold
Wonderful things from Your law.

¹⁹I am a stranger on the earth;

POWERPOINT

We cannot tell of God's ordinances (see Ps. 119:13), or truths, unless we know them. If we want to be able to say what

God says, we have to know what He says, and the way to know that is to study His Word diligently. In order to know God and what to expect from Him, we need to know His Word—because they are one. It is not possible for God to say one thing and do another.



WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Ask for Understanding

I have heard many people say that reading the Bible is confusing and that they don't understand what God is saying. Sometimes that's because people keep trying to figure it out with their minds. We cannot always rely on our understanding (see Prov. 3:5), and we need to realize we're not smart enough to understand the mind of God. Moses explained to the children of Israel that there are "secret things" known only to God (see Deut. 29:29). He pointed out that when God revealed His will—making things clear—those were the words they should obey.

It really is that simple. Like the psalmist, we can say, "Give me understanding [a teachable heart and the ability to learn], that I may keep Your law; and observe it with all my heart" (Ps. 119:34). We need to ask God to show us what we are to do, and follow Him when He reveals that to us. Before reading or studying God's Word, always ask the Holy Spirit to teach you.

Reasoning can move us in a direction that may not reflect God's will even though it seems logical. This happened to King

Saul. It was unlawful for him—even as the king—to offer sacrifices. After Saul and his army waited several days for Samuel, the high priest, to arrive, Saul grew impatient (or perhaps fearful) and offered sacrifices on his own. When Samuel rebuked Saul, the king explained that the imminent threat from the Philistines and the immediate need to ask for the Lord’s help “forced” him to act (1 Sam. 13:12). Saul foolishly reasoned that he was wiser than God.

By contrast, the apostle Paul said: “I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me [enlightened and prompted] by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 9:1). He was doing the right thing—not because he had figured it out or analyzed the situation, but because his actions bore witness in his spirit.

That’s the attitude we need. We need to depend on God to show us things in such a way that we know—with an inner certainty—that what has been revealed to our minds is correct. We may be tempted to reason in our minds and search for logical solutions, but discernment and revelation are always better than reasoning.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Dear God, thank You for loving me more than I could ever comprehend. In the name of Jesus Christ, I ask You to help me love and honor You so much that when You speak, I will have only one thought in my mind, and that is to obey. Amen.

Do not hide Your commandments from me. [Gen 47:9; 1 Chr 29:15; Ps 39:12; 2 Cor 5:6; Heb 11:13]

²⁰My soul is crushed with longing
For Your ordinances at all times.

²¹You rebuke the presumptuous *and* arrogant, the cursed
ones,
Who wander from Your commandments.

²²Take reproach and contempt away from me,
For I observe Your testimonies.

²³Even though princes sit and talk to one another against me,
Your servant meditates on Your statutes.

²⁴Your testimonies also are my delight
And my counselors.

7

Daleth.

²⁵My earthly life clings to the dust;
Revive *and* refresh me according to Your word. [Ps 143:11]

²⁶I have told of my ways, and You have answered me;
Teach me Your statutes.

²⁷Make me understand the way of Your precepts,
So that I will meditate (focus my thoughts) on Your
wonderful works. [Ps 145:5, 6]

²⁸My soul dissolves because of grief;
Renew *and* strengthen me according to [the promises of]
Your word.

- ²⁹Remove from me the way of falsehood *and* unfaithfulness,
And graciously grant me Your law.
- ³⁰I have chosen the faithful way;
I have placed Your ordinances *before me*.
- ³¹I cling tightly to Your testimonies;
O LORD, do not put me to shame!
- ³²I will run the way of Your commandments [with purpose],
For You will give me a heart that is willing.



He.

- ³³Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes, And I will
[steadfastly] observe it to the end.
- ³⁴Give me understanding [a teachable heart and the ability to
learn], that I may keep Your law; And observe it with all
my heart. [Prov 2:6; James 1:5]
- ³⁵Make me walk in the path of Your commandments,
For I delight in it.
- ³⁶Incline my heart to Your testimonies
And not to *dishonest gain and* envy. [Ezek 33:31; Mark 7:21,
22; 1 Tim 6:10; Heb 13:5]
- ³⁷Turn my eyes away from vanity [all those worldly,
meaningless things that distract—let Your priorities be
mine], And restore me [with renewed energy] in Your
ways.
- ³⁸Establish Your word *and* confirm Your promise to Your
servant,

As that which produces [awe-inspired] reverence for You.
[Deut 10:12; Ps 96:9]

³⁹ Turn away my reproach which I dread,
For Your ordinances are good.

⁴⁰ I long for Your precepts;
Renew me through Your righteousness.

י

Vav.

⁴¹ May Your lovingkindness also come to me, O LORD, Your
salvation according to Your promise;

⁴² So I will have an answer for the one who taunts me,
For I trust [completely] in Your word [and its reliability].

⁴³ And do not take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth,
For I wait for Your ordinances.

⁴⁴ I will keep Your law continually,
Forever and ever [writing Your precepts on my heart].

⁴⁵ And I will walk at liberty,
For I seek *and* deeply long for Your precepts.

⁴⁶ I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings
And shall not be ashamed. [Ps 138:1; Matt 10:18, 19; Acts
26:1, 2]

⁴⁷ For I shall delight in Your commandments,
Which I love.

A Prayer To

Renew Your Mind



This is my comfort in my affliction, Lord, that Your word has revived me and given me life.

• adapted from Psalm 119:50

⁴⁸And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments,
Which I love;
And I will meditate on Your statutes.



Zayin.

⁴⁹Remember [always] the word *and* promise to Your servant,
In which You have made me hope.

⁵⁰This is my comfort in my affliction,
That Your word has revived me *and* given me life. [Rom
15:4]

⁵¹The arrogant utterly ridicule me,
Yet I do not turn away from Your law.

⁵²I have remembered [carefully] Your ancient ordinances, O
LORD, And I have taken comfort.

⁵³Burning indignation has seized me because of the wicked,
Who reject Your law.

⁵⁴Your statutes are my songs
In the house of my pilgrimage.

⁵⁵O LORD, I remember Your name in the night,
And keep Your law.

⁵⁶This has become mine [as the gift of Your grace],
That I observe Your precepts [accepting them with loving
obedience].



Heth.

⁵⁷The LORD is my portion;
I have promised to keep Your words.

⁵⁸I sought Your favor with all my heart;
Be merciful *and* gracious to me according to Your promise.

⁵⁹I considered my ways
And turned my feet to [follow and obey] Your testimonies.

⁶⁰I hurried and did not delay
To keep Your commandments.

⁶¹The cords of the wicked have encircled *and* ensnared me,
But I have not forgotten Your law.

⁶²At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You
Because of Your righteous ordinances.

⁶³I am a companion of all who [reverently] fear You,
And of those who keep *and* honor Your precepts.

⁶⁴The earth, O LORD, is full of Your lovingkindness *and*
goodness; Teach me Your statutes.



Teth.

⁶⁵You have dealt well with Your servant,
O LORD, according to Your promise.

⁶⁶Teach me good judgment (discernment) and knowledge,
For I have believed *and* trusted *and* relied on Your
commandments.

⁶⁷Before I was afflicted I went astray,
But now I keep *and* honor Your word [with loving
obedience].

⁶⁸You are good and do good;
Teach me Your statutes.

⁶⁹The arrogant have forged a lie against me,
But I will keep Your precepts with all my heart.

⁷⁰Their heart is insensitive like fat [their minds are dull and
brutal],
But I delight in Your law.

⁷¹It is good for me that I have been afflicted,
That I may learn Your statutes.

⁷²The law from Your mouth is better to me
Than thousands of gold and silver *pieces*.

Yodh.

⁷³Your hands have made me and established me;

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, teach me good
judgment, discernment, and
knowledge, for I have
believed and trusted and
relied on Your
commandments.*

• adapted from Psalm 119:66

Give me understanding *and* a teachable heart, that I may
learn Your commandments.

⁷⁴May those who [reverently] fear You see me and be glad,
Because I wait for Your word.

⁷⁵I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are fair,
And that in faithfulness You have disciplined me. [Heb

12:10]

⁷⁶O may Your lovingkindness *and* graciousness comfort me,
According to Your word (promise) to Your servant.

⁷⁷Let Your compassion come to me that I may live,
For Your law is my delight.

⁷⁸Let the arrogant be ashamed *and* humiliated, for they
sabotage me with a lie;
But I will meditate on Your precepts.

⁷⁹May those who fear You [with submissive wonder] turn to
me,
Even those who have known Your testimonies.

⁸⁰May my heart be blameless in Your statutes,
So that I will not be ashamed.



Kaph.

⁸¹My soul languishes *and* grows weak for Your salvation;
I wait for Your word.

⁸²My eyes fail [with longing, watching] for [the fulfillment of]
Your promise,
Saying, “When will You comfort me?”

⁸³For I have become like a wineskin [blackened and shriveled]
in the smoke [in which it hangs], Yet I do not forget Your
statutes.

⁸⁴How many are the days of Your servant [which he must
endure]?
When will You execute judgment on those who persecute

me? [Rev 6:10]

- ⁸⁵The arrogant (godless) have dug pits for me,
Men who do not conform to Your law.
- ⁸⁶All Your commandments are faithful *and* trustworthy.
They have persecuted me with a lie; help me [LORD]!
- ⁸⁷They had almost destroyed me on earth,
But as for me, I did not turn away from Your precepts.
- ⁸⁸According to Your steadfast love refresh me *and* give me
life,
So that I may keep *and* obey the testimony of Your mouth.



Lamedh.

- ⁸⁹Forever, O LORD,
Your word is settled in heaven [standing firm and
unchangeable]. [Ps 89:2; Matt 24:34, 35; 1 Pet 1:25]
- ⁹⁰Your faithfulness *continues* from generation to generation;
You have established the earth, and it stands [securely].
- ⁹¹They continue this day according to Your ordinances,
For all things [all parts of the universe] are Your servants.
[Jer 33:25]
- ⁹²If Your law had not been my delight,
Then I would have perished in my time of trouble.
- ⁹³I will never forget Your precepts,
For by them You have revived me *and* given me life.
- ⁹⁴I am Yours, save me [as Your own];

For I have [diligently] sought Your precepts *and* required them [as my greatest need]. [Ps 42:1]

⁹⁵The wicked wait for me to destroy me,
But I will consider Your testimonies.

⁹⁶I have seen that all [human] perfection has its limits [no matter how grand and perfect and noble]; Your commandment is exceedingly broad *and* extends without limits [into eternity]. [Rom 3:10–19]



Mem.

⁹⁷Oh, how I love Your law!
It is my meditation all the day. [Ps 1:2]

⁹⁸Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies,
For Your words are always with me.

⁹⁹I have better understanding *and* deeper insight than all my teachers [because of Your word], For Your testimonies are my meditation. [2 Tim 3:15]

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Biblical Meditation

Because of terms such as “transcendental meditation” and “New Age,” some Christians avoid any reference to meditation. They’re afraid of the occult or pagan worship, while not realizing how often the Bible urges us to meditate on God’s Word. In fact, Psalm 119 explains biblical meditation in a number of ways, such as, “Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day” (Ps. 119:97).

God’s Word teaches us three significant lessons about meditation.

First, the Scriptures refer to more than a quick reading or pausing for a few brief, reflecting thoughts. The Bible presents meditation as serious pondering done by serious, committed followers. It is a call to deep, serious concentration.

Second, the biblical contexts show meditation as ongoing and habitual. “It is my meditation all the day.” Both Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1:2 say that the godly person meditates on God’s law day and night. The people who spoke of meditating did so seriously and gave their minds fully to it.

Third, meditation is not a religious ritual. In most of the

biblical passages where the term occurs, the writer goes on to point out the results. In Joshua 1:8: “for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will be successful.” And Psalm 1:3 says, “And in whatever he does, he prospers [and comes to maturity].”

We don’t talk or teach much about meditation today. It’s hard work! It demands time and undivided attention. It requires that we cut all the noise out of our lives for a season and give ourselves to deeper study of God’s Word.

If you want to win the battle for the mind, meditation is a powerful weapon for you to use. The Word of God is a treasure chest of powerful, life-giving secrets that God wants to reveal to us. These truths are manifested to those who meditate on, ponder, study, think about, practice mentally, and speak the Word of God. Some people repeat a verse again and again until the meaning fills their mind. There is value in repetition!

You’ll be amazed at how much power is released into your life from this practice. The more you meditate on God’s Word (think about it over and over), the more you will be able to draw readily upon its strength in times of trouble.

As we spend time in God’s presence and ponder His Word, we grow, we encourage others, and we win the battle against the enemy of our mind.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Holy Spirit of God, help me to spend time every day meditating on the treasures of Your Word. I thank You for showing me that as I fill my mind with pure and holy thoughts, I will become a stronger and better disciple. Amen.

Speak God's Word

*God's Word is a lamp to my
feet and a light to my path.*

| adapted from PSALM 119:105 |

¹⁰⁰I understand more than the aged [who have not observed
Your precepts],

Because I have observed *and* kept Your precepts.

¹⁰¹I have restrained my feet from every evil way,
That I may keep Your word. [Prov 1:15]

¹⁰²I have not turned aside from Your ordinances,
For You Yourself have taught me.

¹⁰³How sweet are Your words to my taste,
Sweeter than honey to my mouth! [Ps 19:10; Prov 8:11]

¹⁰⁴From Your precepts I get understanding;
Therefore I hate every false way.



Nun.

¹⁰⁵Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path. [Prov 6:23]

¹⁰⁶I have sworn [an oath] and have confirmed it,

That I will keep Your righteous ordinances. [Neh 10:29]

¹⁰⁷I am greatly afflicted;

Renew *and* revive me [giving me life], O LORD, according to
Your word.

¹⁰⁸Accept *and* take pleasure in the freewill offerings of my
mouth, O LORD, And teach me Your ordinances. [Hos
14:2; Heb 13:15]

¹⁰⁹My life is continually in my hand,
Yet I do not forget Your law.

¹¹⁰The wicked have laid a snare for me,
Yet I do not wander from Your precepts.

¹¹¹I have taken Your testimonies as a heritage forever,
For they are the joy of my heart. [Deut 33:4]

¹¹²I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes
Forever, even to the end.



Samekh.

¹¹³I hate those who are double-minded,
But I love *and* treasure Your law.

¹¹⁴You are my hiding place and my shield;
I wait for Your word. [Ps 32:7; 91:1]

¹¹⁵Leave me, you evildoers,
That I may keep the commandments of my God [honoring
and obeying them]. [Ps 6:8; 139:19; Matt 7:23]

¹¹⁶Uphold me according to Your word [of promise], so that I
may live;

And do not let me be ashamed of my hope [in Your great goodness]. [Ps 25:2; Rom 5:5; 9:33; 10:11]

¹¹⁷Uphold me that I may be safe,
That I may have regard for Your statutes continually.

¹¹⁸You have turned Your back on all those who wander from
Your statutes,
For their deceitfulness is useless.

¹¹⁹You have removed all the wicked of the earth like dross [for
they have no value];
Therefore I love Your testimonies.

¹²⁰My flesh trembles in [reverent] fear of You,
And I am afraid *and* in awe of Your judgments.



Ayin.

¹²¹I have done justice and righteousness;
Do not leave me to those who oppress me.

¹²²Be the guarantee for Your servant for good [as Judah was
the guarantee for Benjamin];
Do not let the arrogant oppress me. [Gen 43:9]

¹²³My eyes fail [with longing, watching] for [the fulfillment of]
Your salvation,
And for [the fulfillment of] Your righteous word.

¹²⁴Deal with Your servant according to Your [gracious]
lovingkindness,
And teach me Your statutes.

¹²⁵I am Your servant; give me understanding [the ability to

learn and a teachable heart]
That I may know Your testimonies.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The Treasures of God's Word

God's Word has tremendous treasures, powerful life-giving secrets that God wants to reveal to us. They are manifested to those who ponder, study, think about, practice mentally, and meditate on the Word.

Psalms 119:130 says that the unfolding of God's Words to us gives us light and that "their unfolding gives understanding to the simple (childlike)." There is no end to what God can show you out of even one verse of Scripture. You can study a scripture one time and get one thing, and in studying that same verse another time you'll see something else you did not even notice before.

The Lord keeps revealing His secrets to those who are diligent about studying the Word. Don't be the person who always settles for living off someone else's revelation. Study the Word for yourself, and allow the Holy Spirit to bless your life with truth.

¹²⁶It is time for the LORD to act;
They have broken Your law.

¹²⁷Therefore I love Your commandments more than gold,
Yes, more than refined gold.

¹²⁸Therefore I esteem as right all Your precepts concerning

everything;
I hate every false way.



Pe.

¹²⁹Your testimonies are wonderful;
Therefore my soul keeps them.

¹³⁰The unfolding of Your [glorious] words give light;
Their unfolding gives understanding to the simple
(childlike).

¹³¹I opened my mouth and panted [with anticipation],
Because I longed for Your commandments.

¹³²Turn to me and be gracious to me *and* show me favor,
As is Your way to those who love Your name.

¹³³Establish my footsteps in [the way of] Your word;
Do not let any human weakness have power over me
[causing me to be separated from You].

¹³⁴Redeem me from the oppression of man;
That I may keep Your precepts. [Luke 1:74]

¹³⁵Make Your face shine [with pleasure] upon Your servant,
And teach me Your statutes. [Ps 4:6]

¹³⁶My eyes weep streams of water
Because people do not keep Your law.



Tsadhe.

¹³⁷Righteous are You, O LORD,

And upright are Your judgments.

¹³⁸You have commanded Your testimonies in righteousness
And in great faithfulness.

¹³⁹My zeal has [completely] consumed me,
Because my enemies have forgotten Your words.

¹⁴⁰Your word is very pure (refined);
Therefore Your servant loves it.

¹⁴¹I am small and despised,
But I do not forget Your precepts.

¹⁴²Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness,
And Your law is truth. [Ps 19:9; John 17:17]

¹⁴³Trouble and anguish have found me,
Yet Your commandments are my delight *and* my joy.

¹⁴⁴Your righteous testimonies are everlasting;
Give me understanding [the ability to learn and a teachable
heart] that I may live.



Qoph.

¹⁴⁵I cried with all my heart; answer me, O LORD!
I will observe Your statutes.

¹⁴⁶I cried to You; save me
And I will keep Your testimonies.

¹⁴⁷I rise before dawn and cry [in prayer] for help;
I wait for Your word.

¹⁴⁸My eyes anticipate the night watches *and* I awake before

the call of the watchman, That I may meditate on Your word.

¹⁴⁹Hear my voice according to Your [steadfast]
lovingkindness;
O LORD, renew *and* refresh me according to Your ordinances.

¹⁵⁰Those who follow after wickedness approach;
They are far from Your law.

¹⁵¹You are near, O LORD,
And all Your commandments are truth.

¹⁵²Of old I have known from Your testimonies
That You have founded them forever. [Luke 21:33]



Resh.

¹⁵³Look upon my agony and rescue me,
For I do not forget Your law.

¹⁵⁴Plead my cause and redeem me;
Revive me *and* give me life according to [the promise of]
Your word.

¹⁵⁵Salvation is far from the wicked,
For they do not seek Your statutes.

¹⁵⁶Great are Your tender mercies *and* steadfast love, O LORD;
Revive me *and* give me life according to Your ordinances.

¹⁵⁷Many are my persecutors and my adversaries,
Yet I do not turn away from Your testimonies.

¹⁵⁸I see the treacherous and loathe them,

Because they do not respect Your law.

¹⁵⁹Consider how I love Your precepts;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Devote Your Thoughts to God's Word

Reading or hearing the Word is good, but when we also devote our thoughts to it, we begin to understand it more deeply. The Word of God is filled with power, and it has the ability to change us. Just as good, nutritious food must be chewed well and swallowed for us to benefit from it, so the Word of God must be taken in and digested to become a part of us.

The psalmist said, "I rise before dawn and cry [in prayer] for help; I wait for Your word.... that I may meditate on Your word" (Ps. 119:147–148). Let me encourage you to make a habit of choosing a Bible verse and meditating on it all throughout the day. That way it will become rooted in your heart and become more meaningful to you. Soon, you'll realize that it's changing your life.

Revive me *and* give me life, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness.

¹⁶⁰The sum of Your word is truth [the full meaning of all Your precepts],

And every one of Your righteous ordinances endures forever.



Shin.

- ¹⁶¹Princes persecute me without cause,
But my heart stands in [reverent] awe of Your words [so I
can expect You to help me]. [1 Sam 24:11, 14; 26:18]
- ¹⁶²I rejoice at Your word,
As one who finds great treasure.
- ¹⁶³I hate and detest falsehood,
But I love Your law.
- ¹⁶⁴Seven times a day I praise You,
Because of Your righteous ordinances.
- ¹⁶⁵Those who love Your law have great peace;
Nothing makes them stumble. [Prov 3:2; Is 32:17]
- ¹⁶⁶I hope *and* wait [with complete confidence] for Your
salvation, O LORD, And I do Your commandments. [Gen
49:18]
- ¹⁶⁷My soul keeps Your testimonies [hearing and accepting and
obeying them];
I love them greatly.
- ¹⁶⁸I keep Your precepts and Your testimonies,
For all my ways are [fully known] before You.



Tav.

- ¹⁶⁹Let my [mournful] cry come before You, O LORD; Give me
understanding [the ability to learn and a teachable heart]
according to Your word [of promise].

- ¹⁷⁰Let my supplication come before You;
Deliver me according to Your word.
- ¹⁷¹Let my lips speak praise [with thanksgiving],
For You teach me Your statutes.
- ¹⁷²Let my tongue sing [praise for the fulfillment] of Your word,
For all Your commandments are righteous.
- ¹⁷³Let Your hand be ready to help me,
For I have chosen Your precepts.
- ¹⁷⁴I long for Your salvation, O LORD,
And Your law is my delight.
- ¹⁷⁵Let my soul live that it may praise You,
And let Your ordinances help me.
- ¹⁷⁶I have gone astray like a lost sheep;
Seek Your servant, for I do not forget Your commandments.
[Is 53:6; Luke 15:4; 1 Pet 2:25]

Psalm 120

Prayer for Breaking Away from the Treacherous.

A Song of Ascents.

¹IN MY trouble I cried to the LORD,
And He answered me.

²Rescue my soul, O LORD, from lying lips,
And from a deceitful tongue.

³What shall be given to you, and what more shall be done to
you,
You deceitful tongue?—

⁴Sharp arrows of the warrior,
With the burning coals of the broom tree.

⁵Woe to me, for I sojourn in Meshech,
and I live among the tents of Kedar [among hostile people]!
[Gen 10:2; 25:13; Jer 49:28, 29]

POWERPOINT

While seeking advice or counsel from wise people is certainly not wrong, we should be mature enough in our faith that we don't run to somebody else every time we need to know what to do in a certain situation. Discipline yourself to go to God first, and let Him choose whether He wants to speak to you Himself or use the wisdom and advice of others to clarify things to you. Our only true help comes from the Lord (see Ps. 121:2).



⁶Too long my soul has had its dwelling
With those who hate peace.

⁷I am for peace, but when I speak,
They are for war.

Psalm 121

The LORD the Keeper of Israel.

A Song of Ascents.

- ¹I WILL lift up my eyes to the hills [of Jerusalem]—
From where shall my help come? [Jer 3:23]
- ²My help comes from the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.
- ³He will not allow your foot to slip;
He who keeps you will not slumber. [1 Sam 2:9; Ps 127:1;
Prov 3:23, 26; Is 27:3]
- ⁴Behold, He who keeps Israel
Will neither slumber [briefly] nor sleep [soundly].
- ⁵The LORD is your keeper;
The LORD is your shade on your right hand. [Is 25:4]
- ⁶The sun will not strike you by day,
Nor the moon by night. [Ps 91:5; Is 49:10; Rev 7:16]
- ⁷The LORD will protect you from all evil;
He will keep your life.
- ⁸The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in
[everything that you do]
From this time forth and forever. [Deut 28:6; Prov 2:8; 3:6]

Psalm 122

Prayer for the Peace of Jerusalem.

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

- ¹I WAS glad when they said to me,
“Let us go to the house of the LORD.” [Is 2:3; Zech 8:21]
- ²Our feet are standing
Within your gates, O Jerusalem,
- ³Jerusalem, that is built
As a city that is firmly joined together;
- ⁴To which the [twelve] tribes go up, even the tribes of the
LORD, [As was decreed as] an ordinance for Israel,
To give thanks to the name of the LORD.
- ⁵For there the thrones of judgment were set,
The thrones of the house of David.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Confess God's Promises Instead of Past Pain

One of the ways God has taught me to deal with the past is to confess His promises instead of talking about how I feel. We all grapple with certain painful issues from our past. Perhaps you were teased mercilessly as a child and still feel insecure or sensitive because of that old pain. Maybe someone you loved left you without explanation. Maybe someone you trusted betrayed you. Whatever the source of your pain, always remember that God loves you, and you do not have to continue living in the past.

You don't have to spend your life mourning over something you can't do anything about. God wants to heal what was damaged and restore what was lost through every hurt, injustice, and mistake in your life. David said, "Our help is in the name of the LORD, Who made heaven and earth" (Ps. 124:8). God will help you. In fact, He's waiting to help you, so ask for His help today.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Expect Good Things To Happen Today

Live with an attitude of expectancy. The psalmist said, “Those who trust in and rely on the LORD [with confident expectation] are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but remains forever” (Ps. 125:1). He was confident in his expectation.

To live expectantly is not the same as living with a sense of entitlement, which is an attitude that says we deserve everything. We don’t deserve anything from God, but because of His great love and His mercy toward us, He desires that we live in holy expectancy, believing we will so we can receive His best.

Even if you have had a problem or a need for a long time, that can change if you will do your part. Your part is to believe God’s Word, obey Him, sow good seeds, have a vision of breakthrough, and think and say right things in agreement with God’s Word—and be persistent. As you continue doing this, you will develop a healthy mind-set that enables you to prosper in all areas.

⁶Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:

“May they prosper who love you [holy city].

⁷“May peace be within your walls

And prosperity within your palaces.”

⁸For the sake of my brothers and my friends,
I will now say, “May peace be within you.”

⁹For the sake of the house of the LORD our God [which is
Jerusalem], I will seek your (the city’s) good.

Psalm 123

Prayer for the LORD’s Help.

A Song of Ascents.

¹UNTO YOU I lift up my eyes,
O You who are enthroned in the heavens!

²Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their
master,
And as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress,
So our eyes look to the LORD our God,
Until He is gracious *and* favorable toward us.

³Be gracious to us, O LORD, be gracious *and* favorable
toward us, For we are greatly filled with contempt.

⁴Our soul is greatly filled
With the scoffing of those who are at ease,
And with the contempt of the proud [who disregard God’s
law].

Psalm 124

Praise for Rescue from Enemies.

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

- ¹“IF IT had not been the LORD who was on our side,”
Let Israel now say,
²“If it had not been the LORD who was on our side
When men rose up against us,
³Then they would have [quickly] swallowed us alive,
When their wrath was kindled against us;
⁴Then the waters would have engulfed us,
The torrent would have swept over our soul;
⁵Then the raging waters would have swept over our soul.”
- ⁶Blessed be the LORD, Who has not given us as prey to be
torn by their teeth.
⁷We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowlers;
The trap is broken and we have escaped.
⁸Our help is in the name of the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.

Psalm 125

The LORD Surrounds His People.

A Song of Ascents.

- ¹THOSE WHO trust in *and* rely on the LORD [with confident
expectation]
Are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but remains
forever.
²As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
So the LORD surrounds His people

From this time forth and forever.

³For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land of
the righteous,
So that the righteous will not reach out their hands to do
wrong.

⁴Do good, O LORD, to those who are good And to those who
are upright in their hearts.

⁵But as for those who turn aside to their crooked ways [in
unresponsiveness to God],
The LORD will lead them away with those who do evil.
Peace be upon Israel.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Let God Build Your Reputation

Our society places a great deal of emphasis and value on building a good life, including a career and a good reputation. When we try to build our lives and our reputations by ourselves, we are leaning on the arm of flesh (ourselves and other people). We work hard to develop skills, find a career, earn money, build relationships, make a good name for ourselves, and do everything we think will cause us to be successful as the world views success. But Psalm 127:1–2 indicates that all this effort is in vain. The Lord is the One who builds our lives and our reputations, according to the good plans He has for us.

We can be confident that God is working in us, changing us, and helping us grow through our faith in Him, so we can fulfill His good plans for our lives. In Philippians 1:6, Paul writes to assure us of this: “He who has begun a good work in you will [continue to] perfect and complete it until the day of Christ Jesus [the time of His return].” You and I may have confidence that God will complete the good work He has begun in us!

What Paul is saying is simply this: God is the One Who started this good work in you and He is the One Who will finish it! This means we should allow God to do His work without trying to interfere. We should always do the part He gives us to do, but we should never try to do anything without leaning entirely on Him. We need to be patient and rest in Him as He

accomplishes what needs to be done instead of getting involved in things when they are not happening as quickly as we would like or in the way we would like. There are certain responsibilities we need to fulfill in our lives, but there are certain things only God can do. Take the pressure off yourself by leaning on the arm of the Lord instead of the arm of the flesh!

Psalm 126

Thanksgiving for Return from Captivity.

A Song of Ascents.

- ¹WHEN THE LORD brought back the captives to Zion
(Jerusalem), We were like those who dream [it seemed so unreal]. [Ps 53:6; Acts 12:9]
- ²Then our mouth was filled with laughter
And our tongue with joyful shouting;
Then they said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them.”
- ³The LORD has done great things for us;
We are glad!
- ⁴Restore our captivity, O LORD,
As the stream-beds in the South (the Negev) [are restored
by torrents of rain].
- ⁵They who sow in tears shall reap with joyful singing.
- ⁶He who goes back and forth weeping, carrying his bag of
seed [for planting],

Will indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

! REMEMBER, God always
leads you in triumph in
Christ!

Psalm 127

Prosperity Comes from the LORD.

A Song of Ascents. Of Solomon.

- ¹UNLESS THE LORD builds the house,
They labor in vain who build it;
Unless the LORD guards the city,
The watchman keeps awake in vain. [Ps 121:1, 3, 5]
- ²It is vain for you to rise early,
To retire late,
To eat the bread of anxious labors—
For He gives [blessings] to His beloved *even in his* sleep.
- ³Behold, children are a heritage *and* gift from the LORD, The
fruit of the womb a reward. [Deut 28:4]
- ⁴Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,
So are the children of one's youth.
- ⁵How blessed [happy and fortunate] is the man whose
quiver is filled with them;
They will not be ashamed

When they speak with their enemies [in gatherings] at the
[city] gate.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Worry Is a Waste of Time

Worrying is an absolute waste of time. Every time we get upset, it wastes a lot of emotional energy, tires us out, can harm our health, steals our joy, and still it doesn't change one thing. The Bible says we can't even add an hour to the length of our lives by worrying (see Matt. 6:27). Yet we often worry, worry, worry, which gets us nowhere. Solomon said, "It is vain for you to rise early, to retire late, to eat the bread of anxious labors" (Ps. 127:2). We need to stop trying to fix things only God can fix.

Jesus essentially tells us to calm down (see John 14:27) and cheer up (see John 16:33). I believe these two actions combined serve as a one-two knockout punch to the devil. When you realize you can't fix everything, you calm down; and when you know God can, you cheer up!

Psalm 128

Blessedness of the Fear of the LORD.

A Song of Ascents.

¹BLESSED [HAPPY and sheltered by God's favor] is everyone who fears the LORD [and worships Him with obedience], Who walks in His ways *and* lives according to His commandments. [Ps 1:1, 2]

- ²For you shall eat the fruit of [the labor of] your hands,
You will be happy *and* blessed and it will be well with you.
- ³Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine
Within the innermost part of your house;
Your children will be like olive plants
Around your table.
- ⁴Behold, for so shall the man be blessed *and* divinely
favored
Who fears the LORD [and worships Him with obedience].
- ⁵May the LORD bless you from Zion [His holy mountain],
And may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days
of your life;
- ⁶Indeed, may you see your [family perpetuated in your]
children's children.
Peace be upon Israel!

Psalm 129

Prayer for the Overthrow of Zion's Enemies.

A Song of Ascents.

- ¹"MANYTIMES they have persecuted me (Israel) from my
youth,"
Let Israel now say,
- ²"Many times they have persecuted me from my youth,
Yet they have not prevailed against me.
- ³"The [enemies, like] plowers plowed on my back;
They made their furrows [of suffering] long [in Israel]."

⁴The LORD is righteous;
He has cut in two the [thick] cords of the wicked [which
enslaved the people of Israel].

⁵May all who hate Zion
Be put to shame and turned backward [in defeat].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Enjoy the Wait

Patience is extremely important for people who want to glorify God and enjoy their lives (see James 1:4). If people are impatient, the situations they encounter in life will certainly cause them to react emotionally in a wrong way. When pressured by circumstances, we need to tell ourselves, "Wait [patiently] for the LORD, my soul [expectantly] waits" (Ps. 130:5).

The next time you have to wait on something or someone, rather than reacting with impatience, try talking to yourself a little. You might think, Getting upset will not make this go any faster, so I might as well find a way to enjoy the wait. Then perhaps say out loud, "I am developing patience as I wait, so I am thankful for this situation." When you do this, you are acting on the Word of God rather than reacting with impatience to the unpleasant circumstance.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Seeking Contentment

If I am discontent, I easily become upset. But if I choose to be content no matter what is going on, my emotions remain balanced. Our thoughts have a lot to do with our moods. Some thoughts improve our moods and increase our level of contentment, while others send our moods spiraling downward, making us unhappy and discontent. We can think ourselves happy, and we can think ourselves sad! How we talk to ourselves also affects our emotions, so if we talk to ourselves properly, we can stay content and emotionally stable.

Having put his hope in the Lord, David said, “I have calmed and quieted my soul; ... like a weaned child within me [composed and freed from discontent]” (Ps. 131:2). Trusting God at all times is the pathway to contentment. Even if we don’t have all that we want, we can trust God that He will provide what is right for us in His perfect timing.

⁶Let them be like the grass on the housetops,
Which withers before it grows up,

⁷With which the reaper does not fill his hand,
Nor the binder of sheaves his arms,

⁸Nor do those who pass by say,
“The blessing of the LORD be upon you;

We bless you in the name of the LORD.”

Psalm 130

Hope in the LORD’s Forgiving Love.

A Song of Ascents.

¹OUT OF the depths [of distress] I have cried to You, O LORD.

²Lord, hear my voice!
Let Your ears be attentive
To the voice of my supplications.

³If You, LORD, should keep an account of our sins *and* treat us accordingly, O Lord, who could stand [before you in judgment and claim innocence]? [Ps 143:2; Rom 3:20; Gal 2:16]

⁴But there is forgiveness with You,
That You may be feared *and* worshiped [with submissive wonder]. [Deut 10:12]

⁵I wait [patiently] for the LORD, my soul [expectantly] waits,
And in His word do I hope.

⁶My soul waits for the Lord
More than the watchmen for the morning;
More than the watchmen for the morning.

⁷O Israel, hope in the LORD;
For with the LORD there is lovingkindness,
And with Him is abundant redemption.

⁸And He will redeem Israel

From all his sins.

Psalm 131

Childlike Trust in the LORD.

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

¹LORD, MY heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty;
Nor do I involve myself in great matters,
Or in things too difficult for me.

²Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul;
Like a weaned child [resting] with his mother,
My soul is like a weaned child within me [composed and
freed from discontent].

³O Israel, hope in the LORD
From this time forth and forever.

Psalm 132

Prayer for the LORD's Blessing Upon the Sanctuary.

A Song of Ascents.

¹O LORD, remember on David's behalf
All his hardship *and* affliction;

²How he swore to the LORD
And vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob:

³"I absolutely will not enter my house,
Nor get into my bed—

⁴I certainly will not permit my eyes to sleep
Nor my eyelids to slumber,

⁵Until I find a place for the LORD,
A dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob (Israel).”
[Acts 7:46]

⁶Behold, we heard of it at Ephrathah;
We found it in the field of Jaar. [1 Sam 6:21]

⁷Let us go into His tabernacle;
Let us worship at His footstool.

⁸Arise, O LORD, to Your resting place,
You and the ark [the symbol] of Your strength.

⁹Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness (right living),
And let Your godly ones shout for joy.

¹⁰For the sake of Your servant David,
Do not turn away the face of Your anointed.

¹¹The LORD swore to David
A truth from which He will not turn back:
“One of your descendants I will set upon your throne. [Ps
89:3, 4; Luke 1:69; Acts 2:30, 31]

¹²“If your children will keep My covenant
And My testimony which I will teach them,
Their children also shall sit upon your throne forever.”

¹³For the LORD has chosen Zion;
He has desired it for His dwelling place:

¹⁴“This is My resting place forever” [says the LORD];
“Here will I dwell, for I have desired it.

¹⁵“I will abundantly bless her provisions;

I will satisfy her poor with bread.

¹⁶“Her priests also I will clothe with salvation,
And her godly ones will shout aloud for joy.

¹⁷“There I will make the horn (strength) of David grow;
I have prepared a lamp for My anointed [fulfilling the
promises]. [1 Kin 11:36; 15:4; 2 Chr 21:7; Luke 1:69]

¹⁸“His enemies I will clothe with shame,
But upon himself shall his crown shine.”

Psalm 133

The Excellency of Brotherly Unity.

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

¹BEHOLD, HOW good and how pleasant it is
For brothers to dwell together in unity!

²It is like the precious oil [of consecration] poured on the
head,

Coming down on the beard,

Even the beard of Aaron,

Coming down upon the edge of his [priestly] robes
[consecrating the whole body]. [Ex 30:25, 30]

³It is like the dew of [Mount] Hermon

Coming down on the hills of Zion;

For there the LORD has commanded the blessing: life
forevermore.

Psalm 134

Greetings of Night Watchers.

A Song of Ascents.

- ¹BEHOLD, BLESS *and* praise the LORD, all servants of the LORD (priests, Levites), Who stand *and* serve by night in the house of the LORD. [1 Chr 9:33]
- ²Lift up your hands to the sanctuary
And bless the LORD.
- ³May the LORD bless you from Zion,
He who made heaven and earth.

POWERPOINT

Psalm 135:3 is one of many Bible verses that says “the LORD is good.” No matter what has happened in our lives, God is good, and we need to believe that. God is good and He does not show partiality. In other words, He is good all the time; goodness is part of His nature. His goodness radiates from Him. Not everything in life is good, but God is always good, and He will turn negative situations into positive ones as we trust Him (see Gen. 50:20).



Psalm 135

Praise the LORD's Wonderful Works. Vanity of Idols.

¹PRAISE THE LORD! (Hallelujah!)

Praise the name of the LORD;

- Praise Him, O servants of the LORD (priests, Levites),
²You who stand in the house of the LORD,
In the courts of the house of our God,
³Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; Sing praises to His
name, for it is gracious *and* lovely.
⁴For the LORD has chosen [the descendants of] Jacob for
Himself, Israel for His own special treasure *and*
possession. [Deut 7:6]
- ⁵For I know that the LORD is great
And that our Lord is above all gods.
⁶Whatever the LORD pleases, He does,
In the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all deeps—
⁷Who causes the clouds to rise from the ends of the earth;
Who makes lightning for the rain,
Who brings the wind from His storehouses;
- ⁸Who struck the firstborn of Egypt,
Both of man and animal; [Ex 12:12, 29; Ps 78:51; 136:10]
⁹Who sent signs and wonders into your midst, O Egypt,
Upon Pharaoh and all his servants.
- ¹⁰Who struck many nations
And killed mighty kings,
¹¹Sihon, king of the Amorites,
Og, king of Bashan,
And all the kingdoms of Canaan;
¹²And He gave their land as a heritage,
A heritage to Israel His people.

¹³Your name, O LORD, endures forever,
Your fame *and* remembrance, O LORD, [endures] throughout
all generations.

¹⁴For the LORD will judge His people
And He will have compassion on His servants [revealing
His mercy]. [Heb 10:30]

¹⁵The idols of the nations are silver and gold,
The work of men's hands.

¹⁶They have mouths, but they do not speak;
They have eyes, but they do not see;

¹⁷They have ears, but they do not hear,
Nor is there any breath in their mouths.

¹⁸Those who make idols are like them [absolutely worthless—
spiritually blind, deaf, and powerless]; So is everyone
who trusts in *and* relies on them. [Ps 115:4–8]

¹⁹O house of Israel, bless *and* praise the LORD [with
gratitude]; O house of Aaron, bless the LORD;

²⁰O house of Levi, bless the LORD;

POWERPOINT

Psalm 136 contains twenty-six verses and each of them ends with, “for His lovingkindness endures forever.” You and I can never do so much wrong that there isn’t any more mercy left for us. Where sin abounds, grace (mercy) abounds much more (Rom. 5:20). God is much more eager to pardon than to punish.



KEYS to a Victorious Life

Active Awareness of God's Love

When I began my ministry, as I was preparing for my first meeting, I asked the Lord what He wanted me to teach, and what came to my heart was, Tell My people I love them. My response was, "They know that from Sunday school. I want to teach them something really powerful." The Lord reminded me that if people were actively aware of how much He loved them, as the psalmist was in Psalm 136, they would act differently.

As I began to study the subject of receiving God's love, I realized I was in desperate need of the message myself. I had a subconscious, vague sort of understanding that God loved me, but I needed a deeper revelation of this life-changing truth. The love of God is meant to be a powerful force in our lives, one that will take us through even the most difficult trials without our ever doubting God's love.

You who fear the LORD [and worship Him with obedience],
bless the LORD [with grateful praise]! [Deut 6:5; Ps 31:23]

²¹Blessed be the LORD from Zion,
Who dwells [with us] at Jerusalem.
Praise the LORD! (Hallelujah!)

Psalm 136

Thanks for the LORD's Goodness to Israel.

- ¹GIVE THANKS to the LORD, for He is good;
For His lovingkindness (graciousness, mercy, compassion)
endures forever.
- ²Give thanks to the God of gods,
For His lovingkindness endures forever.
- ³Give thanks to the Lord of lords,
For His lovingkindness endures forever.
- ⁴To Him who alone does great wonders,
For His lovingkindness endures forever;
- ⁵To Him who made the heavens with skill,
For His lovingkindness endures forever;
- ⁶To Him who stretched out the earth upon the waters,
For His lovingkindness endures forever;
- ⁷To Him who made the great lights,
For His lovingkindness endures forever;
- ⁸The sun to rule over the day,
For His lovingkindness endures forever;
- ⁹The moon and stars to rule by night,
For His lovingkindness endures forever;
- ¹⁰To Him who struck the firstborn of Egypt,
For His lovingkindness endures forever; [Ex 12:29]
- ¹¹And brought Israel out from among them,
For His lovingkindness endures forever; [Ex 12:51; 13:3, 17]
- ¹²With a strong hand and with an outstretched arm,
For His lovingkindness endures forever;
- ¹³To Him who divided the Red Sea into parts,

- For His lovingkindness endures forever; [Ex 14:21, 22]
- ¹⁴ And made Israel pass through the midst of it,
For His lovingkindness endures forever;
- ¹⁵ But tossed Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea,
For His lovingkindness endures forever;
- ¹⁶ To Him who led His people through the wilderness,
For His lovingkindness endures forever;
- ¹⁷ To Him who struck down great kings,
For His lovingkindness endures forever;
- ¹⁸ And killed mighty kings,
For His lovingkindness endures forever; [Deut 29:7]
- ¹⁹ Sihon, king of the Amorites,
For His lovingkindness endures forever; [Num 21:21–24]
- ²⁰ And Og, king of Bashan,
For His lovingkindness endures forever; [Num 21:33–35]
- ²¹ And gave their land as a heritage,
For His lovingkindness endures forever;
- ²² Even a heritage to Israel His servant,
For His lovingkindness endures forever; [Josh 12:1]
- ²³ Who [faithfully] remembered us in our lowly condition,
For His lovingkindness endures forever;
- ²⁴ And has rescued us from our enemies,
For His lovingkindness endures forever;
- ²⁵ Who gives food to all flesh,
For His lovingkindness endures forever;
- ²⁶ Give thanks to the God of heaven,

For His lovingkindness (graciousness, mercy, compassion)
endures forever.

Psalm 137

An Experience of the Captivity.

- ¹BY THE rivers of Babylon,
There we [captives] sat down and wept,
When we remembered Zion [the city God imprinted on our
hearts].
- ²On the willow trees in the midst of Babylon
We hung our harps.
- ³For there they who took us captive demanded of us a song
with words,
And our tormentors [who made a mockery of us demanded]
amusement, *saying*,
“Sing us one of the songs of Zion.”
- ⁴How can we sing the LORD’s song
In a strange *and* foreign land?
- ⁵If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget [her skill with the harp].
- ⁶Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth
If I do not remember you,
If I do not prefer Jerusalem
Above my chief joy. [Ezek 3:26]
- ⁷Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom, The day of
[the fall of] Jerusalem,

Who said “Down, down [with her]
To her very foundation.”

⁸O daughter of Babylon, you devastator,
How blessed will be the one
Who repays you [with destruction] as you have repaid us.
[Is 13:1–22; Jer 25:12, 13]

⁹How blessed will be the one who seizes and dashes your
little ones
Against the rock.

Psalm 138

Thanksgiving for the LORD's Favor.

A Psalm of David.

¹I WILL give You thanks with all my heart;
I sing praises to You before the [pagan] gods.

²I will bow down [in worship] toward Your holy temple
And give thanks to Your name for Your lovingkindness and
Your truth;

For You have magnified Your word together with Your name.

³On the day I called, You answered me;
And You made me bold *and* confident with [renewed]
strength in my life.

⁴All the kings of the land will give thanks *and* praise You, O
LORD, When they have heard of the promises of Your
mouth [which were fulfilled].

⁵Yes, they will sing of the ways of the LORD [joyfully

celebrating His wonderful acts], For great is the glory *and* majesty of the LORD.

⁶Though the LORD is exalted,
He regards the lowly [and invites them into His fellowship];

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, when I call to You, You
answer me. You make me bold
and confident with renewed
strength in my life.*

• adapted from Psalm 138:3

But the proud *and* haughty He knows from a distance.
[Prov 3:34; James 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5]

⁷Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me;
You will stretch out Your hand against the wrath of my
enemies,
And Your right hand will save me. [Ps 23:3, 4]

⁸The LORD will accomplish that which concerns me;

Your [unwavering] lovingkindness, O LORD, endures forever

Do not abandon the works of Your own hands. [Ps 57:2; Phil 1:6]

Psalm 139

God's Omnipresence and Omniscience.

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

¹O LORD, you have searched me [thoroughly] and have known me.

²You know when I sit down and when I rise up [my entire life, everything I do];

You understand my thought from afar. [Matt 9:4; John 2:24, 25]

³You scrutinize my path and my lying down,
And You are intimately acquainted with all my ways.

⁴Even before there is a word on my tongue [still unspoken],
Behold, O LORD, You know it all. [Heb 4:13]

⁵You have enclosed me behind and before,
And [You have] placed Your hand upon me.

⁶Such [infinite] knowledge is too wonderful for me;
It is too high [above me], I cannot reach it.

⁷Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?

⁸If I ascend to heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in Sheol (the nether world, the place of the

dead), behold, You are there. [Rom 11:33]

⁹If I take the wings of the dawn,

If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

A Healthy Relationship with Yourself

Take comfort in knowing that God knew all about you even before you were born, and He still chose to be in relationship with you (see Ps. 139:13–16; Jer. 1:5). How you think God views you and how you feel about yourself on the inside determines the quality of life you will have. Learn to see yourself as God sees you!

It's important to ask yourself what kind of relationship you have with you. Do you enjoy spending time alone? Are you able to forgive yourself (receive God's forgiveness) when you make mistakes? Are you patient with yourself while God is changing you? Are you able to be yourself and freely be the unique individual God created you to be?

When you ask these questions and answer them honestly, you can begin to understand what kind of relationship you have with yourself. If it is not what it should be, you can learn from God's Word how to love yourself in a balanced way. If you can relax about who you are, you can usually relax about life in general.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Appreciate Uniqueness

When it comes to having good relationships, it is vital that we learn to accept the differences in people. God creates each of us differently on purpose. Those who are different from you are unique and special, and not people who got in all the wrong lines when God was passing out personality traits. I used to think, *Where was I when God handed out the “nice genes”?* I was right where I was supposed to be, receiving what God wanted me to have, and so were you and so was everyone else. Let’s remember that God created each of us in our mother’s womb carefully and intricately (see Ps. 139:13–16). We are not a mistake just because we are not like someone else.

Thinking that everyone should be like we are, as well as thinking that we should be like everyone else, is one of our biggest problems in relationships. This kind of wrong thinking causes wrong attitudes that are damaging to healthy and satisfying marriages, friendships, and work relationships. The truth is that God has created us all differently on purpose, and although I don’t always understand why He created some

people the way He did, I do know I am called by Him to love and accept them and not to think something is wrong with them because they don't seem to be a perfect match for me.

How dull and uninteresting life would be if everyone looked and behaved exactly alike and had the same temperament. What if every tree and flower were the same, and every bird, dog, cat, et cetera? Boring! We can learn to appreciate the variety of people God has placed in the world, and we can learn how to think about the differences between ourselves in a way that honors God and improves our relationships.

How many people do we shut out of our lives, exclude, and criticize, making them feel inferior just because they are not like we are? Probably more than we care to count. We each connect with some people more than others, but even if we don't want to be a person's best friend, we can appreciate their uniqueness as God's creation and make every effort to make them feel loved and significant.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Wise and wonderful God, I am sorry for the many people I've shut out of my life in one way or another because they were different from me. Help me to love and accept others and to enjoy them as Your amazing creations. In Jesus' name. Amen.

POWERPOINT

Most people struggle greatly with jealousy, envy, and comparison. This is a common trait found in people who are insecure. Learning that I was an individual (see Ps. 139:14)—that God has a unique, personal plan for my life—has been one of the most valuable and precious freedoms the Lord has granted me. I am assured that I need not compare myself with anyone, and neither do you.



- ¹⁰Even there Your hand will lead me,
And Your right hand will take hold of me.
- ¹¹If I say, “Surely the darkness will cover me,
And the night will be the only light around me,”
- ¹²Even the darkness is not dark to You *and* conceals nothing
from You,
But the night shines as bright as the day;

Darkness and light are alike *to You*. [Dan 2:22]

- ¹³For You formed my innermost parts;
You knit me [together] in my mother's womb.
- ¹⁴I will give thanks *and* praise to You, for I am fearfully and
wonderfully made;
Wonderful are Your works,
And my soul knows it very well.
- ¹⁵My frame was not hidden from You,
When I was being formed in secret,
And intricately *and* skillfully formed [as if embroidered with
many colors] in the depths of the earth.
- ¹⁶Your eyes have seen my unformed substance;
And in Your book were all written
The days that were appointed *for me*,
When as yet there was not one of them [even taking shape].
- ¹⁷How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!
How vast is the sum of them! [Ps 40:5]
- ¹⁸If I could count them, they would outnumber the sand.
When I awake, I am still with You.
- ¹⁹O that You would kill the wicked, O God;
Go away from me, therefore, men of bloodshed. [Is 11:4]
- ²⁰For they speak against You wickedly,
Your enemies take *Your name* in vain. [Jude 15]
- ²¹Do I not hate those who hate You, O LORD?
And do I not loathe those who rise up against You?
- ²²I hate them with perfect *and* utmost hatred;

They have become my enemies.

²³Search me [thoroughly], O God, and know my heart;
Test me and know my anxious thoughts;

²⁴And see if there is any wicked *or* hurtful way in me,
And lead me in the everlasting way.

Psalm 140

Prayer for Protection against the Wicked.

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

¹RESCUE ME, O LORD, from evil men;

Protect me from violent men.

²They devise evil things in their hearts;

They continually [gather together and] stir up wars.

³They sharpen their tongues like a serpent's;

Poison of a viper is under their lips. [Rom 3:13]

Selah.

⁴Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; Protect me
from violent men

Who intend to trip up my steps.

⁵The proud have hidden a trap for me, and cords;

They have spread a net by the wayside;

They have set traps for me.

Selah.

⁶I said to the LORD, "You are my God;

Listen to the voice of my supplications, O LORD.

⁷"O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation,

POWERPOINT

Scripture lets us know how very important it is that we think properly. Thoughts are powerful, and they have creative ability. If our thoughts are going to affect what we become, thinking right thoughts should certainly be a priority for us. For our head to be protected in the day of battle (see Ps. 140:7), it is an absolute necessity to get your thinking in line with God's Word. You cannot have a positive life and a negative mind.



You have covered my head in the day of battle.

⁸“Do not grant, O LORD, the desires of the wicked;
Do not further their evil device, that they not be exalted.

Selah.

- ⁹“Those who surround me raise their heads;
May the mischief of their own lips come upon them.
- ¹⁰“Let burning coals fall upon them;
Let them be thrown into the fire,
Into deep [water] pits from which they cannot rise.
- ¹¹“Do not let a slanderer be established in the earth;
Let evil quickly hunt the violent man [to overthrow him and
stop his evil acts].”
- ¹²I know [with confidence] that the LORD will maintain the
cause of the afflicted, And [will secure] justice for the
poor.
- ¹³Surely the righteous will give thanks to Your name;
The upright will dwell in Your presence.

Psalm 141

An Evening Prayer for Sanctification and Protection.

A Psalm of David.

- ¹LORD, I call upon You; hurry to me.
Listen to my voice when I call to You.
- ²Let my prayer be counted as incense before You;
The lifting up of my hands as the evening offering. [1 Tim
2:8; Rev 8:3, 4]
- ³Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth;
Keep watch over the door of my lips [to keep me from
speaking thoughtlessly].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Think About What You Say

I strongly recommend confessing the Word of God out loud. Even though what you confess may be the opposite of how you initially feel, keep confessing it; God's Word has inherent power to change your feelings. God's Word also brings comfort to us and quiets our distraught emotions.

David said, "Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips [to keep me from speaking thoughtlessly]" (Ps. 141:3). There is a time to speak and a time to keep silent. Sometimes the best thing we can do is to say nothing. When we do speak, it is wise to be purposeful in what we say and to think about our words beforehand. If we truly believe our words are filled with life or death (see Prov. 18:21), why wouldn't we more carefully choose what we say?

⁴Do not incline my heart to [consent to or tolerate] any evil thing, Or to practice deeds of wickedness
With men who plan *and* do evil;
And let me not eat of their delicacies (be tempted by their gain).

⁵Let the righteous [thoughtfully] strike (correct) me—it is a kindness [done to encourage my spiritual maturity].
It is [the choicest anointing] oil on the head;

Let my head not refuse [to accept and acknowledge and learn from] it;

For still my prayer is against their wicked deeds. [Prov 9:8; 19:25; 25:12; Gal 6:1]

⁶Their [wicked, godless] judges are thrown down the sides of the rocky cliff,
And they [who followed them] will hear my words, for they are pleasant (just).

⁷As when the one plows and breaks open the ground [and the soil scatters behind him],
Our bones have been scattered at the mouth of Sheol [by the injustices of the wicked]. [2 Cor 1:9]

⁸For my eyes are toward You, O GOD, the Lord; In You I take refuge; do not pour out my life *nor* leave me defenseless.

⁹Keep me from the jaws of the trap which they have set for me,
And from the snares of those who do evil.

¹⁰Let the wicked fall into their own nets,
While I pass by *and* safely escape [from danger].

Psalm 142

Prayer for Help in Trouble.

A skillful song, *or* a didactic *or* reflective poem, of David; when he was in the cave. A Prayer.

¹I CRY aloud with my voice to the LORD;
I make supplication with my voice to the LORD.

²I pour out my complaint before Him;
I declare my trouble before Him.

³When my spirit was overwhelmed *and* weak within me
[wrapped in darkness],

POWERPOINT

David, the author of Psalm 142, was a man through whom deep emotions ran. His response to his feelings of depression and being wrapped in darkness was not to meditate on the problem.

Instead, he literally came against the problem by choosing to cry out to the Lord, his refuge and portion in the land of the living. In other words, he thought on Someone good, his Deliverer, and it helped him to overcome depression.



You knew my path.

In the way where I walk

They have hidden a trap for me.

⁴Look to the right [the point of attack] and see;

For there is no one who has regard for me [to act in my

favor].

Escape has failed me *and* I have nowhere to run;
No one cares about my life.

⁵I cried out to You, O LORD;
I said, “You are my refuge,
My portion in the land of the living.

⁶“Give attention to my cry,
For I am brought very low;
Rescue me from my persecutors,
For they are stronger than I.

⁷“Bring my soul out of prison (adversity),
So that I may give thanks *and* praise Your name;
The righteous will surround me [in triumph],
For You will look after me.”

Psalm 143

Prayer for Help and Guidance.

A Psalm of David.

¹HEAR MY prayer, O LORD,
Listen to my supplications!
Answer me in Your faithfulness, and in Your righteousness.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Choose To Think About God

The psalmist David talked frequently about meditating on or thinking about all the wonderful works of the Lord—the mighty acts of God. He thought on the name of the Lord, the mercy of God, the love of God, and many other such things.

When he felt depressed, he wrote in Psalm 143:4–5 that his response was not to meditate on the problem. Instead, he actively came against the problem by choosing to remember the good times of past days—pondering the doings of God and the works of His hands. In other words, David focused his thoughts on something good, and it helped him overcome depression.

Never forget this: Your mind plays an important role in your victory. Think thoughts that will add power to your life, not ones that drain your strength and energy.

²And do not enter into judgment with Your servant,
For in Your sight no man living is righteous *or* justified. [Ps
130:3; Rom 3:20–26; Gal 2:16]

³For the enemy has persecuted me,
He has crushed my life down to the ground;
He has made me dwell in dark places, like those who have
been long dead.

⁴Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed *and* weak within me
[wrapped in darkness];
My heart grows numb within me.

⁵I remember the days of old;
I meditate on all that You have done;
I ponder the work of Your hands.

⁶I reach out my hands to You;
My throat *thirsts* for You, as a parched land [thirsts for
water].

Selah.

⁷Answer me quickly, O LORD, my spirit fails; Do not hide
Your face from me,
Or I will become like those who go down into the pit (grave).

⁸Let me hear Your lovingkindness in the morning,
For I trust in You.
Teach me the way in which I should walk,
For I lift up my soul to You.

⁹Rescue me, O LORD, from my enemies;
I take refuge in You.

¹⁰Teach me to do Your will [so that I may please You],
For You are my God;
Let Your good Spirit lead me on level ground.

¹¹Save my life, O LORD, for Your name's sake;
In Your righteousness bring my life out of trouble.

¹²In your lovingkindness, silence *and* destroy my enemies
And destroy all those who afflict my life,

For I am Your servant.

Psalm 144

Prayer for Rescue and Prosperity.

A Psalm of David.

¹BLESSED BE the LORD, my Rock *and* my great strength,
Who trains my hands for war
And my fingers for battle;

POWERPOINT

David praises the Lord with strong, compelling words in Psalm 144—Rock, fortress, high tower, and more. The Lord subdued David's enemies under him, but David also had to do his part. We are partners with God. He has a part, and we have a part. We cannot do His part, and He will not do ours. If we do our part, He will train us to conquer in battle.



²My [steadfast] lovingkindness and my fortress,
My high tower and my rescuer,
My shield and He in whom I take refuge,
Who subdues my people under me.

³LORD, what is man that You take notice of him?
Or the son of man that You think of him? [Job 7:17; Ps 8:4;
Heb 2:6]

⁴Man is like a mere breath;

His days are like a shadow that passes away.

⁵Bow Your heavens, O LORD, and come down; Touch the mountains, and they will smoke.

⁶Flash lightning and scatter my enemies;
Send out Your arrows and confuse *and* embarrass *and* frustrate them.

⁷Stretch out Your hand from above;
Set me free and rescue me from great waters,
Out of the hands of [hostile] foreigners [who surround us]

⁸Whose mouths speak deceit [without restraint],
And whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

⁹I will sing a new song to You, O God;
Upon a harp of ten strings I will sing praises to You,

¹⁰Who gives salvation to kings,
Who sets David His servant free from the evil sword.

¹¹Set me free and rescue me from the hand of [hostile] foreigners,
Whose mouth speaks deceit [without restraint],
And whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

¹²Let our sons in their youth be like plants full grown,
And our daughters like corner pillars fashioned for a palace;

¹³Let our barns be full, supplying every kind of produce,
And our flocks bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our fields;

¹⁴Let our cattle bear
Without mishap and without loss,

And let there be no outcry in our streets!

¹⁵How blessed *and* favored are the people in such
circumstance;

How blessed [fortunate, prosperous, and favored] are the
people whose God is the LORD!

Psalm 145

The LORD Extolled for His Goodness.

A Psalm of praise. Of David.

¹I WILL exalt You, my God, O King,
And [with gratitude and submissive wonder] I will bless
Your name forever and ever.

²Every day I will bless You *and* lovingly praise You;
Yes, [with awe-inspired reverence] I will praise Your name
forever and ever.

³Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised,
And His greatness is [so vast and profound as to be]
unsearchable [incomprehensible to man]. [Job 5:9; 9:10;
Rom 11:33]

⁴One generation shall praise Your works to another,
And shall declare Your mighty *and* remarkable acts.

⁵On the glorious splendor of Your majesty
And on Your wonderful works, I will meditate.

⁶People will speak of the power of Your awesome acts,
And [with gratitude and submissive wonder] I will tell of
Your greatness.

⁷They will overflow [like a fountain] when they speak of Your great *and* abundant goodness And will sing joyfully of Your righteousness.

⁸The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.

⁹The LORD is good to all,
And His tender mercies are over all His works [the entirety of things created].

¹⁰All Your works shall give thanks to You *and* praise You, O LORD, And Your godly ones will bless You.

¹¹They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom
And talk of Your power,

¹²To make known to the sons of men Your mighty acts
And the glorious majesty of Your kingdom.

¹³Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,

Speak God's Word

The Lord is near to me and to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth and without guile. He will fulfill the desires of those who fear and worship Him; He also will hear my cry and will save me.

| adapted from PSALM 145:18–19 |

And Your dominion *endures* throughout all generations.
[Dan 7:14, 27]

¹⁴The LORD upholds all those [of His own] who fall And raises up all those who are bowed down.

¹⁵The eyes of all look to You [in hopeful expectation],
And You give them their food in due time.

¹⁶You open Your hand
And satisfy the desire of every living thing.

¹⁷The LORD is [unwaveringly] righteous in all His ways And gracious *and* kind in all His works.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Speak Words that Edify and Encourage

Words are wonderful when used with good intentions. They can encourage, edify, and give confidence. When we understand the power of words and realize we can choose what we think and speak, our lives can be transformed. Our words are not forced on us—they formulate in our thoughts and then we speak them. We can learn to choose our thoughts, to resist the wrong ones, and to think on the good, healthy, right ones.

When you get up in the morning, if there is something you need to attend to that you're not looking forward to, you can say, "I dread this day," or you can say, "I will exalt You, my God, O King. ... Every day I will bless You and lovingly praise You" (Ps. 145:1–2). God will give you the strength today to do whatever you need to do and to do it with joy.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Liberally Meets Your Needs

Paul tells us that God will “liberally supply (fill until full) your every need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19). He doesn’t promise that God will give us everything we want, but he does assure us that God will meet our every need.

Many times we think of needs in terms of the basic necessities of life. These represent our physical needs, but I believe God created us to need more than the essentials. We don’t simply need money, nourishment, roofs over our heads, and clothes to wear. We also need wisdom, strength, health, friends, and loved ones; and we need the gifts and talents and abilities to help us do what we are supposed to do in life. We need many things, and God is willing to open His hand “and satisfy the desire of every living thing” (Ps. 145:16).

¹⁸The LORD is near to all who call on Him,
To all who call on Him in truth (without guile).

¹⁹He will fulfill the desire of those who fear *and* worship Him
[with awe-inspired reverence and obedience]; He also will
hear their cry and will save them.

²⁰The LORD keeps all who love Him,
But all the wicked He will destroy.

²¹My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD,

And all flesh will bless *and* gratefully praise His holy name
forever and ever.

Psalm 146

The LORD an Abundant Helper.

¹PRAISE THE LORD! (Hallelujah!)

Praise the LORD, O my soul!

²While I live I will praise the LORD;

I will sing praises to my God as long as I live.

³Do not trust in princes,

In mortal man, in whom there is no salvation (help).

⁴When his spirit leaves him, he returns to the earth;

In that very day his thoughts *and* plans perish. [1 Cor 2:6]

⁵How blessed *and* graciously favored is he whose help is the

God of Jacob (Israel), Whose hope is in the LORD his God,

[Gen 32:30]

⁶Who made heaven and earth,

The sea, and all that is in them,

Who keeps truth *and* is faithful forever, [Gen 1:3]

POWERPOINT

Disappointments hurt! So rather than be hurt again and again, many people simply refuse to hope or to believe that anything good will ever happen to them. This type of behavior sets up a negative lifestyle. When thoughts are negative, everything else becomes negative, too. No matter what comes against us, God wants each of us to be “blessed *and* graciously favored” (Ps. 146:5) as we look to Him as our help and set our hope in Him. Positive minds are always full of faith and hope.



KEYS to a Victorious Life

Think About Where Your Thoughts Come From

Not every thought in your head is from you, from your circumstances, or from God. Some of the thoughts you think are from Satan's placing wrong thoughts in your mind because he wants to control your life. Did you know you don't have to continue thinking about everything that comes into your mind? You can cast wrong thoughts down and replace them with right thoughts (see 2 Cor. 10:5).

When you wake up feeling depressed and think, This is not going to be a good day, you don't have to remain depressed. Instead, you can believe, Great is our Lord and abundant in strength. He lifts up the humble. This will be a fantastic day! (see Ps. 147:5–6).

Negative thoughts and attitudes can be avoided simply by saying, "That's not a God thought. I cast it down in Jesus' name, and I am going to think about something beneficial to me today."

⁷Who executes justice for the oppressed,
Who gives food to the hungry.
The LORD sets free the prisoners.

⁸The LORD opens *the eyes* of the blind; The LORD lifts up
those who are bowed down;

The LORD loves the righteous [the upright in heart]. [Luke 13:13; John 9:7, 32]

⁹The LORD protects the strangers;
He supports the fatherless and the widow;
But He makes crooked the way of the wicked.

¹⁰The LORD shall reign forever,
Your God, O Zion, to all generations.
Praise the LORD! (Hallelujah!) [Ps 10:16; Rev 11:15]

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, God, that You
heal the brokenhearted and
bind up my wounds, healing
my pain and comforting my
sorrow.*

• adapted from Psalm 147:3

Psalm 147

Praise for Jerusalem's Restoration and Prosperity.

¹PRAISE THE LORD!

For it is good to sing praises to our [gracious and majestic]
God;

Praise is becoming *and* appropriate.

²The LORD is building up Jerusalem;

He is gathering [together] the exiles of Israel.

³He heals the brokenhearted

And binds up their wounds [healing their pain and
comforting their sorrow]. [Ps 34:18; Is 57:15; 61:1; Luke
4:18]

⁴He counts the number of the stars;

He calls them all by their names.

⁵Great is our [majestic and mighty] Lord and abundant in
strength;

His understanding is inexhaustible [infinite, boundless].

⁶The LORD lifts up the humble;

He casts the wicked down to the ground.

⁷Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving;

Sing praises to our God with the lyre,

⁸Who covers the heavens with clouds,

Who provides rain for the earth,

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

A New Perspective on the Past

Our perspectives on life involve our thought processes and they also affect our moods. If I am in a bad mood, I may need a perspective adjustment. Perhaps I am thinking too much about what I don't have and not enough about what I do have. Or I may be looking at what people don't do for me, instead of what they have done for me. Our perspective on anything, especially events and people we don't like, will have a long-range effect. How we view events that took place as far back as childhood may still be affecting us negatively today.

When I learned to think of the abuse in my childhood as something that was unfortunate, but something that God could use for good, the pain began to lessen and I began to heal emotionally. As long as I deeply resented my father for sexually abusing me, and I resented my mother for not protecting me, I had a wound in my soul that could not heal. When I decided to try to understand the way my father was raised, and my mother's fear and weakness of character, I actually started feeling more sorry for them than I did for myself.

If you are dealing with a broken heart or a wounded soul, try asking God to help you make a connection between your perspective and your current feelings. If you are willing to change the way you view the situation, you will begin to make progress toward wholeness instead of remaining broken. Life breaks each of us in one way or another. It is up to us whether we will remain broken and bitter or let God use it to make us better and more powerful.

We have God's promise: "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds [healing their pain and comforting their sorrow]" (Ps. 147:3). Although opening up old wounds for the purpose of having them cleansed is painful, it is more painful to remain wounded and broken all our lives. We cannot do anything about our past, but we can do a great deal about our future. I encourage you to not remain stuck in a painful place when God is offering you healing. It's never too late for a new beginning.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord God of heaven, I commit to You my heart and soul and mind for the healing of what is broken in my life. Help me to see what I need to know about my past, and cleanse my wounds that I may be healed. It's in Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Who makes grass grow on the mountains.

⁹He gives to the beast its food,
And to the young ravens that for which they cry.

¹⁰He does not delight in the strength (military power) of the
horse,

Nor does He take pleasure in the legs (strength) of a man.

¹¹The LORD favors those who fear *and* worship Him [with
awe-inspired reverence and obedience], Those who wait
for His mercy *and* lovingkindness. [Ps 145:20]

¹²Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem!

Praise your God, O Zion!

¹³For He has strengthened the bars of your gates,
He has blessed your children within you.

¹⁴He makes peace in your borders;
He satisfies you with the finest of the wheat.

¹⁵He sends His command to the earth;
His word runs very swiftly.

¹⁶He gives [to the earth] snow like [a blanket of] wool;
He scatters the frost like ashes.

¹⁷He casts out His ice like fragments;
Who can stand before His cold?

¹⁸He sends out His word and melts the ice;
He causes His wind to blow and the waters to flow.

¹⁹He declares His word to Jacob,
His statutes and His ordinances to Israel. [Mal 4:4]

²⁰He has not dealt this way with any [other] nation;
They have not known [understood, appreciated, heeded, or
cherished] His ordinances.
Praise the LORD! (Hallelujah!) [Ps 79:6; Jer 10:25]

Psalm 148

The Whole Creation Invoked to Praise the LORD.

¹PRAISE THE LORD!

Praise the LORD from the heavens;
Praise Him in the heights!

²Praise Him, all His angels;
Praise Him, all His hosts (armies)!

³Praise Him, sun and moon:
Praise Him, all stars of light!

⁴Praise Him, highest heavens,
And the waters above the heavens!

⁵Let them praise the name of the LORD,
For He commanded and they were created.

⁶He has also established them forever and ever;
He has made a decree which shall not pass away.

⁷Praise the LORD from the earth,
Sea monsters and all deeps;

⁸Lightning and hail, snow and fog;
Stormy wind, fulfilling His orders;

⁹Mountains and all hills;
Fruitful trees and all cedars;

¹⁰Beasts and all cattle;
Creeping things and winged birds;

¹¹Kings of the earth and all people;

- Princes and all judges of the earth;
¹²Both young men and virgins;
Old men and children.
- ¹³Let them praise the name of the LORD,
For His name alone is exalted *and* supreme;
His glory *and* majesty are above earth and heaven.
- ¹⁴He has lifted up a horn for His people [giving them strength,
prosperity, dignity, and preeminence], Praise for all His
godly ones;
For the people of Israel, a people near to Him.
Praise the LORD! (Hallelujah!) [Ps 75:10; Eph 2:17]

Psalm 149

Israel Invoked to Praise the LORD.

- ¹PRAISE THE LORD!
Sing to the LORD a new song,
And praise Him in the congregation of His godly ones
(believers).
- ²Let Israel rejoice in their Maker;
Let Zion's children rejoice in their King. [Zech 9:9; Matt
21:5]
- ³Let them praise His name with dancing;
Let them sing praises to Him with the tambourine and lyre.
- ⁴For the LORD takes pleasure in His people;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

High Praises

In David's Psalm 149, he gives us a picture of the position God's people should take—with "the high praises of God... in their throats, and a two-edged sword" of the Word of God in their hands (v. 6). In the remainder of the psalm, he goes on to infer that the saints of God take this position in order to defeat their enemies.

Praise defeats the devil more quickly than any other battle plan. Praise is a garment we put on that will protect us from defeat and negativity in our minds. This garment should be genuine heart praise and not just lip service or a method being tried to see if it works. Praise always involves the Word of God. We praise God according to His Word and His goodness.

Worship is a battle position! As we worship God for Who He is and for His attributes, for His ability and might, we will witness His power and attributes released on our behalf.

I am sure your heart frequently fills up with love and worship for God. Bow your heart and give thanks to Him. Praise and worship confuse the enemy. Take your position, and you will see the enemy's defeat.

God never loses a battle. He has a definite battle plan, and when we follow it, we will win with Him.

He will beautify the humble with salvation.

⁵Let the godly ones exult in glory;
Let them sing for joy on their beds.

⁶Let the high praises of God be in their throats,
And a two-edged sword in their hands, [Heb 4:12; Rev 1:16]

⁷To execute vengeance on the nations
And punishment on the peoples,

⁸To bind their kings with chains
And their nobles with fetters of iron,

⁹To execute on them the judgment written.
This is the honor for all His godly ones.
Praise the LORD! (Hallelujah!)

Speak God's Word

*With every breath of my life, I
will praise the Lord!*

| adapted from PSALM 150:6 |

Psalm 150

A Psalm of Praise.

¹PRAISE THE LORD!

Praise God in His sanctuary;
Praise Him in His mighty heavens.

²Praise Him for His mighty acts;

Praise Him according to [the abundance of] His greatness.
[Deut 3:24; Ps 145:5, 6]

³Praise Him with trumpet sound;

Praise Him with harp and lyre.

⁴Praise Him with tambourine and dancing;

Praise Him with stringed instruments and flute.

⁵Praise Him with resounding cymbals;

Praise Him with loud cymbals.

⁶Let everything that has breath *and* every breath of life
praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD! (Hallelujah!)

Proverbs

Author: | Solomon,
with brief portions
written by others

Date: | About 950
BC with portions
about 720 BC

Proverbs is the Bible's greatest book of wisdom. Wisdom should be one of our primary goals for our thinking. The wiser we are, the better we can recognize and overcome the enemy's attempts to influence our thoughts and use them against us. Throughout Proverbs, we see the words *knowledge*, *understanding*, and *learning*, which are all aspects of godly wisdom. It offers wisdom on relationships, decision-making, time management, how to handle finances, and many other aspects of life.

Proverbs also includes many verses pertaining to thoughts and words. From start to finish, it teaches us how to think and how to speak and emphasizes the importance of thoughts and words. If you want to see change in any area of

your life, it will start with changing the way you think and the way you speak.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM PROVERBS:

Words are not merely words. They are containers for power (see Proverbs 18:21).

As human beings, we think about and plan many things, but it is the Lord's purpose that will stand strong (see Proverbs 19:21).

Whatever you think, that's what you become (see Proverbs 23:7).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM PROVERBS:

The wise will hear and increase their learning, and the person of understanding will acquire wise counsel and the skill [to steer his course wisely and lead others to the truth]. | Proverbs 1:5

Trust in and rely confidently on the LORD with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight or understanding. In all your ways know and acknowledge and recognize Him, and He will make your paths straight and smooth [removing obstacles that block your way]. | Proverbs 3:5–6

He who guards his mouth and his tongue guards himself from troubles. | Proverbs 21:23

THE PROVERBS

- 1 THE PROVERBS (truths obscurely expressed, maxims) of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: ²To know [skillful and godly] wisdom and instruction;
To discern *and* comprehend the words of understanding *and* insight,
³To receive instruction in wise behavior *and* the discipline of wise thoughtfulness,
Righteousness, justice, and integrity;
⁴That prudence (good judgment, astute common sense) may be given to the naive *or* inexperienced [who are easily misled], And knowledge and discretion (intelligent discernment) to the youth,
⁵The wise will hear and increase their learning,
And the person of understanding will acquire wise counsel *and* the skill [to steer his course wisely and lead others to the truth], [Prov 9:9]
⁶To understand a proverb and a figure [of speech] *or* an enigma with its interpretation, And the words of the wise and their riddles [that require reflection].

⁷The [reverent] fear of the LORD [that is, worshiping Him and regarding Him as truly awesome] is the beginning *and* the preeminent part of knowledge [its starting point and its essence];

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Lord, I pray that You will help me grow in wisdom. As I become wiser, I will hear and increase in learning, and I will acquire wise counsel and the skill to steer my course wisely through life and lead others to the truth.

• adapted from Proverbs 1:5–6

But arrogant fools despise [skillful and godly] wisdom and instruction and self-discipline. [Ps 111:10]

⁸My son, hear the instruction of your father,
And do not reject the teaching of your mother.

⁹For they are a garland of grace on your head,
And chains *and* ornaments [of gold] around your neck.

¹⁰My son, if sinners entice you,
Do not consent. [Ps 1:1; Eph 5:11]

¹¹If they say, “Come with us;
Let us lie in wait to *shed* blood,
Let us ambush the innocent without cause;

¹²Let us swallow them alive like Sheol (the place of the dead),

- Even whole, as those who go down to the pit [of death];
- ¹³We will find *and* take all kinds of precious possessions,
We will fill our houses with spoil;
- ¹⁴Throw in your lot with us [they insist];
We will all have one money bag [in common],”
- ¹⁵My son, do not walk on the road with them;
Keep your foot [far] away from their path,
- ¹⁶For their feet run to evil,
And they hurry to shed blood.
- ¹⁷Indeed, it is useless to spread the *baited* net
In the sight of any bird;
- ¹⁸But [when these people set a trap for others] they lie in wait
for their own blood;
They set an ambush for their own lives [and rush to their
destruction].
- ¹⁹So are the ways of everyone who is greedy for gain;
Greed takes away the lives of its possessors. [Prov 15:27; 1
Tim 6:10]
- ²⁰Wisdom shouts in the street,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Live Fearlessly

Solomon said, “Whoever listens to me (Wisdom) will live securely and in confident trust and will be at ease, without fear or dread of evil” (Prov. 1:33). That is a powerful promise for us today.

Similarly, the apostle Paul stated that we should not, even for one moment, be frightened or intimidated by anything our opponents try to do to us (see Phil. 1:28), that our fearlessness is a sign to our enemies of their impending destruction and evidence of our deliverance and salvation through God. In other words, when we have trials, the spiritual world is watching. God is watching and Satan is watching; therefore, how we respond and what we say and do are very important. If you can hold your tongue and remain emotionally stable during times of difficulty, it is a sign of spiritual maturity and you are honoring God and letting the enemy know he is not going to control you.

She raises her voice in the markets;

²¹She calls out at the head of the noisy streets [where large crowds gather];

At the entrance of the city gates she speaks her words:

²²“How long, O naive ones [you who are easily misled], will you love being simple-minded *and* undiscerning?

How long will scoffers [who ridicule and deride] delight in scoffing,
How long will fools [who obstinately mock truth] hate knowledge?

23“*If you will turn and pay attention to my rebuke,*
Behold, I [Wisdom] will pour out my spirit on you;
I will make my words known to you. [Is 11:2; Eph 1:17–20]

24“*Because I called and you refused [to answer],*
I stretched out my hand and no one has paid attention [to my offer]; [Is 65:11, 12; 66:4; Jer 7:13, 14; Zech 7:11–13]

25*And you treated all my counsel as nothing*
And would not accept my reprimand,

26*I also will laugh at your disaster;*
I will mock when your dread and panic come,

27*When your dread and panic come like a storm,*
And your disaster comes like a whirlwind,
When anxiety and distress come upon you [as retribution].

28“*Then they will call upon me (Wisdom), but I will not answer;*
They will seek me eagerly but they will not find me, [Job 27:9; 35:12, 13; Is 1:15, 16; Jer 11:11; Mic 3:4; James 4:3]

29*Because they hated knowledge*
And did not choose the fear of the LORD [that is, obeying Him with reverence and awe-filled respect], [Prov 8:13]

30*They would not accept my counsel,*
And they spurned all my rebuke.

31“*Therefore they shall eat of the fruit of their own [wicked]*

way

And be satiated with [the penalty of] their own devices.

³²“For the turning away of the naive will kill them,
And the careless ease of [self-righteous] fools will destroy
them. [Is 32:6]

³³“But whoever listens to me (Wisdom) will live securely *and*
in confident trust
And will be at ease, without fear *or* dread of evil.”

2 MYSON, if you will receive my words And treasure my
commandments within you,

²So that your ear is attentive to [skillful and godly] wisdom,
And apply your heart to understanding [seeking it
conscientiously and striving for it eagerly];

³Yes, if you cry out for insight,
And lift up your voice for understanding;

⁴If you seek skillful *and* godly wisdom as you would silver
And search for her as you would hidden treasures;

⁵Then you will understand the [reverent] fear of the LORD
[that is, worshiping Him and regarding Him as truly
awesome]

And discover the knowledge of God. [Prov 1:7]

⁶For the LORD gives [skillful and godly] wisdom;
From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.

⁷He stores away sound wisdom for the righteous [those who
are in right standing with Him];
He is a shield to those who walk in integrity [those of

honorable character and moral courage],

⁸He guards the paths of justice;

And He preserves the way of His saints (believers). [1 Sam
2:9; Ps 66:8, 9]

⁹Then you will understand righteousness and justice [in
every circumstance]

And integrity and every good path.

¹⁰For [skillful and godly] wisdom will enter your heart
And knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.

Speak God's Word

*If I seek wisdom as I would
seek silver and search for her
as I would search for hidden
treasure, then I will
understand the reverent fear
of the Lord, regard Him as
truly awesome, and discover
the knowledge of God.*

| adapted from PROVERBS 2:4–5 |

- ¹¹Discretion will watch over you,
Understanding *and* discernment will guard you,
- ¹²To keep you from the way of evil *and* the evil man,
From the man who speaks perverse things;
- ¹³From those who leave the paths of uprightness
To walk in the ways of darkness;
- ¹⁴Who find joy in doing evil
And delight in the perversity of evil,
- ¹⁵Whose paths are crooked,
And who are devious in their ways;
- ¹⁶To keep you from the immoral woman;
From the seductress with her flattering words, [Prov 2:11]

- ¹⁷Who leaves the companion (husband) of her youth,
And forgets the covenant of her God.
- ¹⁸For her house leads down to death
And her paths lead to the dead;
- ¹⁹None who go to her return again,
Nor do they regain the paths of life—
- ²⁰So you will walk in the way of good men [that is, those of
personal integrity, moral courage and honorable
character], And keep to the paths of the righteous.
- ²¹For the upright [those who are in right standing with God]
will live in the land
And those [of integrity] who are blameless [in God's sight]
will remain in it;
- ²²But the wicked will be cut off from the land
And the treacherous shall be [forcibly] uprooted *and*
removed from it.

3 MYSON, do not forget my teaching, But let your heart keep
my commandments;

²For length of days and years of life [worth living]
And tranquility *and* prosperity [the wholeness of life's
blessings] they will add to you.

³Do not let mercy *and* kindness and truth leave you [instead
let these qualities define you]; Bind them [securely]
around your neck,

Speak God's Word

*I will trust in and rely
confidently on the Lord with
all my heart and not rely on
my own insight or
understanding. In all my
ways I will know and
acknowledge and recognize
Him, and He will make my
paths straight and smooth,
removing obstacles in my
way.*

| *adapted from* PROVERBS 3:5–6 |

Write them on the tablet of your heart. [Col 3:9–12]

⁴So find favor and high esteem

In the sight of God and man. [Luke 2:52]

⁵Trust in *and* rely confidently on the LORD with all your heart
And do not rely on your own insight *or* understanding.

⁶In all your ways know *and* acknowledge *and* recognize Him,
And He will make your paths straight *and* smooth
[removing obstacles that block your way].

⁷Do not be wise in your own eyes;

Fear the LORD [with reverent awe and obedience] and turn
[entirely] away from evil. [Prov 8:13]

⁸It will be health to your body [your marrow, your nerves,
your sinews, your muscles—all your inner parts]
And refreshment (physical well-being) to your bones.

⁹Honor the LORD with your wealth
And with the first fruits of all your crops (income); [Deut
26:2; Mal 3:10; Luke 14:13, 14]

¹⁰Then your barns will be abundantly filled
And your vats will overflow with new wine. [Deut 28:8]

¹¹My son, do not reject *or* take lightly the discipline of the
LORD [learn from your mistakes and the testing that
comes from His correction through discipline]; Nor
despise His rebuke, [Ps 94:12; Heb 12:5, 6; Rev 3:19]

¹²For those whom the LORD loves He corrects,
Even as a father *corrects* the son in whom he delights.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Trust God with Your Mind

God wants us to trust Him not only with our whole heart, but also with our mind (our thoughts). I found in my own life that I would often say I trusted God, yet I mentally tried to come up with reasons for and answers to my problems. I spent a lot of time in confusion saying, "Lord, I just don't understand! I don't know what to do." God wasn't asking me to understand or to take action apart from His instructions. He wanted me to trust!

Surveys taken in my conferences reveal that most people say they are confused, but God is not the author of confusion (see 1 Cor. 14:33). We can eliminate confusion in our lives if we cease trying to figure everything out and trust God to let us know what He wants us to know at the right time.

Acknowledge God in all that you do and He promises to direct your path (see Prov. 3:6). You may not always understand the direction He is leading you, but you can be assured that you will arrive at the right place at the right time.

¹³Happy [blessed, considered fortunate, to be admired] is the man who finds [skillful and godly] wisdom, And the man who gains understanding *and* insight [learning from God's word and life's experiences], ¹⁴For wisdom's profit is better than the profit of silver,

And her gain is better than fine gold.

¹⁵She is more precious than rubies;
And nothing you can wish for compares with her [in value].
[Job 28:12–18]

¹⁶Long life is in her right hand;
In her left hand are riches and honor. [Prov 8:12–21; 1 Tim 4:8]

¹⁷Her ways are highways of pleasantness *and* favor,
And all her paths are peace.

¹⁸She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her,
And happy [blessed, considered fortunate, to be admired] is
everyone who holds her tightly.

¹⁹The LORD by His wisdom has founded the earth;
By His understanding He has established the heavens. [Col 1:16]

²⁰By His knowledge the deeps were broken up
And the clouds drip with dew.

²¹My son, let them not escape from your sight,
But keep sound wisdom and discretion,

²²And they will be life to your soul (your inner self)
And a gracious adornment to your neck (your outer self).

²³Then you will walk on your way [of life] securely
And your foot will not stumble. [Ps 91:11, 12; Prov 10:9]

²⁴When you lie down, you will not be afraid;
When you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.

²⁵Do not be afraid of sudden fear
Nor of the storm of the wicked when it comes [since you will

be blameless];

²⁶For the LORD will be your confidence, firm *and* strong, And
will keep your foot from being caught [in a trap].

²⁷Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due [its
rightful recipients], When it is in your power to do it.
[Rom 13:7; Gal 6:10]

²⁸Do not say to your neighbor, “Go, and come back,
And tomorrow I will give it,”
When you have it with you. [Lev 19:13; Deut 24:15]

²⁹Do not devise evil against your neighbor,
Who lives securely beside you.

³⁰Do not quarrel with a man without cause,
If he has done you no harm. [Rom 12:18]

³¹Do not envy a man of violence
And do not choose any of his ways. [Ps 37:1; 73:3; Prov
24:1]

³²For the devious are repulsive to the LORD;
But His private counsel is with the upright [those with
spiritual integrity and moral courage]. [Ps 25:14]

³³The curse of the LORD is on the house of the wicked,
But He blesses the home of the just *and* righteous. [Ps
37:22; Zech 5:4; Mal 2:2]

³⁴Though He scoffs at the scoffers *and* scorns the scorners,
Yet He gives His grace [His undeserved favor] to the
humble [those who give up self-importance]. [James 4:6; 1
Pet 5:5]

³⁵The wise will inherit honor *and* glory,

But dishonor *and* shame is conferred on fools. [Is 32:6]

4 HEAR, O children, the instruction of a father, And pay attention [and be willing to learn] so that you may gain understanding *and* intelligent discernment.

²For I give you good doctrine;
Do not turn away from my instruction.

³When I was a son with my father (David),
Tender and the only son in the sight of my mother
(Bathsheba),

⁴He taught me and said to me,
“Let your heart hold fast my words;
Keep my commandments and live. [1 Chr 28:9; Eph 6:4]

⁵“Get [skillful and godly] wisdom! Acquire understanding
[actively seek spiritual discernment, mature
comprehension, and logical interpretation]!
Do not forget nor turn away from the words of my mouth.

⁶“Do not turn away from her (Wisdom) and she will guard
and protect you;
Love her, and she will watch over you.

⁷“The beginning of wisdom is: Get [skillful and godly]
wisdom [it is preeminent]!
And with all your acquiring, get understanding [actively
seek spiritual discernment, mature comprehension, and
logical interpretation]. [James 1:5]

⁸“Prize wisdom [and exalt her], and she will exalt you;
She will honor you if you embrace her.

- ⁹“She will place on your head a garland of grace;
She will present you with a crown of beauty *and* glory.”
- ¹⁰Hear, my son, and accept my sayings,
And the years of your life will be many.
- ¹¹I have instructed you in the way of [skillful and godly]
wisdom;
I have led you in upright paths.
- ¹²When you walk, your steps will not be impeded [for your
path will be clear and open];
And when you run, you will not stumble.
- ¹³Take hold of instruction; [actively seek it, grip it firmly and]
do not let go.
Guard her, for she is your life.
- ¹⁴Do not enter the path of the wicked,
And do not go the way of evil men.
- ¹⁵Avoid it, do not travel on it;
Turn away from it and pass on.
- ¹⁶For the wicked cannot sleep unless they do evil;
And they are deprived of sleep unless they make someone
stumble *and* fall.
- ¹⁷For they eat the bread of wickedness
And drink the wine of violence.
- ¹⁸But the path of the just (righteous) is like the light of dawn,
That shines brighter and brighter until [it reaches its full
strength and glory in] the perfect day. [2 Sam 23:4; Matt
5:14; Phil 2:15]

- ¹⁹The way of the wicked is like [deep] darkness;
They do not know over what they stumble. [John 12:35]

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Lord, open my ears to Your sayings. I will not let them escape from my sight. I will keep them in the center of my heart. For they are life to all who find them, and healing and health to all my flesh.

• adapted from Proverbs 4:20–22

- ²⁰My son, pay attention to my words *and* be willing to learn;
Open your ears to my sayings.
- ²¹Do not let them escape from your sight;
Keep them in the center of your heart.
- ²²For they are life to those who find them,
And healing *and* health to all their flesh.

²³ Watch over your heart with all diligence,
For from it *flow* the springs of life.

²⁴ Put away from you a deceitful (lying, misleading) mouth,
And put devious lips far from you.

²⁵ Let your eyes look directly ahead [toward the path of moral courage]

And let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you [toward the path of integrity].

²⁶ Consider well *and* watch carefully the path of your feet,
And all your ways will be steadfast *and* sure.

²⁷ Do not turn away to the right nor to the left [where evil may lurk];

Turn your foot from [the path of] evil.

5 MY SON, be attentive to my wisdom [godly wisdom learned by costly experience], Incline your ear to my understanding; [1 Kin 4:29]

² That you may exercise discrimination *and* discretion (good judgment),

And your lips may reserve knowledge *and* answer wisely [to temptation].

³ For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey [like a honeycomb]

And her speech is smoother than oil; [Ezek 20:30; Col 2:8–10; 2 Pet 2:14–17]

⁴ But in the end she is bitter like [the extract of] wormwood,

Sharp as a two-edged sword.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Post a Guard Around Your Heart

To watch over our hearts with all diligence (see Prov. 4:23) means to be alert or watchful to Satan's subtle tactics at all times. We can learn about how to do this from Philippians 4:6-7: "Do not be anxious or worried about anything, but in everything [every circumstance and situation] by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, continue to make your [specific] requests known to God. And the peace of God [that peace which reassures the heart, that peace] which transcends all understanding, [that peace which] stands guard over your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus [is yours]."

When we guard something, we watch over it with special care and stand ready to protect it at all times. To me, Proverbs 4:23 means that I am to be alert, to be conscious and aware of my thoughts and attitudes, and to not let the enemy or anything else poison my heart with lies and deceptions. Many wrong and vicious thought patterns and attitudes are built up in us little by little. We must remember that Satan is very patient, and he is relentless, so we must be even more relentless than he is. Guard your heart with all diligence!

Sometimes when riding along in the car, looking out the window, I catch myself thinking some thoughts that are really unproductive, unkind, and suspicious of others. Thankfully, because of what I have learned from God's Word, I know to immediately cast down these thoughts and choose to think on

something good. This is how we guard our hearts. We need to also be careful not to spend too much time with people who are given to gossiping, complaining, and being negative. We can become like what we surround ourselves with if we don't guard our hearts carefully!

⁵Her feet go down to death;
Her steps take hold of Sheol (the nether world, the place of the dead),

⁶So that she does not think [seriously] about the path of life;
Her ways are aimless *and* unstable; you cannot know where her path leads.

⁷Now then, my sons, listen to me
And do not depart from (forget) the words of my mouth.

⁸Let your way [in life] be far from her,
And do not go near the door of her house [avoid even being near the places of temptation], [Prov 4:15; Rom 16:17; 1 Thess 5:19–22]

⁹Or you will give your honor to others,
And your years to the cruel one,

¹⁰And strangers will be filled with your strength
And your hard-earned wealth will go to the house of a foreigner [who does not know God];

¹¹And you will groan when your *life* is ending,
When your flesh and your body are consumed;

¹²And you say, “How I hated instruction *and* discipline,
And my heart despised correction *and* reproof!

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Discipline Is Good

Some people, such as the person described in Proverbs 5:12–13, cringe at the mention of the word discipline. Their mental attitudes toward discipline are unhealthy and self-defeating and lead to a defeated life. We need to realize that discipline is our friend, not our enemy. It helps us be what we say we want to be, do what we say we want to do, and have what we say we want to have.

Discipline doesn't prevent you from having fun and doing what you want to do in life; instead it helps you obtain what you truly want, which includes peace, joy, and right relationships. Learn to love discipline (it will keep you out of trouble!), and embrace it as your companion in life.

¹³“I have not listened to the voice of my teachers,
Nor have I inclined my ear to those who instructed me.

¹⁴“I was almost in total ruin
In the midst of the assembly and congregation.”

¹⁵Drink water from your own cistern [of a pure marriage
relationship]

And fresh running water from your own well.

¹⁶Should your springs (children) be dispersed,
As streams of water in the streets?

- ¹⁷[Confine yourself to your own wife.] Let *your children* be yours alone,
And not *the children* of strangers with you.
- ¹⁸Let your fountain (wife) be blessed [with the rewards of fidelity],
And rejoice in the wife of your youth. [Song 4:12, 15]

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that my
ways are before Your eyes,
and You carefully watch all
my comings and goings.*

• adapted from Proverbs 5:21

- ¹⁹*Let her be as a loving hind and graceful doe,
Let her breasts refresh and satisfy you at all times;
Always be exhilarated and delight in her love.*
- ²⁰Why should you, my son, be exhilarated with an immoral woman

And embrace the bosom of an outsider (pagan)?

²¹For the ways of man are directly before the eyes of the
LORD,

And He carefully watches all of his paths [all of his comings
and goings]. [2 Chr 16:9; Job 31:4; 34:21; Prov 15:3; Jer
16:17; Hos 7:2; Heb 4:13]

²²The iniquities done by a wicked man will trap him,
And he will be held with the cords of his sin.

²³He will die for lack of instruction (discipline),
And in the greatness of his foolishness he will go astray
and be lost.

6 MY SON, if you have become surety (guaranteed a debt or
obligation) for your neighbor, If you have given your pledge
for [the debt of] a stranger *or* another [outside your family],

²If you have been snared with the words of your lips,
If you have been trapped by the speech of your mouth,

³Do this now, my son, and release yourself [from the
obligation];

Since you have come into the hand of your neighbor,
Go humble yourself, and plead with your neighbor [to pay
his debt and release you].

⁴Give no [unnecessary] sleep to your eyes,
Nor slumber to your eyelids;

⁵Tear yourself away like a gazelle from the hand of *the hunter*
And like a bird from the hand of the fowler.

⁶Go to the ant, O lazy one;
Observe her ways and be wise, [Job 12:7]

⁷Which, having no chief,
Overseer or ruler,

⁸She prepares her food in the summer
And brings in her provisions [of food for the winter] in the
harvest.

⁹How long will you lie down, O lazy one?
When will you arise from your sleep [and learn self-
discipline]? [Prov 24:33, 34]

¹⁰“Yet a little sleep, a little slumber,
A little folding of the hands to lie down *and* rest”—

POWERPOINT

We can learn a lot when we read about the ant, which works and provides for itself with no supervision. People who must always have someone else pushing them to do things rarely do something great. Those who only do what is right when someone is looking won't get very far either. We should be motivated from within and live our lives before God, knowing that He sees all and trusting that our reward will come from Him.



¹¹So your poverty will come like an *approaching* prowler who walks [slowly, but surely]

And your need [will come] like an armed man [making you helpless]. [Prov 10:4; 13:4; 20:4]

¹²A worthless person, a wicked man,

Is one who walks with a perverse (corrupt, vulgar) mouth.

¹³Who winks with his eyes [in mockery], who shuffles his feet
[to signal],

Who points with his fingers [to give subversive
instruction];

¹⁴Who perversely in his heart plots trouble *and* evil
continually;

Who spreads discord *and* strife.

¹⁵Therefore [the crushing weight of] his disaster will come
suddenly *upon him*;

Instantly he will be broken, and there will be no healing *or*
remedy [because he has no heart for God].

¹⁶These six things the LORD hates;
Indeed, seven are repulsive to Him:

¹⁷A proud look [the attitude that makes one overestimate
oneself and discount others], a lying tongue, And hands
that shed innocent blood, [Ps 120:2, 3]

¹⁸A heart that creates wicked plans,
Feet that run swiftly to evil,

¹⁹A false witness who breathes out lies [even half-truths],
And one who spreads discord (rumors) among brothers.

²⁰My son, be guided by your father's [God-given]
commandment (instruction)

And do not reject the teaching of your mother; [Eph 6:1–3]

²¹Bind them continually upon your heart (in your thoughts),
And tie them around your neck. [Prov 3:3; 7:3]

- ²²When you walk about, they (the godly teachings of your parents) will guide you;
When you sleep, they will keep watch over you;
And when you awake, they will talk to you.
- ²³For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching [of the law] is light,
And reproofs (rebukes) for discipline are the way of life, [Ps 19:8; 119:105]
- ²⁴To keep you from the evil woman,
From [the flattery of] the smooth tongue of an immoral woman.
- ²⁵Do not desire (lust after) her beauty in your heart,
Nor let her capture you with her eyelashes.
- ²⁶For on account of a prostitute one is reduced to a piece of bread [to be eaten up],
And the immoral woman hunts [with a hook] the precious life [of a man].
- ²⁷Can a man take fire to his chest
And his clothes not be burned?
- ²⁸Or can a man walk on hot coals
And his feet not be scorched?
- ²⁹So is the one who goes in to his neighbor's wife;
Whoever touches her will not be found innocent *or* go unpunished.
- ³⁰People do not despise a thief if he steals
To satisfy himself when he is hungry;
- ³¹But when he is found, he must repay seven times [what he

stole];

He must give all the property of his house [if necessary to meet his fine].

³²But whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks common sense *and* sound judgment *and* an understanding [of moral principles]; He who would destroy his soul does it.

³³Wounds and disgrace he will find,
And his reproach (blame) will not be blotted out.

³⁴For jealousy enrages the [wronged] husband;
He will not spare [the guilty one] on the day of vengeance.

³⁵He will not accept any ransom [offered to buy him off from demanding full punishment];
Nor will he be satisfied though you offer him many gifts (bribes).

7 MYSON, keep my words And treasure my commandments within you [so they are readily available to guide you].

²Keep my commandments and live,
And keep my teaching *and* law as the apple of your eye.

³Bind them [securely] on your fingers;
Write them on the tablet of your heart.

⁴Say to [skillful and godly] wisdom, “You are my sister,”
And regard understanding *and* intelligent insight as your intimate friends;

⁵That they may keep you from the immoral woman,
From the foreigner [who does not observe God’s laws and]

who flatters with her [smooth] words.

⁶For at the window of my house
I looked out through my lattice.

⁷And among the naive [the inexperienced and gullible],
I saw among the youths
A young man lacking [good] sense,

⁸Passing through the street near her corner;
And he took the path to her house

⁹In the twilight, in the evening;
In the black and dark night.

¹⁰And there a woman met him,
Dressed as a prostitute and sly *and* cunning of heart.

¹¹She was boisterous and rebellious;
She would not stay at home.

¹²At times *she was* in the streets, at times in the market places,
Lurking *and* setting her ambush at every corner.

¹³So she caught him and kissed him
And with a brazen *and* impudent face she said to him:

¹⁴“I have peace offerings with me;
Today I have paid my vows.

¹⁵“So I came out to meet you [that you might share with me
the feast of my offering],
Diligently I sought your face and I have found you.

¹⁶“I have spread my couch with coverings *and* cushions of
tapestry,
With colored fine linen of Egypt.

17“I have perfumed my bed

With myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.

18“Come, let us drink our fill of love until morning;

Let us console *and* delight ourselves with love.

19“For my husband is not at home.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

What Goes In Comes Out

When we think thoughts and speak words, especially frequently, they are written on the tablet of our heart, embedded in our hard drive, so to speak. Just as a computer can only put out the information programmed into it, so our heart can only put out what is written on it: “For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart” (Matt. 12:34). If you don’t like the results you are getting from your computer, you don’t hesitate to install a new program or perhaps even get a new computer. You can take similar steps with your life.

Start rewriting what has been programmed into your heart by choosing more carefully what you think and speak. “Keep my commandments and live, and keep my teaching and law as the apple of your eye. Bind them [securely] on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart” (Prov. 7:2–3).

He has gone on a long journey;

²⁰He has taken a bag of money with him,
And he will come home on the appointed day.”

²¹With her many persuasions she caused him to yield;
With her flattering lips she seduced him.

²²Suddenly he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter
[not knowing the outcome],

Or as one in stocks going to the correction [to be given] to

a fool,

²³Until an arrow pierced his liver [with a mortal wound];
Like a bird fluttering straight into the net,
He did not know that it *would cost* him his life.

²⁴Now therefore, my sons, listen to me,
And pay attention to the words of my mouth.

²⁵Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways,
Do not stray into her [evil, immoral] paths.

²⁶For she has cast down many [mortally] wounded;
Indeed, all who were killed by her were strong. [Neh 13:26]

²⁷Her house is the way to Sheol,
Descending to the chambers of death. [1 Cor 6:9]

8 DOES NOT wisdom call, And understanding lift up her voice?

²On the top of the heights beside the way,
Where the paths meet, wisdom takes her stand;

³Beside the gates, at the entrance to the city,
At the entrance of the doors, she cries out:

⁴“To you, O men, I call,
And my voice is directed to the sons of men.

⁵“O you naive *or* inexperienced [who are easily misled],
understand prudence *and* seek astute common sense;
And, O you [closed-minded, self-confident] fools,
understand wisdom [seek the insight and self-discipline
that leads to godly living]. [Is 32:6]

⁶“Listen, for I will speak excellent *and* noble things;
And the opening of my lips *will reveal* right things.

⁷“For my mouth will utter truth,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

An Excellent Life

In Proverbs 8:6, Solomon made a decision about how he would talk, and we would be wise to follow his example. Just as we can direct our thoughts, we can also direct our words with God's help. We should choose to "speak excellent and noble things."

Our words affect us and the people around us. They also affect what God is able to do for us. We cannot have a negative mouth and a positive life. In 1 Peter 3:10, the apostle Peter teaches us that if we want to enjoy life and see good days—even in the midst of trials—we must keep our tongue free from evil.

What kind of life do you want? Do you want an excellent life? If so, then be excellent in your choice of words. Change your words, and you will change your life!

And wickedness is repulsive *and* loathsome to my lips.

⁸“All the words of my mouth are in righteousness (upright, in right standing with God);

There is nothing contrary to truth or perverted (crooked) in them.

⁹“They are all straightforward to him who understands [with an open and willing mind],

- And right to those who find knowledge *and* live by it.
- 10“Take my instruction rather than [seeking] silver,
And take knowledge rather than choicest gold,
- 11“For wisdom is better than rubies;
And all desirable things cannot compare with her. [Job
28:15; Ps 19:10; 119:127]
- 12“I, [godly] wisdom, reside with prudence [good judgment,
moral courage and astute common sense], And I find
knowledge and discretion. [James 1:5]
- 13“*The [reverent] fear and worshipful awe of the LORD*
includes the hatred of evil; Pride and arrogance and the
evil way,
And the perverted mouth, I hate.
- 14“Counsel is mine and sound wisdom;
I am understanding, power *and* strength are mine.
- 15“By me kings reign
And rulers decide *and* decree justice. [Dan 2:21; Rom 13:1]
- 16“By me princes rule, and nobles,
All who judge *and* govern rightly.
- 17“I love those who love me;
And those who seek me early *and* diligently will find me. [1
Sam 2:30; Ps 91:14; John 14:21; James 1:5]
- 18“Riches and honor are with me,
Enduring wealth and righteousness (right standing with
God). [Prov 3:16; Matt 6:33]
- 19“My fruit is better than gold, even pure gold,
And my yield is better than choicest silver.

- 20“*I, [Wisdom, continuously] walk in the way of
righteousness,
In the midst of the paths of justice,*
- 21*That I may cause those who love me to inherit wealth and
true riches,
And that I may fill their treasuries.*
- 22“*The LORD created and possessed me at the beginning of
His way, Before His works of old [were accomplished].*
- 23“*From everlasting I was established and ordained,
From the beginning, before the earth existed, [I, godly
wisdom, existed]. [John 1:1; 1 Cor 1:24]*
- 24“*When there were no ocean depths I was born,
When there were no fountains and springs overflowing
with water.*
- 25“*Before the mountains were settled,
Before the hills, I was born; [Job 15:7, 8]*
- 26*While He had not yet made the earth and the fields,
Or the first of the dust of the earth.*
- 27“*When He established the heavens, I [Wisdom] was there;
When He drew a circle upon the face of the deep,*
- 28*When He made firm the skies above,
When the fountains and springs of the deep became fixed
and strong,*
- 29*When He set for the sea its boundary
So that the waters would not transgress [the boundaries set
by] His command,*

POWERPOINT

The Bible mentions seven things the Lord hates, and a lying tongue is one of them (see Prov. 6:16–19). In Proverbs 8:7–8, Solomon says he will speak truth. Satan is known as the deceiver; he is a liar and the father of lies (see John 8:44), and one way he wages war in our minds is to whisper lies to us. God, on the other hand is truth, and we can assume that since He hates a lying tongue, He loves words that are truthful. Jesus said that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (see John 14:6). Satan lies to all of us, and the only way we can recognize and resist his lies is to know God's Word, which is truth. The more we know the truth, the more we can speak truthfully.



When He marked out the foundations of the earth—[Job 38:10, 11; Ps 104:6–9; Jer 5:22]

³⁰Then I was beside Him, as a master craftsman;

And I was daily His delight;

Rejoicing before Him always, [Matt 3:17; John 1:2, 18]

³¹Rejoicing in the world, His inhabited earth,

And having my delight in the sons of men. [Ps 16:3]

³²“Now therefore, O sons, listen to me,

For blessed [happy, prosperous, to be admired] are they
who keep my ways. [Ps 119:1, 2; 128:1, 2; Luke 11:28]

³³“Heed (pay attention to) instruction and be wise,

And do not ignore *or* neglect it.

³⁴“Blessed [happy, prosperous, to be admired] is the man who
listens to me,

Watching daily at my gates,

Waiting at my doorposts.

³⁵“For whoever finds me (Wisdom) finds life

And obtains favor *and* grace from the LORD.

³⁶“But he who fails to find me *or* sins against me injures
himself;

All those who hate me love *and* court death.”

9 WISDOM HAS built her [spacious and sufficient] house;
She has hewn out *and* set up her seven pillars.

- ²She has prepared her food, she has mixed her wine;
She has also set her table. [Matt 22:2–4]
- ³She has sent out her maidens, she calls
From the highest places of the city:
- ⁴“Whoever is naive *or* inexperienced, let him turn in here!”
As for him who lacks understanding, she says,
- ⁵“Come, eat my food
And drink the wine I have mixed [and accept my gifts]. [Is
55:1; John 6:27]
- ⁶“Leave [behind] your foolishness [and the foolish] and live,
And walk in the way of insight *and* understanding.”

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Help me to always remember,
Lord, that the reverent fear of
You is the beginning of
wisdom and that regarding
You as truly awesome is the
beginning and preeminent
part of wisdom, its starting*

place and its essence.

• *adapted from Proverbs 9:10*

- ⁷He who corrects *and* instructs a scoffer gets dishonor for himself,
And he who rebukes a wicked man gets insults for himself.
- ⁸Do not correct a scoffer [who foolishly ridicules and takes no responsibility for his error] or he will hate you; Correct a wise man [who learns from his error], and he will love you. [Ps 141:5]
- ⁹Give *instruction* to a wise man and he will become even wiser;
Teach a righteous man and he will increase his learning.
- ¹⁰The [reverent] fear of the LORD [that is, worshiping Him and regarding Him as truly awesome] is the beginning *and* the preeminent part of wisdom [its starting point and its essence], And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding *and* spiritual insight.
- ¹¹For by me (wisdom from God) your days will be multiplied,
And years of life shall be increased.
- ¹²If you are wise, you are wise for yourself [for your own benefit];
If you scoff [thoughtlessly ridicule and disdain], you alone will pay the penalty.
- ¹³The foolish woman is restless *and* noisy;
She is naive *and* easily misled *and* thoughtless, and knows

nothing at all [of eternal value].

¹⁴She sits at the doorway of her house,
On a seat by the high *and* conspicuous places of the city,

¹⁵Calling to those who pass by,
Who are making their paths straight:

¹⁶“Whoever is naive *or* inexperienced, let him turn in here!”
And to him who lacks understanding (common sense), she
says,

¹⁷“Stolen waters (pleasures) are sweet [because they are
forbidden];
And bread *eaten* in secret is pleasant.” [Prov 20:17]

¹⁸But he does not know that the spirits of the dead are there,
And that her guests are [already] in the depths of Sheol (the
nether world, the place of the dead).

10 THE PROVERBS of Solomon: A wise son makes a father
glad,

But a foolish [stubborn] son [who refuses to learn] is a grief
to his mother.

²Treasures of wickedness *and* ill-gotten gains do not profit,
But righteousness *and* moral integrity in daily life rescues
from death.

³The LORD will not allow the righteous to hunger [God will
meet all his needs], But He will reject *and* cast away the
craving of the wicked. [Ps 34:9, 10; 37:25]

⁴Poor is he who works with a negligent *and* idle hand,

But the hand of the diligent makes *him* rich.

⁵He who gathers during summer *and* takes advantage of his opportunities is a son who acts wisely, *But* he who sleeps during harvest *and* ignores the moment of opportunity is a son who acts shamefully.

⁶Blessings are on the head of the righteous [the upright, those in right standing with God],
But the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.

⁷The *memory of the righteous [person] is a [source of] blessing, But the name of the wicked will [be forgotten and] rot [like a corpse]. [Ps 112:6; 9:5]

⁸The wise in heart [are willing to learn so they] will accept *and* obey commands (instruction), But the babbling fool [who is arrogant and thinks himself wise] will come to ruin.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Remember To Speak Positively

Jesus often experienced adverse circumstances, and while He talked about the situations He was facing, He never did so in a negative way. In the book of John, He told His disciples He was going away, but they should be happy for Him because it was the will of God. He went on to say He wouldn't be talking much more with them (see John 14:28–31).

Proverbs 10:11 says, “The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life and his words of wisdom are a source of blessing,” which Jesus demonstrated perfectly. He knew when to speak, when not to speak, and how to speak. He obviously knew the power and impact of words. I believe His choosing to say fewer words and making sure that the ones He did say were the right ones helped Him to complete God's perfect plan for Him.

⁹He who walks in integrity *and* with moral character walks securely,
But he who takes a crooked way will be discovered *and* punished.

¹⁰He who [maliciously] winks the eye [of evil intent] causes trouble;
And the babbling fool [who is arrogant and thinks himself wise] will come to ruin.

¹¹The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life *and* his words of wisdom are a source of blessing, But the mouth of the wicked conceals violence *and* evil.

¹²Hatred stirs up strife,
But love covers *and* overwhelms all transgressions
[forgiving and overlooking another's faults].

¹³On the lips of the discerning, [skillful and godly] wisdom is found,
But discipline *and* the rod are for the back of the one who is without common sense *and* understanding.

¹⁴Wise men store up *and* treasure knowledge [in mind and heart],
But with the mouth of the foolish, ruin is at hand.

¹⁵The rich man's wealth is his fortress;
The ruin of the poor is their poverty. [Ps 52:7; 1 Tim 6:17]

¹⁶The wages of the righteous [the upright, those in right standing with God] is [a worthwhile, meaningful] life, The income of the wicked, punishment. [Rom 6:21–23; 1 Tim 6:10]

¹⁷He who learns from instruction *and* correction is on the [right] path of life [and for others his example is a path toward wisdom and blessing], But he who ignores *and* refuses correction goes off course [and for others his example is a path toward sin and ruin].

¹⁸He who hides hatred has lying lips,
And he who spreads slander is a fool. [Prov 26:24–26]

¹⁹When there are many words, transgression *and* offense are

unavoidable,

But he who controls his lips *and* keeps thoughtful silence is wise.

²⁰The tongue of the righteous is like precious silver (greatly valued);

The heart of the wicked is worth little.

²¹The lips of the righteous feed *and* guide many,

But fools [who reject God and His wisdom] die for lack of understanding.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Avoiding “Loose Mouth Disease”

According to Proverbs 10:19 people who talk too much can easily get themselves into trouble. Without meaning to cause problems, they talk about something they were to keep confidential, sharing information with someone who wasn't to find out about it, hurting someone's feelings, spreading gossip or rumors, or making casual comments that others might easily misinterpret. I refer to this kind of undisciplined speech as “loose mouth disease.” People who have it merely love to talk and take every opportunity available to say something.

One aspect of loose mouth disease that almost all of us are susceptible to is making comments that other people perceive as promises. I once hurt a friend deeply in this very way. I said something that she took as a long-term commitment, and at the time I thought it would be the case. But God later led me in a different direction, and she was wounded. I felt terrible that I didn't speak more wisely. Since then I have learned to say to people, “We will do such and such unless God leads us in a different direction.” That was what I meant when speaking with

my friend, but I didn't actually say it. I was not careful enough with my words.

When you make a commitment to someone, speak carefully and make your intention clear. Try not to leave room for the other person to misinterpret your intent, and qualify your commitment if necessary with a comment such as, "We can do that as long as it's good for both of us," or "We can do that if I do not have to work overtime that weekend," or, as I mentioned earlier, "We can do that unless God leads us in a different direction." If we believe what God's Word says about the words of our mouths, we must also take seriously the issue of keeping our word.

If you have ever told someone you would do something and not done it, even if you had a good reason, you know you will feel awkward and uncomfortable the next time you see that person. This kind of trouble can be avoided by practicing wisdom and thinking before you speak. Proverbs 21:23 says, "He who guards his mouth and his tongue guards himself from troubles."

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Dear Lord, please help me understand how serious my words are and to be more careful about them, especially when making promises or commitments. I want to be a person of integrity where my words are concerned, and I believe You will help me do it. In Jesus' name. Amen.

- ²²The blessing of the LORD brings [true] riches, And He adds
no sorrow to it [for it comes as a blessing from God].
- ²³Engaging in evil is like sport to the fool [who refuses
wisdom and chases sin],
But to a man of understanding [skillful and godly] wisdom
brings joy.
- ²⁴What the wicked fears will come upon him,
But the desire of the righteous [for the blessings of God]
will be granted.
- ²⁵When the whirlwind passes, the wicked is no more,
But the righteous has an everlasting foundation. [Ps 125:1;
Matt 7:24–27]
- ²⁶Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes,
So is the lazy one to those who send him *to work.*
- ²⁷The [reverent] fear of the LORD [worshiping, obeying,
serving, and trusting Him with awe-filled respect]
prolongs one's life, But the years of the wicked will be
shortened.
- ²⁸The hope of the righteous [those of honorable character
and integrity] is joy,
But the expectation of the wicked [those who oppose God
and ignore His wisdom] comes to nothing.
- ²⁹The way of the LORD is a stronghold to the upright,
But it is ruin to those who do evil.
- ³⁰The [consistently] righteous will never be shaken,
But the wicked will not inhabit the earth. [Ps 37:22; 125:1]

- ³¹The mouth of the righteous flows with [skillful and godly] wisdom,
But the perverted tongue will be cut out.
- ³²The lips of the righteous know (speak) what is acceptable,
But the mouth of the wicked knows (speaks) what is perverted (twisted).

11 A FALSE balance *and* dishonest business practices are extremely offensive to the LORD, But an accurate scale is His delight. [Lev 19:35, 36; Prov 16:11]

²When pride comes [boiling up with an arrogant attitude of self-importance], then come dishonor *and* shame, But with the humble [the teachable who have been chiseled by trial and who have learned to walk humbly with God] there is wisdom *and* soundness of mind.

³The integrity *and* moral courage of the upright will guide them,
But the crookedness of the treacherous will destroy them.

⁴Riches will not provide security in the day of wrath *and* judgment,
But righteousness rescues from death. [Prov 10:2; Zeph 1:18]

⁵The righteousness of the blameless will smooth their way *and* keep it straight,
But the wicked will fall by his own wickedness.

⁶The righteousness of the upright will rescue them,

But the treacherous will be caught by their own greed.

⁷When the wicked man dies, his expectation will perish;
And the hope of [godless] strong men perishes.

⁸The righteous is rescued from trouble,
And the wicked takes his place.

⁹With his mouth the godless man destroys his neighbor,
But through knowledge *and* discernment the righteous will
be rescued.

¹⁰When it goes well for the righteous, the city rejoices,
And when the wicked perish, there are shouts of joy.

¹¹By the blessing [of the influence] of the upright the city is
exalted,
But by the mouth of the wicked it is torn down.

¹²He who despises his neighbor lacks sense,
But a man of understanding keeps silent.

¹³He who goes about as a gossip reveals secrets,
But he who is trustworthy *and* faithful keeps a matter
hidden.

¹⁴Where there is no [wise, intelligent] guidance, the people
fall [and go off course like a ship without a helm],

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Seek the Right Kind of Advice

When you are facing a dilemma, it is important to run to the throne (to God), not to the phone to ask a friend for advice. It's always best to go to God first and seek His wisdom and to not start asking other people what they think. There are situations in life when you can benefit from a trustworthy person's good advice and times when God chooses to speak to you through other people, so I want to offer a couple of guidelines for seeking advice.

First, anytime we talk to someone else about our problems, we should do so with a purpose in mind. When we speak of our troubles just to be talking about them or trying to gain nothing more than sympathy, we often say things that don't really need to be said.

Second, know that bad advice is worse than no advice at all. So the first guideline for talking to people about your problems is to speak with someone you respect and are willing to listen to. Talk with someone who is known to be wise, who knows God's Word thoroughly, and who will keep your secrets. God's Word clearly teaches us that we are to not follow the

advice of the ungodly (see Ps. 1:1). Seek advice from true friends who will not simply agree with you, but will disagree if they see that you may be wrong about something.

Third, talk with someone whom you can trust not to discuss with anyone else what you have discussed with them. Only people with mature character will keep secrets, so if you need to talk about something confidential, seek someone who is disciplined with their mouth and has been proven trustworthy.

You can protect yourself and hopefully gain the good advice you need by following God's wisdom in these areas. I can tell you from firsthand experience that I have sacrificed my joy and peace on numerous occasions simply because I talked to the wrong people. Proverbs 11:14 says there is victory in the abundance of counselors, but it also says they must be "wise and godly" counselors. When you need advice, look for wise, godly people who can give you good advice—and you'll be on your way to victory.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Help me, Lord, to look to You for advice first anytime I have a problem. If I need to seek advice from another human being, lead me to the right people, people who are wise and trustworthy and will help me find the wisdom you want me to have. In Jesus' name. Amen.

But in the abundance of [wise and godly] counselors there is victory.

¹⁵He who puts up security *and* guarantees a debt for an outsider will surely suffer [for his foolishness], But he who hates (declines) being a guarantor is secure [from its penalties].

¹⁶A gracious *and* good woman attains honor,
And ruthless men attain riches [but not respect].

¹⁷The merciful *and* generous man benefits his soul [for his behavior returns to bless him], But the cruel *and* callous man does himself harm.

¹⁸The wicked man earns deceptive wages,
But he who sows righteousness *and* lives his life with integrity will have a true reward [that is both permanent and satisfying]. [Hos 10:12; Gal 6:8, 9; James 3:18]

¹⁹He who is steadfast in righteousness *attains* life,
But he who pursues evil *attains* his own death.

²⁰The perverse in heart are repulsive *and* shamefully vile to the LORD, But those who are blameless *and* above reproach in their walk are His delight!

²¹Assuredly, the evil man will not go unpunished,
But the descendants of the righteous will be freed.

²²As a ring of gold in a swine's snout,
So is a beautiful woman who is without discretion [her lack of character mocks her beauty].

²³The desire of the righteous brings only good,

But the expectation of the wicked brings wrath.

²⁴There is the one who [generously] scatters [abroad], and yet increases all the more;

And there is the one who withholds what is justly due, *but it results* only in want *and* poverty.

²⁵The generous man [is a source of blessing and] shall be prosperous *and* enriched,

And he who waters will himself be watered [reaping the generosity he has sown]. [2 Cor 9:6–10]

²⁶The people curse him who holds back grain [when the public needs it],

But a blessing [from God and man] is upon the head of him who sells it.

²⁷He who diligently seeks good seeks favor *and* grace,
But he who seeks evil, evil will come to him.

²⁸He who leans on *and* trusts in *and* is confident in his riches will fall,

But the righteous [who trust in God's provision] will flourish like a *green* leaf.

²⁹He who troubles (mismanages) his own house will inherit the wind (nothing),

And the foolish will be a servant to the wise-hearted.

³⁰The fruit of the [consistently] righteous is a tree of life,

And he who is wise captures *and* wins souls [for God—he gathers them for eternity]. [Matt 4:19; 1 Cor 9:19; James 5:20]

³¹If the righteous will be rewarded on the earth [with godly

blessings],
How much more [will] the wicked and the sinner [be repaid
with punishment]!

12 WHOEVER LOVES instruction *and* discipline loves
knowledge, But he who hates reproof *and* correction is stupid.

²A good man will obtain favor from the LORD,
But He will condemn a man who devises evil.

³A man will not be established by wickedness,
But the root of the [consistently] righteous will not be
moved.

⁴A virtuous *and* excellent wife [worthy of honor] is the
crown of her husband,
But she who shames him [with her foolishness] is like
rottenness in his bones. [Prov 31:23; 1 Cor 11:7]

⁵The thoughts *and* purposes of the [consistently] righteous
are just (honest, reliable), But the counsels *and* schemes
of the wicked are deceitful.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The Power of Words

The Bible says that we need to control our tongue if we want to enjoy life (see 1 Pet. 3:10) and that “the tongue of the wise brings healing” (Prov. 12:18). I find that reading and meditating on what God’s Word says about the power of words is helpful to me. Here are some of my favorites: “The one who guards his mouth [thinking before he speaks] protects his life” (Prov. 13:3). “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable and pleasing in Your sight, O LORD, my [firm, immovable] rock and my Redeemer” (Ps. 19:14).

Look up these additional Scriptures and meditate on them as you seek to live a powerful life: Proverbs 8:8; 11:9; 15:4; 18:21; James 1:26. God’s Word has power in it that will strengthen and enable you to speak words of life that will benefit you.

⁶The [malevolent] words of the wicked lie in wait for
[innocent] blood [to slander],
But the mouth of the upright will rescue *and* protect them.

⁷The wicked are overthrown [by their evil] and are no more,
But the house of the [consistently] righteous will stand
[securely].

⁸A man will be commended according to his insight *and*

sound judgment,

But the one who is of a perverse mind will be despised.

⁹Better is he who is lightly esteemed and has a servant,
Than he who [boastfully] honors himself [pretending to be
what he is not] and lacks bread.

¹⁰A righteous man has kind regard for the life of his animal,
But even the compassion of the wicked is cruel. [Deut 25:4]

¹¹He who tills his land will have plenty of bread,
But he who follows worthless *things* lacks common sense
and good judgment.

¹²The wicked desire the plunder of evil men,
But the root of the righteous yields *richer* fruit.

¹³An evil man is [dangerously] ensnared by the transgression
of his lips,
But the righteous will escape from trouble.

¹⁴A man will be satisfied with good from the fruit of his words,
And the deeds of a man's hands will return to him [as a
harvest].

¹⁵The way of the [arrogant] fool [who rejects God's wisdom]
is right in his own eyes,
But a wise *and* prudent man is he who listens to counsel.
[Prov 3:7; 9:9; 21:2]

¹⁶The [arrogant] fool's anger is quickly known [because he
lacks self-control and common sense],
But a prudent man ignores an insult.

¹⁷He who speaks truth [when he testifies] tells what is right,
But a false witness utters deceit [in court].

¹⁸There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword,
But the tongue of the wise brings healing.

¹⁹Truthful lips will be established forever,
But a lying tongue is [credited] only for a moment.

²⁰Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil,
But counselors of peace have joy.

POWERPOINT

I have certainly experienced the fact that anxiety weighs us down and keeps us from being lighthearted and glad (see Prov. 12:25)—and perhaps you have, too. Anxiety on a regular basis becomes a real burden and keeps us from enjoying life and moving forward in God's plans for us. People who allow their lives to consist of being anxious over one little thing after another do not experience much peace and joy. The good news is that we do have a choice. We can choose to be upset or we can choose to be at peace. Thankfully, we don't have to live by our feelings; we can learn to live beyond them.



²¹No harm befalls the righteous,

But the wicked are filled with trouble. [Job 5:19; Ps 91:3;
Prov 12:13; Is 46:4; Jer 1:8; Dan 6:27; 2 Tim 4:18]

²²Lying lips are extremely disgusting to the LORD,
But those who deal faithfully are His delight. [Prov 6:17;
11:20; Rev 22:15]

²³A shrewd man is reluctant to display his knowledge [until
the proper time],
But the heart of [over-confident] fools proclaims
foolishness. [Is 32:6]

²⁴The hand of the diligent will rule,
But the negligent *and* lazy will be put to forced labor.

²⁵Anxiety in a man's heart weighs it down,
But a good (encouraging) word makes it glad. [Ps 50:4; Prov
15:13]

²⁶The righteous man is a guide to his neighbor,
But the way of the wicked leads them astray.

²⁷The lazy man does not catch *and* roast his prey,
But the precious possession of a [wise] man is diligence
[because he recognizes opportunities and seizes them].

²⁸In the way of righteousness is life,
And in its pathway there is no death [but immortality—
eternal life]. [John 3:36; 4:36; 8:51; 11:26; 1 Cor 15:54; Gal
6:8]

13 A WISE son heeds *and* accepts [and is the result of] his
father's discipline *and* instruction, But a scoffer does not listen
to reprimand *and* does not learn from his errors.

²From the fruit of his mouth a [wise] man enjoys good,
But the desire of the treacherous is for violence.

³The one who guards his mouth [thinking before he speaks]
protects his life;
The one who opens his lips wide [and chatters without
thinking] comes to ruin.

⁴The soul (appetite) of the lazy person craves and gets
nothing [for lethargy overcomes ambition], But the soul
(appetite) of the diligent [who works willingly] is rich *and*
abundantly supplied. [Prov 10:4]

⁵A righteous man hates lies,
But a wicked man is loathsome, and he acts shamefully.

⁶Righteousness (being in right standing with God) guards
the one whose way is blameless,
But wickedness undermines *and* overthrows the sinner.

⁷There is one who pretends to be rich, yet has nothing at all;
Another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth. [Prov
12:9; Luke 12:20, 21]

⁸The ransom for a man's life is his wealth,
But the poor man does not even have to listen to a rebuke
or threats [from the envious].

⁹The light of the righteous [within him—grows brighter and]
rejoices,
But the lamp of the wicked [is a temporary light and] goes
out.

¹⁰Through pride *and* presumption come nothing but strife,
But [skillful and godly] wisdom is with those who welcome

[well-advised] counsel.

¹¹Wealth *obtained* by fraud dwindles,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

What Are You Talking About?

The Bible says, “From the fruit of his mouth a [wise] man enjoys good” (Prov. 13:2). We talk a lot, and sometimes we pay little attention to what we are saying, let alone think seriously about the impact of our words. If we are honest with ourselves, we may find that some of our moods—good and bad—are directly linked to our conversations.

Anytime you become aware of your mood, whether you are feeling a bit gloomy or feeling cheerful and blessed, you should ask yourself: “What have I been talking about?” Soon you will begin to see how your words connect to your moods and attitudes.

Why not decide each day before you even get out of bed to ask God to help you talk only about those things that will benefit you and everyone who hears you? Since we have the power to make our days better, we would be foolish indeed if we didn't use it.

But he who gathers gradually by [honest] labor will increase [his riches].

¹²Hope deferred makes the heart sick,
But when desire is fulfilled, it is a tree of life.

¹³Whoever despises the word *and* counsel [of God] brings destruction upon himself,

But he who [reverently] fears *and* respects the
commandment [of God] will be rewarded.

¹⁴The teaching of the wise is a fountain *and* source of life,
So that one may avoid the snares of death.

¹⁵Good understanding wins favor [from others],
But the way of the unfaithful is hard [like barren, dry soil].

¹⁶Every prudent *and* self-disciplined man acts with
knowledge,
But a [closed-minded] fool [who refuses to learn] displays
his foolishness [for all to see].

¹⁷A wicked messenger falls into hardship,
But a faithful ambassador brings healing.

¹⁸Poverty and shame will come to him who refuses instruction
and discipline,
But he who accepts *and* learns from reproof *or* censure is
honored.

¹⁹Desire realized is sweet to the soul;
But it is detestable to fools to turn away from evil [which
they have planned].

²⁰He who walks [as a companion] with wise men will be wise,
But the companions of [conceited, dull-witted] fools [are
fools themselves and] will experience harm. [Is 32:6]

²¹Adversity pursues sinners,
But the [consistently] upright will be rewarded with
prosperity.

²²A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children,
And the wealth of the sinner is stored up for [the hands of]

the righteous.

²³ Abundant food is in the fallow (uncultivated) ground of the poor,

But [without protection] it is swept away by injustice.

²⁴ He who withholds the rod [of discipline] hates his son,
But he who loves him disciplines *and* trains him diligently
and appropriately [with wisdom and love]. [Prov 19:18;
22:15; 23:13; 29:15, 17; Eph 6:4]

²⁵ The [consistently] righteous has enough to satisfy his appetite,

But the stomach of the wicked is in need [of bread].

14 THE WISE woman builds her house [on a foundation of godly precepts, and her household thrives], But the foolish one [who lacks spiritual insight] tears it down with her own hands [by ignoring godly principles].

² He who walks in uprightness [reverently] fears the LORD
[and obeys and worships Him with profound respect], But
he who is devious in his ways despises Him.

³ In the mouth of the [arrogant] fool [who rejects God] is a rod for his back,
But the lips of the wise [when they speak with godly wisdom] will protect them.

⁴ Where there are no oxen, the manger is clean,
But much revenue [because of good crops] comes by the strength of the ox.

⁵ A faithful *and* trustworthy witness will not lie,

But a false witness speaks lies.

⁶A scoffer seeks wisdom and finds none [for his ears are closed to wisdom],

But knowledge is easy for one who understands [because he is willing to learn].

⁷Leave the presence of a [shortsighted] fool,

For you will not find knowledge *or* hear godly wisdom from his lips.

⁸The wisdom of the sensible is to understand his way,

But the foolishness of [shortsighted] fools is deceit.

⁹Fools mock sin [but sin mocks the fools],

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Learn To Be Prudent

A word we don't hear very much about is prudence. The King James Version of Proverbs 14:8 says, "The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way." To have prudence or to be prudent means being wise stewards of the gifts God has given us to use. Those gifts include time, energy, strength, and health as well as thoughts, words, and material possessions. They include our bodies as well as our minds and spirits.

Prudence is a word that many people are not familiar with, but we should be knowledgeable of it and avidly seek it. In our world today we see a great deal of waste. Jesus doesn't want us to be wasteful. He wants us to be good managers of everything He gives to us. God's giving us increase and promotion is dependent on how well we learn to manage what we already have.

Ask God to reveal when you are being wasteful and make changes accordingly. Sometimes I find myself thinking something that is a total waste of time, or I might be drawn into a conversation that is a waste of time. Thankfully, I can make prudent changes and improve the quality of my life, and so can you.

But among the upright there is good will and the favor and blessing of God. [Prov 10:23]

- ¹⁰The heart knows its own bitterness,
And no stranger shares its joy.
- ¹¹The house of the wicked will be overthrown,
But the tent of the upright will thrive.
- ¹²There is a way *which seems* right to a man *and* appears
straight before him,
But its end is the way of death.
- ¹³Even in laughter the heart may be in pain,
And the end of joy may be grief.
- ¹⁴The backslider in heart will have his fill with his own [rotten]
ways,
But a good man will *be satisfied* with his ways [the godly
thought and action which his heart pursues and in which
he delights].
- ¹⁵The naive *or* inexperienced person [is easily misled and]
believes every word he hears, But the prudent man [is
discreet and astute and] considers well where he is going.
- ¹⁶A wise man suspects danger and cautiously avoids evil,
But the fool is arrogant and careless.
- ¹⁷A quick-tempered man acts foolishly *and* without self-
control,
And a man of wicked schemes is hated.
- ¹⁸The naive [are unsophisticated and easy to exploit and]
inherit foolishness,
But the sensible [are thoughtful and far-sighted and] are
crowned with knowledge.
- ¹⁹The evil will bow down before the good,

And the wicked [will bow down] at the gates of the righteous.

²⁰The poor man is hated even by his neighbor,
But those who love the rich are many.

²¹He who despises his neighbor sins [against God and his fellow man],
But happy [blessed and favored by God] is he who is gracious *and* merciful to the poor.

²²Do they not go astray who devise evil *and* wander from the way of righteousness?
But kindness and truth will be to those who devise good.

²³In all labor there is profit,

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, in the reverent fear of
You I have strong confidence,
and I will always have a
place of refuge.*

• adapted from Proverbs 14:26

But mere talk leads only to poverty.

²⁴The crown of the wise is their wealth [of wisdom],
But the foolishness of [closed-minded] fools is [nothing
but] folly.

²⁵A truthful witness saves lives,
But he who speaks lies is treacherous.

²⁶In the [reverent] fear of the LORD there is strong confidence,
And His children will [always] have a place of refuge.

²⁷The [reverent] fear of the LORD [that leads to obedience and
worship] is a fountain of life, So that one may avoid the
snares of death. [John 4:10, 14]

²⁸In a multitude of people is a king's glory,
But in a lack of people is a [pretentious] prince's ruin.

²⁹He who is slow to anger has great understanding [and
profits from his self-control],
But he who is quick-tempered exposes *and* exalts his
foolishness [for all to see]. [Prov 16:32; James 1:19]

³⁰A calm *and* peaceful *and* tranquil heart is life *and* health to
the body, But passion *and* envy are like rottenness to the
bones.

³¹He who oppresses the poor taunts *and* insults his Maker,
But he who is kind *and* merciful *and* gracious to the needy
honors Him. [Prov 17:5; Matt 25:40, 45]

³²The wicked is overthrown through his wrongdoing,
But the righteous has hope *and* confidence *and* a refuge
[with God] even in death.

³³Wisdom rests [silently] in the heart of one who has

understanding,
But what is in the heart of [shortsighted] fools is made
known. [Is 32:6]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Your Words Are a Tree of Life

The principle truth in Proverbs 15:4 is the same as the one in Proverbs 18:21, which says we minister either life or death with our mouth: “Death and life are in the power of the tongue.”

These two verses explain why God’s Word reminds us often to pay attention to the words we speak. In Ephesians 4:29, Paul writes: “Do not let unwholesome [foul, profane, worthless, vulgar] words ever come out of your mouth, but only such speech as is good for building up others, according to the need and the occasion, so that it will be a blessing to those who hear [you speak].”

Notice that the word spirit in Proverbs 15:4 is spelled with a lowercase “s.” This tells us the verse is not talking about the Holy Spirit, but refers to the human spirit. In other words, our words have the power to give life to or to break down the spirit or heart of other people, as well as our own.

As believers, we are not to speak things that would discourage people or make them want to give up on life, nor are we to pollute ourselves or others with negative words or comments. We are not to use our mouths to hurt people. We should speak words that heal, restore, and uplift. Try giving each person you come in contact with a sincere compliment! People light up when we point out something good about

them.

- ³⁴Righteousness [moral and spiritual integrity and virtuous character] exalts a nation,
But sin is a disgrace to any people.
- ³⁵The king's favor *and* good will are toward a servant who acts wisely *and* discreetly, But his anger *and* wrath are toward him who acts shamefully. [Matt 24:45, 47]

15 A SOFT *and* gentle *and* thoughtful answer turns away wrath,

But harsh *and* painful *and* careless words stir up anger.
[Prov 25:15]

²The tongue of the wise speaks knowledge that is pleasing *and* acceptable,
But the [babbling] mouth of fools spouts folly.

³The eyes of the LORD are in every place,
Watching the evil and the good [in all their endeavors]. [Job 34:21; Prov 5:21; Jer 16:17; 32:19; Heb 4:13]

⁴A soothing tongue [speaking words that build up and encourage] is a tree of life,
But a perversive tongue [speaking words that overwhelm and depress] crushes the spirit.

⁵A [flippant, arrogant] fool rejects his father's instruction *and* correction,

Speak God's Word

I speak soft and gentle and thoughtful answers that turn away wrath, not harsh and painful and careless words that stir up anger.

| adapted from PROVERBS 15:1 |

But he who [is willing to learn and] regards *and* keeps in mind a reprimand acquires good sense.

⁶Great *and* priceless treasure is in the house of the [consistently] righteous one [who seeks godly instruction and grows in wisdom], But trouble is in the income of the wicked one [who rejects the laws of God].

⁷The lips of the wise spread knowledge [sifting it as chaff from the grain];
But the hearts of [shortsighted] fools are not so.

⁸The sacrifice of the wicked is hateful *and* exceedingly offensive to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight! [Is 1:11; Jer 6:20; Amos 5:22]

⁹The way [of life] of the wicked is hateful *and* exceedingly offensive to the LORD, But He loves one who pursues righteousness [personal integrity, moral courage and

honorable character].

¹⁰There is severe discipline for him who turns from the way
[of righteousness];

And he who hates correction will die.

¹¹Sheol (the nether world, the place of the dead) and Abaddon
(the abyss, the place of eternal punishment) *lie open*
before the LORD— How much more the hearts *and* inner
motives of the children of men. [Job 26:6; Ps 139:8; Rev
9:2; 20:1, 2]

¹²A scoffer [unlike a wise man] resents one who rebukes him
and tries to teach him;

Nor will he go to the wise [for counsel and instruction].

¹³A heart full of joy *and* goodness makes a cheerful face,
But when a heart is full of sadness the spirit is crushed.
[Prov 17:22]

¹⁴The mind of the intelligent *and* discerning seeks knowledge
and eagerly inquires after it,

Speak God's Word

*I have a glad heart that has a
continual feast regardless of
the circumstances.*

| *adapted from* PROVERBS 15:15 |

Speak God's Word

*I will not be hot-tempered
and stir up strife, but I will be
slow to anger and patiently
calm disputes.*

| *adapted from* PROVERBS 15:18 |

But the mouth of the [stubborn] fool feeds on foolishness.
[Is 32:6]

- ¹⁵ All the days of the afflicted are bad,
But a glad heart has a continual feast [regardless of the
circumstances].
- ¹⁶ Better is a little with the [reverent, worshipful] fear of the
LORD
Than great treasure and trouble with it. [Ps 37:16; Prov 16:8;
1 Tim 6:6]
- ¹⁷ Better is a dinner of vegetables *and* herbs where love is
present
Than a fattened ox served with hatred. [Prov 17:1]
- ¹⁸ A hot-tempered man stirs up strife,
But he who is slow to anger *and* patient calms disputes.
- ¹⁹ The way of the lazy is like a hedge of thorns [it pricks,
lacerates, and entangles him],

But the way [of life] of the upright is smooth *and* open like a highway.

²⁰ A wise son makes a father glad,
But a foolish man despises his mother.

²¹ Foolishness is joy to him who is without heart *and* lacks
[intelligent, common] sense,
But a man of understanding walks uprightly [making his
course straight]. [Eph 5:15]

²² Without consultation *and* wise advice, plans are frustrated,
But with many counselors they are established and
succeed.

²³ A man has joy in giving an appropriate answer,
And how good *and* delightful is a word spoken at the right
moment—how good it is!

²⁴ The [chosen] path of life leads upward for the wise,
That he may keep away from Sheol (the nether world, the
place of the dead) below. [Phil 3:20; Col 3:1, 2]

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Expect Good Things To Happen

Shortly after I began to study the Bible seriously, I often sensed an oppressive atmosphere around me. Everything seemed gloomy—as if something bad was going to happen. It wasn't anything I could explain, just a vague, dreaded sense of something evil or wrong about to happen. When I asked the Lord, "What is this feeling?" He said, "Evil forebodings." I had to meditate on that. I had never heard the phrase before.

I learned that the sense of dread I felt was not based on true circumstances or situations. The problems I was facing were not as critical as the devil was making them appear. My acceptance of his lies, even though they were vague, was opening the door for evil forebodings. I eventually realized that I had encountered so many negative things in my life that I had gotten to the point of expecting more of them. My feelings were based on my past experiences when they should have been based on God's promises.

As I continued to meditate on evil forebodings, God gave me a clear revelation. *I was miserable because my thoughts*

were miserable—my thoughts were poisoning my outlook. My thoughts robbed me of the ability to enjoy my life. Instead of being positive because of all the amazing things I was learning from God’s Word, I found myself trapped in the gloom and doom that had surrounded me since my abusive childhood.

I had not been taught to let go of what was behind. I couldn’t rejoice in the good things going on in my life. I focused on the past and what might lie ahead, which was usually gloom and chaos because that was what I expected. Satan had built a stronghold in my mind, and I was trapped until I learned I could tear down that negative, evil stronghold by applying God’s Word to my life and circumstances.

Little by little, my thinking changed, and today I no longer live in evil forebodings. I purposefully expect good things to happen in my life. I realize now that I can choose my thoughts. I don’t have to accept Satan’s lies.

Like everyone else, negative things do happen to me from time to time, but I don’t become negative because of them. I discovered that “a glad heart has a continual feast [regardless of the circumstances]” (Prov. 15:15). I always make an effort to remain positive, and that helps me enjoy my life even in the midst of the storms.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Dear Lord, at times evil forebodings have robbed me of my joy and contentment. When these feelings come, please remind me that You are in control. Help me to rest in You and rejoice in Your Power. Amen.

POWERPOINT

Words are wonderful when used in a proper way. They can encourage, edify, and give confidence to the hearer. A right word spoken at the right time is so good for people (see Prov. 15:23) and can actually be life changing. The words that come out of our mouths go into other people's ears, but they go into our own ears as well.

When we hear them, they drop down into our soul, where they give us either joy or sadness, peace or turmoil, depending on what kind of words they are.

We can literally increase our own joy and the joy of others by speaking the right words.

Confessing good things will make you happier and will make the people around you happier too.



²⁵The LORD will tear down the house of the proud *and* arrogant (self-righteous), But He will establish *and* protect the boundaries [of the land] of the [godly] widow.

²⁶Evil plans *and* thoughts of the wicked are exceedingly vile *and* offensive to the LORD, But pure words are pleasant words to Him.

²⁷He who profits unlawfully brings suffering to his own house,
But he who hates bribes [and does not receive nor pay them] will live. [Is 5:8; Jer 17:11]

²⁸The heart of the righteous thinks carefully about how to answer [in a wise and appropriate and timely way], But the [babbling] mouth of the wicked pours out malevolent things. [1 Pet 3:15]

²⁹The LORD is far from the wicked [and distances Himself from them], But He hears the prayer of the [consistently] righteous [that is, those with spiritual integrity and moral courage].

³⁰The light of the eyes rejoices the hearts of others,
And good news puts fat on the bones.

³¹The ear that listens to *and* learns from the life-giving rebuke (reprimand, censure)
Will remain among the wise.

³²He who neglects *and* ignores instruction *and* discipline despises himself,
But he who learns from rebuke acquires understanding [and

grows in wisdom].

- ³³The [reverent] fear of the LORD [that is, worshiping Him and regarding Him as truly awesome] is the instruction for wisdom [its starting point and its essence]; And before honor comes humility.

16 THE PLANS *and* reflections of the heart belong to man,

But the [wise] answer of the tongue is from the LORD.

- ²All the ways of a man are clean *and* innocent in his own eyes [and he may see nothing wrong with his actions], But the LORD weighs *and* examines the motives *and* intents [of the heart and knows the truth]. [1 Sam 16:7; Heb 4:12]

- ³Commit your works to the LORD [submit and trust them to Him],
And your plans will succeed [if you respond to His will and guidance].

- ⁴The LORD has made everything for its own purpose,
Even the wicked [according to their role] for the day of evil.

- ⁵Everyone who is proud *and* arrogant in heart is disgusting *and* exceedingly offensive to the LORD; Be assured he will not go unpunished. [Prov 8:13; 11:20, 21]

- ⁶By mercy *and* lovingkindness and truth [not superficial ritual] wickedness is cleansed from the heart, And by the fear of the LORD one avoids evil.

- ⁷When a man's ways please the LORD,
He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

⁸Better is a little with righteousness
Than great income [gained] with injustice. [Ps 37:16; Prov
15:16]

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Pleasant, Healing Words

Solomon wrote, “The heart of the wise instructs his mouth [in wisdom] and adds persuasiveness to his lips. Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweet *and* delightful to the soul and healing to the body” (Prov. 16:23–24). This proverb means that the thoughts we dwell on will eventually come out in our words. If our words agree with God’s Word, we will see miraculous things happen in our lives.

We should be wise in how we think about and speak to others. One of the smartest friends I had in school shared how her father told her she was stupid so many times that eventually her own thoughts said to her, *You aren’t intelligent enough to understand this because you are stupid.* We shouldn’t determine our worth and value based on what other people have said about us, but on what God says about us!

Many of us struggle at times with insecurity and self-doubt, but for some people it’s worse than for others. By speaking encouraging words to others, we are helping them win their own personal battle over the enemy.

I remember times when I've wanted to say a kind word to someone, but then I would think, *Oh, she already knows that.* I have since learned that we cannot edify and encourage anyone too much.

What if each of us decided, *I am God's servant to bring soothing, kind, healing words to wounded and hurting hearts?* Not only would we put the devil to flight, but our friends' joy would soar, and ours, too, because we had been used as God's instruments of healing. It often takes very little effort to do a great deal of good. Often it's only a word of encouragement, a hug, or even just a smile that can brighten someone's day.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Holy Spirit of God, please remind me of the words that dwell inside me. Remind me to hold on to the good, the kind, and the uplifting thoughts, and empower me to cast down those that can hurt and tear down others—and myself. I ask this through Jesus Christ. Amen.

- ⁹ A man's mind plans his way [as he journeys through life],
But the LORD directs his steps *and* establishes them. [Ps 37:23; Prov 20:24; Jer 10:23]
- ¹⁰ A divine decision [given by God] is on the lips of the king
[as His representative];
His mouth should not be unfaithful *or* unjust in judgment.
[Deut 17:18–20; 2 Sam 14:17–20; 1 Kin 3:9–12; Is 11:2]
- ¹¹ A just balance and [honest] scales are the LORD's;
All the weights of the bag are His concern [established by
His eternal principles].
- ¹² It is repulsive [to God and man] for kings to behave
wickedly,
For a throne is established on righteousness (right standing
with God).
- ¹³ Righteous lips are the delight of kings,
And he who speaks right is loved.
- ¹⁴ The wrath of a king is like a messenger of death,
But a wise man will appease it.
- ¹⁵ In the light of the king's face is life,
And his favor is like a cloud bringing the spring rain.
- ¹⁶ How much better it is to get wisdom than gold!
And to get understanding is to be chosen above silver.
[Prov 8:10, 19]
- ¹⁷ The highway of the upright turns away *and* departs from
evil;
He who guards his way protects his life (soul).

- ¹⁸ Pride goes before destruction,
And a haughty spirit before a fall.
- ¹⁹ It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly
Than to divide the spoil with the proud (haughty, arrogant).
- ²⁰ He who pays attention to the word [of God] will find good,
And blessed (happy, prosperous, to be admired) is he who
trusts [confidently] in the LORD.
- ²¹ The wise in heart will be called understanding,
And sweet speech increases persuasiveness *and* learning
[in both speaker and listener].
- ²² Understanding (spiritual insight) is a [refreshing and
boundless] wellspring of life to those who have it, But to
give instruction *and* correction to fools is foolishness.
- ²³ The heart of the wise instructs his mouth [in wisdom]
And adds persuasiveness to his lips.
- ²⁴ Pleasant words are like a honeycomb,
Sweet *and* delightful to the soul and healing to the body.
- ²⁵ There is a way which seems right to a man *and* appears
straight before him,
But its end is the way of death.
- ²⁶ The appetite of a worker works for him,
For his hunger urges him on.
- ²⁷ A worthless man devises *and* digs up evil,
And the words on his lips are like a scorching fire.
- ²⁸ A perverse man spreads strife,
And one who gossips separates intimate friends. [Prov 17:9]
- ²⁹ A violent *and* exceedingly covetous man entices his

- neighbor [to sin],
And leads him in a way that is not good.
- ³⁰He who [slyly] winks his eyes does so to plot perverse things;
And he who compresses his lips [as if in a secret signal] brings evil to pass.
- ³¹The silver-haired head is a crown of splendor *and* glory;
It is found in the way of righteousness. [Prov 20:29]
- ³²He who is slow to anger is better *and* more honorable than the mighty [soldier],
And he who rules *and* controls his own spirit, than he who captures a city.
- ³³The lot is cast into the lap,
But its every decision is from the LORD.

17 BETTER IS a dry morsel [of food served] with quietness *and* peace Than a house full of feasting [served] with strife *and* contention.

- ²A wise servant will rule over the [unworthy] son who acts shamefully *and* brings disgrace [to the family]
And [the worthy servant] will share in the inheritance among the brothers.
- ³The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold,
But the LORD tests hearts. [Ps 26:2; Prov 27:21; Jer 17:10; Mal 3:3]
- ⁴An evildoer listens closely to wicked lips;
And a liar pays attention to a destructive *and* malicious

tongue.

⁵Whoever mocks the poor taunts his Maker,
And he who rejoices at [another's] disaster will not go
unpunished. [Job 31:29; Prov 14:31; Obad 12]

⁶Grandchildren are the crown of aged men,
And the glory of children is their fathers [who live godly
lives]. [Ps 127:3; 128:3]

⁷Excellent speech does not benefit a fool [who is spiritually
blind],
Much less do lying lips *benefit* a prince.

⁸A bribe is like a bright, precious stone in the eyes of its
owner;
Wherever he turns, he prospers.

⁹He who covers *and* forgives an offense seeks love,
But he who repeats *or* gossips about a matter separates
intimate friends.

¹⁰A reprimand goes deeper into one who has understanding
and a teachable spirit
Than a hundred lashes into a fool. [Is 32:6]

¹¹A rebellious man seeks only evil;
Therefore a cruel messenger will be sent against him.

¹²Let a man meet a [ferocious] bear robbed of her cubs
Rather than the [angry, narcissistic] fool in his folly. [Hos
13:8]

¹³Whoever returns evil for good,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Live with Joy and Delight

God is life, and every good thing He has created is part of that life. We get so caught up in doing and accomplishing, in working and trying to climb the ladder of success, that if we are not careful, we will come to the end of our life and only then realize that we never really lived. God wants us to enjoy life and live it to the full, until it overflows.

We have choices in life. We can grumble our way through our troubles, or we can maintain positive thoughts and attitudes and also have a happy heart. Either way, we have to go through some troubles, so why not take the joy of the Lord as our strength and have our mind filled with energy and vitality and healing. The pressure of any problem is immediately lessened if we choose to believe that God will work something good from it.

In John 15, Jesus talks about abiding in Him. In verse 11, He says, "I have told you these things so that My joy and delight may be in you, and that your joy may be made full and complete and overflowing." Jesus wants us to trust Him and have a happy heart (see Prov. 17:22).

Don't spend your life waiting for things to change before you can be happy. Cultivate and nurture a happy heart now and experience God's "joy and delight" in you all the way to the end of your life.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Close the Door to the Enemy

One of the best commitments we can make is to speak good, positive words. Sometimes, when we truly can't think of anything good to say, it is wise to say nothing at all (see Prov. 17:28). Making a commitment to speak only good things does not mean we will no longer be tempted to speak negative words. In fact, the enemy may tempt us even more than before because he knows the power of words. The very thought that we would commit to improve our words is frightening to him.

We need to remember that the enemy can only influence and control our words to the extent that we allow him to do so. If we ask God for grace, and discipline ourselves to stop speaking negatively, we close a door of opportunity to the enemy. He will always tempt us to do and say what is wrong, but we can resist him and gain victory.

Evil will not depart from his house. [Ps 109:4, 5; Jer 18:20]

¹⁴The beginning of strife is like letting out water [as from a small break in a dam; first it trickles and then it gushes]; Therefore abandon the quarrel before it breaks out *and* tempers explode.

¹⁵He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the righteous

Are both repulsive to the LORD. [Ex 23:7; Prov 24:24; Is 5:23]

¹⁶Why is there money in the hand of a fool to buy wisdom,
When he has no common sense *or* even a heart for it?

¹⁷A friend loves at all times,
And a brother is born for adversity.

¹⁸A man lacking common sense gives a pledge
And becomes guarantor [for the debt of another] in the
presence of his neighbor.

¹⁹He who loves transgression loves strife *and* is quarrelsome;
He who [proudly] raises his gate seeks destruction
[because of his arrogant pride].

²⁰He who has a crooked mind finds no good,
And he who is perverted in his language falls into evil.
[James 3:8]

²¹He who becomes the parent of a fool [who is spiritually
blind] does so to his sorrow,
And the father of a fool [who is spiritually blind] has no joy.

²²A happy heart is good medicine *and* a joyful mind causes
healing,
But a broken spirit dries up the bones. [Prov 12:25; 15:13,
15]

²³A wicked man receives a bribe from the [hidden] pocket
To pervert the ways of justice.

²⁴[Skillful and godly] wisdom is in the presence of a person of
understanding [and he recognizes it], But the eyes of a
[thickheaded] fool are on the ends of the earth.

²⁵A foolish son is a grief *and* anguish to his father
And bitterness to her who gave birth to him.

²⁶It is also not good to fine the righteous,
Nor to strike the noble for their uprightness.

²⁷He who has knowledge restrains *and* is careful with his words,
And a man of understanding *and* wisdom has a cool spirit
(self-control, an even temper). [James 1:19]

²⁸Even a [callous, arrogant] fool, when he keeps silent, is
considered wise; When he closes his lips he is regarded
as sensible (prudent, discreet) *and* a man of
understanding.

18 HE WHO [willfully] separates himself [from God and man]
seeks his own desire, He quarrels against all sound wisdom.

²A [closed-minded] fool does not delight in understanding,
But only in revealing his personal opinions [unwittingly
displaying his self-indulgence and his stupidity].

³When the wicked man comes [to the depth of evil],
contempt [of all that is pure and good] also comes, And
with inner baseness (dishonor) comes outer shame
(scorn).

⁴The words of a man's mouth are like deep waters [copious
and difficult to fathom];
The fountain of [mature, godly] wisdom is like a bubbling
stream [sparkling, fresh, pure, and life-giving].

⁵To show respect to the wicked person is not good,
Nor to push aside *and* deprive the righteous of justice.

⁶A fool's lips bring contention *and* strife, And his mouth invites a beating.

⁷A fool's mouth is his ruin,
And his lips are the snare of his soul.

⁸The words of a whisperer (gossip) are like dainty morsels
[to be greedily eaten];
They go down into the innermost chambers of the body [to be remembered and mused upon].

⁹He who is careless in his work
Is a brother to him who destroys.

¹⁰The name of the LORD is a strong tower;
The righteous runs to it and is safe *and* set on high [far above evil].

¹¹The rich man's wealth is his strong city,
And like a high wall [of protection] in his own imagination *and* conceit.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Positive Thoughts and Words

Our thoughts and words about ourselves are tremendously important. In order to overcome the negative thinking and speaking that have been such a natural part of our lifestyle for so long, we will need to make a conscious effort to think and speak good things about ourselves (see Prov. 18:21).

We need to think and say what the Word of God says about us. Positive confession of the Word of God should be an ingrained habit of every believer. If you have not yet begun to develop this important habit, you can start today. Begin thinking and saying good things about yourself: “I am the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ. I prosper in everything I lay my hand to. I have gifts and talents, and God is using me. I operate in the fruit of the Spirit. I walk in love. Joy flows through me.”

The Bible teaches that we can appropriate the blessings of God into our lives by believing and confessing the positive things God has said about us in His Word.

Words are seeds that we sow, and when we sow positive ones, we can expect positive results.

¹²Before disaster the heart of a man is haughty *and* filled with self-importance, But humility comes before honor.

¹³He who answers before he hears [the facts]—

It is folly and shame to him. [John 7:51]

¹⁴The spirit of a man sustains him in sickness,
But as for a broken spirit, who can bear it?

¹⁵The mind of the prudent [always] acquires knowledge,
And the ear of the wise [always] seeks knowledge.

¹⁶A man's gift [given in love or courtesy] makes room for him
And brings him before great men. [Gen 32:20; 1 Sam 25:27;
Prov 17:8; 21:14]

¹⁷The first one to plead his case seems right,
Until another comes and cross-examines him.

¹⁸To cast lots puts an end to quarrels
And decides between powerful contenders.

¹⁹A brother offended *is harder to win* over than a fortified
city,
And contentions [separating families] are like the bars of a
castle.

²⁰A man's stomach will be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth;
He will be satisfied with the consequence of his words.

²¹Death and life are in the power of the tongue,
And those who love it *and* indulge it will eat its fruit *and*
bear the consequences of their words. [Matt 12:37]

²²He who finds a [true and faithful] wife finds a good thing
And obtains favor *and* approval from the LORD. [Prov 19:14;
31:10]

Speak God's Word

*I know that death and life are
in the power of the tongue,
and those who love it and
indulge it will eat its fruit
and bear the consequences of
their words.*

| adapted from PROVERBS 18:21

|

²³ The poor man pleads,
But the rich man answers roughly.

²⁴ The man of *too many* friends [chosen indiscriminately] will
be broken in pieces *and* come to ruin, But there is a [true,
loving] friend who [is reliable and] sticks closer than a
brother.

19 BETTER IS a poor man who walks in his integrity

Than a [rich] man who is twisted in his speech and is a
[shortsighted] fool.

² Also it is not good for a person to be without knowledge,
And he who hurries with his feet [acting impulsively and

proceeding without caution or analyzing the consequences] sins (misses the mark).

³The foolishness of man undermines his way [ruining whatever he undertakes];
Then his heart is resentful *and* rages against the LORD [for, being a fool, he blames the LORD instead of himself].

⁴Wealth makes many friends,
But a poor man is separated from his friend. [Prov 14:20]

⁵A false witness will not go unpunished,
And he who breathes out lies will not escape. [Ex 23:1; Deut 19:16–19; Prov 6:19; 21:28]

⁶Many will seek the favor of a generous *and* noble man,
And everyone is a friend to him who gives gifts.

⁷All the brothers of a poor man hate him;
How much more do his friends abandon him!
He pursues *them with* words, but they are gone.

⁸He who gains wisdom *and* good sense loves (preserves) his own soul;
He who keeps understanding will find good *and* prosper.

⁹A false witness will not go unpunished,
And he who breathes lies will perish.

¹⁰Luxury is not fitting for a fool;
Much less for a slave to rule over princes.

¹¹Good sense *and* discretion make a man slow to anger,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Wisdom and Patience

According to Proverbs 19:11 when we use good sense and discretion, we will not be easily angered. Wisdom silently tells us to wait a little while, until our emotions settle down, before we do or say something. Emotions urge us toward haste, pushing us to do something and do it right now! Godly wisdom tells us to be patient and wait until we have a clear picture of what we are to do and when we are to do it. I like to say it this way: "Let emotions subside and then decide." We need to be able to step back from our situations and see them from God's perspective. Then we need to make decisions based on what we know rather than on what we feel.

And it is his honor *and* glory to overlook a transgression *or* an offense [without seeking revenge and harboring resentment].

¹²The king's wrath *terrifies* like the roaring of a lion,
But his favor is as [refreshing and nourishing as] dew on
the grass. [Hos 14:5]

¹³A foolish (ungodly) son is destruction to his father,
And the contentions of a [quarrelsome] wife are like a
constant dripping [of water].

¹⁴House and wealth are the inheritance from fathers,
But a wise, understanding, *and* sensible wife is [a gift and

blessing] from the LORD. [Prov 18:22]

¹⁵ Laziness casts one into a deep sleep [unmindful of lost opportunity],

And the idle person will suffer hunger.

¹⁶ He who keeps *and* obeys the commandment [of the LORD] keeps (guards) his own life, But he who is careless of his ways *and* conduct will die. [Prov 13:13; 16:17; Luke 10:28; 11:28]

¹⁷ He who is gracious *and* lends a hand to the poor lends to the LORD, And the LORD will repay him for his good deed. [Prov 28:27; Eccl 11:1; Matt 10:42; 25:40; 2 Cor 9:6–8; Heb 6:10]

¹⁸ Discipline *and* teach your son while there is hope, And do not [indulge your anger or resentment by imposing inappropriate punishment nor] desire his destruction.

¹⁹ A *man of* great anger will bear the penalty [for his quick temper and lack of self-control]; For if you rescue him [and do not let him learn from the consequences of his action], you will only have to rescue him over and over again.

²⁰ Listen to counsel, receive instruction, *and* accept correction,

That you may be wise in the time to come.

²¹ Many plans are in a man's mind,

But it is the LORD's purpose for him that will stand (be carried out). [Job 23:13; Ps 33:10, 11; Is 14:26, 27; 46:10; Acts 5:39; Heb 6:17]

²²That which is desirable in a man is his loyalty *and* unfailing love,

But it is better to be a poor man than a [wealthy] liar.

²³The fear of the LORD *leads* to life,

So that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil. [Job 5:19; Ps 91:3; Prov 12:13; Is 46:4; Jer 1:8; Dan 6:27; 2 Tim 4:8]

²⁴The lazy man buries his hand in the [food] dish,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Close the Door to Strife

Strife is a thief and a robber that we can learn to recognize and deal with quickly. We can control strife before it controls us (see Prov. 20:3).

Strife is defined as “the act or state of fighting or quarreling, especially bitterly; discord.” It is bickering, arguing, being involved in a heated disagreement; it can reveal itself as an angry undercurrent. Strife is dangerous. It is a demonic force sent by Satan for the purpose of destruction.

Almost any time someone hurts us or offends us, anger rises up within us. Feeling anger is not sin, but we should not act out the angry feelings in an ungodly manner. We need to resist the temptation to hold a grudge or to fall into bitterness, resentment, or unforgiveness.

A judgmental attitude is an open door to strife, so it's important for us to remember that mercy triumphs over judgment (see James 2:13). Judgment usually leads to gossip. Gossip begins to spread the strife from person to person. Strife hinders us from living in unity and harmony and from enjoying God's blessings.

When we are tempted to think judgmental thoughts toward others, and then to spread our opinion through gossip and backbiting, we should remember this helpful hint: Let the one among us who is without sin throw the first stone (see John

8:7).

Remember that God changes things through prayer and faith, not through strife, judgment, or gossip.

But will not even bring it to his mouth again.

²⁵Strike a scoffer [for refusing to learn], and the naive may [be warned and] become prudent;

Reprimand one who has understanding *and* a teachable spirit, and he will gain knowledge *and* insight.

²⁶He who assaults his father and chases away his mother
Is a son who brings shame and disgrace. [1 Tim 5:8]

²⁷Cease listening, my son, to instruction *and* discipline
And you will stray from the words of knowledge.

²⁸A wicked *and* worthless witness mocks justice,
And the mouth of the wicked spreads iniquity.

²⁹Judgments are prepared for scoffers,
And beatings for the backs of [thickheaded] fools. [Is 32:6]

20 WINE IS a mocker, strong drink a riotous brawler; And whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise. [Prov 23:29, 30; Is 28:7; Hos 4:11]

²The terror of a king is like the roaring of a lion;
Whoever provokes him to anger forfeits his own life.

³It is an honor for a man to keep away from strife [by handling situations with thoughtful foresight], But any fool will [start a] quarrel [without regard for the

consequences].

⁴The lazy man does not plow when the winter [planting] season arrives;
So he begs at the [next] harvest and has nothing [to reap].

⁵A plan (motive, wise counsel) in the heart of a man is like water in a deep well,
But a man of understanding draws it out. [Prov 18:4]

⁶Many a man proclaims his own loyalty *and* goodness,
But who can find a faithful *and* trustworthy man?

⁷The righteous man who walks in integrity *and* lives life in accord with his [godly] beliefs— How blessed [happy and spiritually secure] are his children after him [who have his example to follow].

⁸A [discerning] king who sits on the throne of judgment
Sifts all evil [like chaff] with his eyes [and cannot be easily fooled].

⁹Who can say, “I have cleansed my heart,
I am pure from my sin?” [1 Kin 8:46; 2 Chr 6:36; Job 9:30; 14:4; Ps 51:5; 1 John 1:8]

¹⁰Differing weights [one for buying and another for selling] and differing measures,
Both of them are detestable *and* offensive to the LORD.
[Deut 25:13; Mic 6:10, 11]

¹¹Even a boy is known *and* distinguished by his acts,
Whether his conduct is pure and right.

¹²The hearing ear and the seeing eye,
The [omnipotent] LORD has made both of them.

¹³Do not love [excessive] sleep, or you will become poor;
Open your eyes [so that you can do your work] and you
will be satisfied with bread.

¹⁴“It is [almost] worthless, it is [almost] worthless,” says the
buyer [as he negotiates the price]; But when he goes his
way, then he boasts [about his bargain].

¹⁵There is gold, and an abundance of pearls,
But the lips of knowledge are a vessel of preciousness [the
most precious of all]. [Job 28:12, 16–19; Prov 3:15; 8:11]

POWERPOINT

Proverbs 20:19 says that we should not associate with people who gossip or tell other people's secrets. If a person tells you someone else's secret, he or she will likely tell someone else your secret too. Many of us have confided in someone only to find out that he or she told our secret, and that is a painful experience.

Let's learn to choose our friends wisely and choose our words wisely.



¹⁶[The judge tells the creditor], “Take the clothes of one who is surety for a stranger;
And hold him in pledge [when he guarantees a loan] for foreigners.” [Prov 27:13]

¹⁷Food gained by deceit is sweet to a man,
But afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel [just as sin

may be sweet at first, but later its consequences bring despair].

¹⁸Plans are established by counsel;
So make war [only] with wise guidance.

¹⁹He who goes about as a gossip reveals secrets;
Therefore do not associate with a gossip [who talks freely
or flatters]. [Rom 16:17, 18]

²⁰Whoever curses his father or his mother,
His lamp [of life] will be extinguished in time of darkness.

²¹An inheritance hastily gained [by greedy, unjust means] at
the beginning
Will not be blessed in the end. [Prov 28:20; Hab 2:6]

²²Do not say, "I will repay evil";
Wait [expectantly] for the LORD, and He will rescue *and*
save you. [Deut 32:35; 2 Sam 16:12; Rom 12:17–19; 1
Thess 5:15; 1 Pet 3:9]

²³Differing weights are detestable *and* offensive to the LORD,
And fraudulent scales are not good.

²⁴Man's steps are ordered *and* ordained by the LORD.
How then can a man [fully] understand his way?

²⁵It is a trap for a man to [speak a vow of consecration and]
say rashly, "It is holy!"
And [not until] afterward consider [whether he can fulfill it].

²⁶A wise king sifts out the wicked [from among the good]
And drives the [threshing] wheel over them [to separate the
chaff from the grain].

²⁷The spirit (conscience) of man is the lamp of the LORD,

Searching *and* examining all the innermost parts of his being. [1 Cor 2:11]

²⁸Loyalty *and* mercy, truth *and* faithfulness, protect the king,
And he upholds his throne by lovingkindness.

²⁹The glory of young men is their [physical] strength,
And the honor of aged men is their gray head [representing wisdom and experience].

³⁰Blows that wound cleanse away evil,
And strokes reach to the innermost parts.

21 THE KING'S heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it whichever way He wishes. [Ex 10:1, 2; Ezra 6:22]

²Every man's way is right in his own eyes,
But the LORD weighs *and* examines the hearts [of people and their motives]. [Prov 24:12; Luke 16:15]

³To do righteousness and justice
Is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice [for wrongs repeatedly committed]. [1 Sam 15:22; Prov 15:8; Is 1:11; Hos 6:6; Mic 6:7, 8]

⁴Haughty *and* arrogant eyes and a proud heart,
The lamp of the wicked [their self-centered pride], is sin [in the eyes of God].

⁵The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance *and* advantage,
But everyone who acts in haste comes surely to poverty.

- ⁶Acquiring treasures by a lying tongue
Is a fleeting vapor, the seeking *and* pursuit of death.
- ⁷The violence of the wicked will [return to them and] drag
them away [like fish caught in a net], Because they refuse
to act with justice.
- ⁸The way of the guilty is [exceedingly] crooked,
But as for the pure, his conduct is upright.
- ⁹It is better to live in a corner of the housetop [on the flat
roof, exposed to the weather]
Than in a house shared with a quarrelsome (contentious)
woman.
- ¹⁰The soul of the wicked desires evil [like an addictive
substance];
His neighbor finds no compassion in his eyes. [James 2:16]
- ¹¹When the scoffer is punished, the naive [observes the
lesson and] becomes wise;
But when the wise *and* teachable person is instructed, he
receives knowledge. [Prov 19:25]
- ¹²The righteous one keeps an eye on the house of the wicked
—
How the wicked are cast down to ruin.
- ¹³Whoever shuts his ears at the cry of the poor
Will cry out himself and not be answered. [Matt 18:30–34;
James 2:13]
- ¹⁴A gift in secret subdues anger,
And a bribe [hidden] in the pocket, strong wrath.
- ¹⁵When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous (the

upright, the one in right standing with God), But to the evildoers it is disaster.

¹⁶A man who wanders from the way of understanding (godly wisdom)

Will remain in the assembly of the dead.

¹⁷He who loves [only selfish] pleasure *will become* a poor man;

He who loves *and* is devoted to wine and [olive] oil will not become rich.

¹⁸The wicked become a ransom for the righteous,
And the treacherous in the place of the upright [for they fall into their own traps].

¹⁹It is better to dwell in a desert land
Than with a contentious and troublesome woman.

²⁰There is precious treasure and oil in the house of the wise
[who prepare for the future],
But a shortsighted *and* foolish man swallows it up *and* wastes it.

²¹He who earnestly seeks righteousness and loyalty
Finds life, righteousness, and honor. [Prov 15:9; Matt 5:6]

²²A wise man scales the city [walls] of the mighty
And brings down the stronghold in which they trust.

²³He who guards his mouth and his tongue
Guards himself from troubles. [Prov 12:13; 13:3; 18:21; James 3:2]

²⁴“Proud,” “Haughty,” “Scoffer,” are his names
Who acts with overbearing *and* insolent pride.

- ²⁵ The desire of the lazy kills him,
For his hands refuse to labor;
- ²⁶ He craves all the day long [and does no work],
But the righteous [willingly] gives and does not withhold
[what he has]. [2 Cor 9:6–10]
- ²⁷ The sacrifice of the wicked is detestable *and* offensive [to
the LORD].
How much more [unacceptable and insulting can it be]
when he brings it with evil intention?
- ²⁸ A false witness will perish,
But a man who listens *to the truth* will speak forever *and* go
unchallenged.
- ²⁹ A wicked man puts on a bold face,
But as for the upright, he considers, directs, *and* establishes
his way [with the confidence of integrity].
- ³⁰ There is no [human] wisdom or understanding
Or counsel [that can prevail] against the LORD.
- ³¹ The horse is prepared for the day of battle,
But deliverance *and* victory belong to the LORD.

22 A *GOOD* name [earned by honorable behavior, godly wisdom, moral courage, and personal integrity] is more desirable than great riches; And favor is better than silver and gold.

- ² The rich and poor have a common bond;
The LORD is the Maker of them all. [Job 31:15; Prov 14:31]

- ³ A prudent *and* far-sighted *person* sees the evil [of sin] and hides himself [from it], But the naive continue on and are punished [by suffering the consequences of sin].
- ⁴ The reward of humility [that is, having a realistic view of one's importance] and the [reverent, worshipful] fear of the LORD
Is riches, honor, and life. [Prov 21:21]
- ⁵ Thorns and snares are in the way of the obstinate [for their lack of honor and their wrongdoing traps them]; He who guards himself [with godly wisdom] will be far from them *and* avoid the consequences they suffer.
- ⁶ Train up a child in the way he should go [teaching him to seek God's wisdom and will for his abilities and talents],
Even when he is old he will not depart from it. [Eph 6:4; 2 Tim 3:15]
- ⁷ The rich rules over the poor,
And the borrower is servant to the lender.
- ⁸ He who sows injustice will reap [a harvest of] trouble,
And the rod of his wrath [with which he oppresses others] will fail.
- ⁹ He who is generous will be blessed,
For he gives some of his food to the poor. [2 Cor 9:6–10]
- ¹⁰ Drive out the scoffer, and contention will go away;
Even strife and dishonor will cease.
- ¹¹ He who loves purity of heart
And whose speech is gracious will have the king as his friend.

¹²The eyes of the LORD keep guard over knowledge *and* the one who has it, But He overthrows the words of the treacherous.

¹³The lazy one [manufactures excuses and] says, “There is a lion outside!
I will be killed in the streets [if I go out to work]!”

¹⁴The mouth of an immoral woman is a deep pit [deep and inescapable];
He who is cursed by the LORD [because of his adulterous sin] will fall into it.

¹⁵Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child;
The rod of discipline [correction administered with godly wisdom and lovingkindness] will remove it far from him.

¹⁶He who oppresses *or* exploits the poor to get more for himself
Or who gives to the rich [to gain influence and favor], will only come to poverty.

¹⁷Listen carefully and hear the words of the wise,
And apply your mind to my knowledge;

¹⁸For it will be pleasant if you keep them in mind
[incorporating them as guiding principles];
Let them be ready on your lips [to guide and strengthen yourself and others].

¹⁹So that your trust *and* reliance *and* confidence may be in the LORD, I have taught these things to you today, even to you.

²⁰Have I not written to you excellent things

- In counsels and knowledge,
21 To let you know the certainty of the words of truth,
That you may give a correct answer to him who sent you?
[Luke 1:3, 4]
- 22 Do not rob the poor because he is poor [and defenseless],
Nor crush the afflicted [by legal proceedings] at the gate
[where the city court is held], [Ex 23:6; Job 31:16, 21]
- 23 For the LORD will plead their case
And take the life of those who rob them. [Zech 7:10; Mal
3:5]
- 24 Do not even associate with a man given to angry outbursts;
Or go [along] with a hot-tempered man,
25 Or you will learn his [undisciplined] ways
And get yourself trapped [in a situation from which it is
hard to escape].
- 26 Do not be among those who give pledges [involving
themselves in others' finances], Or among those who
become guarantors for *others'* debts.
- 27 If you have nothing with which to pay [another's debt when
he defaults],
Why should his creditor take your bed from under you?
- 28 Do not move the ancient landmark [at the boundary of the
property]
Which your fathers have set.
- 29 Do you see a man skillful *and* experienced in his work?

He will stand [in honor] before kings;
He will not stand before obscure men.

23 WHEN YOU sit down to dine with a ruler, Consider
carefully what is [set] before you;

²For you will put a knife to your throat
If you are a man of *great* appetite.

³Do not desire his delicacies,
For it is deceptive food [offered to you with questionable
motives].

⁴Do not weary yourself [with the overwhelming desire] to
gain wealth;
Cease from your own understanding of it. [Prov 28:20; 1 Tim
6:9, 10]

⁵When you set your eyes on wealth, it is [suddenly] gone.
For *wealth* certainly makes itself wings
Like an eagle that flies to the heavens.

⁶Do not eat the bread of a selfish man,
Or desire his delicacies;

⁷For as he thinks in his heart, so is he [in behavior—one who
manipulates].

He says to you, “Eat and drink,”
Yet his heart is not with you [but it is begrudging the cost].

⁸The morsel which you have eaten you will vomit up,
And you will waste your compliments.

⁹Do not speak in the ears of a fool,
For he will despise the [godly] wisdom of your words. [Is
32:6]

Speak God's Word

*As I think in my heart, so am
I.*

| *adapted from* PROVERBS 23:7 |

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Where the Mind Goes, the Man Follows

What we give our energies and attention to will develop in our lives (see Prov. 23:7), or as I like to say, “Where the man goes, the mind follows!” If I think about ice cream long enough, I will probably end up eating some!

If we focus only on the negative things in our lives, we become negative people. Everything, including our conversation, becomes negative. We soon lose our joy and live miserable lives—and it all started with our own thinking.

You might be experiencing some problems in life—not realizing that you may be creating them yourself by what you’re choosing to think about. You might be discouraged and even depressed and wonder why. Yet if you examine your thought life, you will find that you are feeding the negative emotions you are feeling. Negative thoughts are fuel for discouragement, depression, and many other unpleasant emotions.

We should choose our thoughts carefully. We can think about what is wrong with our lives or about what is right with them. We can think about what is wrong with all the people we are in relationship with or we can see the good and meditate on that. The Bible teaches us to always believe the best. When we do that, it pleases God and makes our own lives happier and more peaceful.

We should always remember that the mind is a battlefield and that our thoughts largely determine our destiny. They aren't just empty words that flow through our mind, so it is very important to decide what we will allow to rest inside our mind. We should also be very aware that our adversary will use what's in our mind in any way he possibly can to trap us.

To put it another way, we can't have a positive life and a negative mind. Our thoughts—our focus—is what determines where we end up. God wants our minds to be filled with positive, beautiful, and healthy thoughts. The more we focus on those things, the more readily we defeat Satan's attacks.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Dear patient and loving God, I ask You to forgive me for focusing my thoughts on things that are not pleasing to You. I pray that You will help me fill my mind with thoughts that are clean and pure and uplifting. In Jesus' name. Amen.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Discipline Has Its Rewards

Think of an area in your life where you need to refuse to give up and “apply your heart to discipline” (Prov. 23:12). Come up with a goal—one that will require you to be disciplined and overcome some obstacles, but one that also promises great reward. It may be as basic as making your bed each morning or as ambitious as running a marathon. It may be to break free from a fear of public speaking or to overcome an addiction or to get out of debt. Just make sure you and God are in agreement, depend on Him for the strength to do it, and then go after your goal with everything in you.

Be full of holy determination—not some kind of fleshly determination or willpower—but true God-given determination. You do have self-control. It is a fruit of the Spirit, and it is in you—believe it and begin walking in it.

¹⁰Do not move the ancient landmark [at the boundary of the property]

And do not go into the fields of the fatherless [to take what is theirs], [Deut 19:14; 27:17; Prov 22:28]

¹¹For their Redeemer is strong *and* mighty;
He will plead their case against you.

¹²Apply your heart to discipline
And your ears to words of knowledge.

- ¹³ Do not withhold discipline from the child;
If you swat him with a *reed-like* rod [applied with godly wisdom], he will not die.
- ¹⁴ You shall swat him with the *reed-like* rod
And rescue his life from Sheol (the nether world, the place of the dead).
- ¹⁵ My son, if your heart is wise,
My heart will also be glad;
- ¹⁶ Yes, my heart will rejoice
When your lips speak right things.
- ¹⁷ Do not let your heart envy sinners [who live godless lives and have no hope of salvation], But [continue to] live in the [reverent, worshipful] fear of the LORD day by day.
- ¹⁸ Surely there is a future [and a reward],
And your hope *and* expectation will not be cut off.
- ¹⁹ Listen, my son, and be wise,
And direct your heart in the way [of the LORD].
- ²⁰ Do not associate with heavy drinkers of wine,
Or with gluttonous eaters of meat, [Is 5:22; Luke 21:34; Rom 13:13; Eph 5:18]
- ²¹ For the heavy drinker and the glutton will come to poverty,
And the drowsiness [of overindulgence] will clothe one with rags.
- ²² Listen to your father, who sired you,
And do not despise your mother when she is old.

- ²³Buy truth, and do not sell it;
Get wisdom and instruction and understanding.
- ²⁴The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice,
And he who sires a wise child will have joy in him.
- ²⁵Let your father and your mother be glad,
And let her who gave birth to you rejoice [in your wise and
godly choices].
- ²⁶My son, give me your heart
And let your eyes delight in my ways,
- ²⁷For a prostitute is a deep pit,
And an immoral woman is a narrow well.
- ²⁸She lurks *and* lies in wait like a robber [who waits for prey],
And she increases the faithless among men.
- ²⁹Who has woe? Who has sorrow?
Who has strife? Who has complaining?
Who has wounds without cause?
Whose eyes are red *and* dim?
- ³⁰Those who linger long over wine,
Those who go to taste mixed wine. [Prov 20:1; Eph 5:18]
- ³¹Do not look at wine when it is red,
When it sparkles in the glass,
When it goes down smoothly.
- ³²At the last it bites like a serpent
And stings like a viper.
- ³³Your [drunken] eyes will see strange things

And your mind will utter perverse things [untrue things,
twisted things].

³⁴And you will be [as unsteady] as one who lies down in the
middle of the sea,
And [as vulnerable to disaster] as one who lies down on the
top of a ship's mast, *saying*,

³⁵“They struck me, but I was not hurt!
They beat me, but I did not feel it!
When will I wake up?
I will seek more wine.”

24 DO NOT be envious of evil men, Nor desire to be with
them;

²For their minds plot violence,
And their lips talk of trouble [for the innocent].

³Through [skillful and godly] wisdom a house [a life, a home,
a family] is built, And by understanding it is established
[on a sound and good foundation],

⁴And by knowledge its rooms are filled
With all precious and pleasant riches.

⁵A wise man is strong,
And a man of knowledge strengthens his power; [Prov
21:22; Eccl 9:16]

⁶For by wise guidance you can wage your war,
And in an abundance of [wise] counselors there is victory
and safety.

- ⁷Wisdom is too exalted for a [hardened, arrogant] fool;
He does not open his mouth in the gate [where the city's
rulers sit in judgment].
- ⁸He who plans to do evil
Will be called a schemer *or* deviser of evil.
- ⁹The devising of folly is sin,
And the scoffer is repulsive to men.
- ¹⁰If you are slack (careless) in the day of distress,
Your strength is limited.
- ¹¹Rescue those who are being taken away to death,
And those who stagger to the slaughter, Oh hold them back
[from their doom]!
- ¹²If you [claim ignorance and] say, "See, we did not know
this,"
Does He not consider it who weighs *and* examines the
hearts *and* their motives?
And does He not know it who guards your life *and* keeps
your soul?
And will He not repay [you and] every man according to his
works?
- ¹³My son, eat honey, because it is good,
And the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet to your
taste.
- ¹⁴Know that [skillful and godly] wisdom is [so very good] for
your life *and* soul;

If you find wisdom, then there will be a future *and* a reward,
And your hope *and* expectation will not be cut off.

¹⁵Do not lie in wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the
righteous;

Do not destroy his resting place;

¹⁶For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again,
But the wicked stumble in *time of* disaster *and* collapse.

[Job 5:19; Ps 34:19; 37:24; Mic 7:8]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Examining Your Motives

Our motives—the reasons for doing the things we do—are very important. No matter what we may claim as our motives, we're told that God “weighs and examines the hearts and their motives” and rewards “every man according to his works” (Prov. 24:12).

God wants you to have a pure heart. He wants you to do things because He is leading you to do them or because they are the right things to do. God wants you to be motivated by love. It's important to be able to do what you do because of love—love for God and love for others. It's a good idea to regularly take some time and ask yourself why you are doing the things you do. It is not what you do that impresses God; He is interested in the why behind what you do. Ask God to reveal your motives to you and to change any that are not pure.

¹⁷Do not rejoice *and* gloat when your enemy falls,
And do not let your heart be glad [in self-righteousness]
when he stumbles,

¹⁸Or the LORD will see your gloating and be displeased,
And turn His anger away from your enemy.

¹⁹Do not get upset because of evildoers,

- Or be envious of the wicked,
²⁰For there will be no future for the evil man;
The lamp of the wicked will be put out.
- ²¹My son, fear the LORD and the king;
And do not associate with those who are given to change
[of allegiance, and are revolutionary],
- ²²For their tragedy will rise suddenly,
And who knows the punishment that both [the LORD and
the king] will bring on the rebellious?
- ²³These also are sayings of the wise:
To show partiality in judgment is not good.
- ²⁴He who says to the wicked, “You are righteous,”
Peoples will curse him, nations will denounce him;
- ²⁵But to those [honorable judges] who rebuke the *wicked*, it
will go well with them *and* they will find delight, And a
good blessing will come upon them.
- ²⁶He kisses the lips [and wins the hearts of people]
Who gives a right *and* straightforward answer.
- ²⁷Prepare your work outside
And get it ready for yourself in the field;
Afterward build your house *and* establish a home.
- ²⁸Do not be a witness against your neighbor without cause,
And do not deceive with your lips [speak neither lies nor
half-truths]. [Eph 4:25]
- ²⁹Do not say, “I will do to him as he has done to me;

I will pay the man back for his deed.” [Prov 20:22; Matt 5:39, 44; Rom 12:17, 19]

³⁰I went by the field of the lazy man,
And by the vineyard of the man lacking understanding *and*
common sense;

³¹And, behold, it was all overgrown with thorns,
And nettles were covering its surface,
And its stone wall was broken down.

³²When I saw, I considered it well;
I looked and received instruction.

³³“Yet a little sleep, a little slumber,
A little folding of the hands to rest [and daydream],”

³⁴Then your poverty will come as a robber,
And your want like an armed man.

25 THESE ARE also the proverbs of Solomon, which the
men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied: [1 Kin 4:32]

²It is the glory of God to conceal a matter,
But the glory of kings is to search out a matter. [Deut 29:29;
Rom 11:33]

³As the heavens for height and the earth for depth,
So the hearts *and* minds of kings are unsearchable.

⁴Take away the dross from the silver,
And there comes out [the pure metal for] a vessel for the
silversmith [to shape]. [2 Tim 2:21]

⁵Take away the wicked from before the king,
And his throne will be established in righteousness.
⁶Do not be boastfully ambitious *and* claim honor in the
presence of the king,
And do not stand in the place of great men;
⁷For it is better that it be said to you, “Come up here,”
Than for you to be placed lower in the presence of the
prince,
Whom your eyes have seen. [Luke 14:8–10]

⁸Do not rush out to argue *your* case [before magistrates or
judges];
Otherwise what will you do in the end [when your case is
lost and]
When your neighbor (opponent) humiliates you? [Prov
17:14; Matt 5:25]

⁹Argue your case with your neighbor himself [before you go
to court];
And do not reveal another’s secret, [Matt 18:15]

¹⁰Or he who hears it will shame you
And the rumor about you [and your action in court] will
have no end.

¹¹Like apples of gold in settings of silver
Is a word spoken at the right time. [Prov 15:23; Is 50:4]

¹²Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold
Is a wise reprover to an ear that listens *and* learns.

¹³Like the cold of snow [brought from the mountains] in the

time of harvest,
So is a faithful messenger to those who send him;
For he refreshes the life of his masters.

¹⁴Like clouds and wind without rain
Is a man who boasts falsely of gifts [he does not give].
[Jude 12]

¹⁵By patience *and* a calm spirit a ruler may be persuaded,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Can Use Your Words

God has always used people to speak messages to others. Those messages may be extremely important, with the ability to change the course of a nation, a church, a business, an individual, or a family; right words spoken at just the right time are very valuable (see Prov. 25:11).

Whoever you may have an opportunity to speak to, remember that right words at the right time can change a life.

And a soft *and* gentle tongue breaks the bone [of resistance]. [Gen 32:4; 1 Sam 25:24; Prov 15:1; 16:14]

- ¹⁶Have you found [pleasure sweet like] honey? Eat only as much as you need,
Otherwise, being filled excessively, you vomit it.
- ¹⁷Let your foot seldom be in your neighbor's house,
Or he will become tired of you and hate you.
- ¹⁸Like a club and a sword and a piercing arrow
Is a man who testifies falsely against his neighbor
(acquaintance).
- ¹⁹Like a broken tooth or an unsteady foot
Is confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble.
- ²⁰Like one who takes off a garment in cold weather, or like [a reactive, useless mixture of] vinegar on soda, Is he who

[thoughtlessly] sings [joyful] songs to a heavy heart.
[Dan 6:18; Rom 12:15]

- ²¹If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat;
And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; [Matt 5:44; Rom 12:20]
- ²²For in doing so, you will heap coals of fire upon his head,
And the LORD will reward you.
- ²³The north wind brings forth rain,
And a backbiting tongue, an angry countenance.
- ²⁴It is better to live in a corner of the housetop [on the flat roof, exposed to the weather]
Than in a house shared with a quarrelsome (contentious) woman. [Prov 21:9]
- ²⁵Like cold water to a thirsty soul,
So is good news from a distant land.
- ²⁶Like a muddied fountain and a polluted spring

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Help me, Lord, to live as a

*righteous person who does
not yield and compromise my
integrity before the wicked.*

- *adapted from Proverbs 25:26*

POWERPOINT

Exercising self-control is a form of freedom. Not exercising self-control sets a person up for trouble (see Prov. 25:28). You don't have to do what you feel like doing; you're free to do what you know is wise.

Discipline and self-control will help you be the person you want to be. Don't ever say, "I just don't have any self-control," because the truth is that you do, but it needs to be exercised in order to be strong. Self-control is a fruit of the new nature God has given each of us as believers in Jesus Christ, and all we need to do is develop it. We develop self-control by using it, just as we develop muscles by using them (see 2 Pet. 1:6).



Is a righteous man who yields *and* compromises his integrity before the wicked.

²⁷It is not good to eat much honey,
Nor is it glorious to seek one's own glory.

²⁸Like a city that is broken down and without walls [leaving it unprotected]
Is a man who has no self-control over his spirit [and sets himself up for trouble]. [Prov 16:32]

26 LIKE SNOW in summer and like rain in harvest, So honor is not fitting for a [shortsighted] fool. [Is 32:6]

²Like the sparrow in her wandering, like the swallow in her flying,
So the curse without cause does not come *and* alight [on the undeserving]. [Num 23:8]

³A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey,
And a rod for the backs of fools [who refuse to learn].

⁴Do not answer [nor pretend to agree with the frivolous comments of] a [closed-minded] fool according to his folly,
Otherwise you, even you, will be like him.

⁵Answer [and correct the erroneous concepts of] a fool according to his folly,
Otherwise he will be wise in his own eyes [if he thinks you agree with him]. [Matt 16:1–4; 21:24–27]

⁶He who sends a message by the hand of a fool
Cuts off *his own* feet (sabotages himself) and drinks the

violence [it brings on himself as a consequence]. [Prov 13:17]

⁷Like the legs which are useless to the lame,
So is a proverb in the mouth of a fool [who cannot learn from its wisdom].

⁸Like one who [absurdly] binds a stone in a sling [making it impossible to throw],
So is he who [absurdly] gives honor to a fool.

⁹Like a thorn that goes [without being felt] into the hand of a drunken man,
So is a proverb in the mouth of a fool [who remains unaffected by its wisdom].

¹⁰Like a [careless] archer who [shoots arrows wildly and] wounds everyone,
So is he who hires a fool or those who [by chance just] pass by.

¹¹Like a dog that returns to his vomit
Is a fool who repeats his foolishness.

¹²Do you see a man [who is unteachable and] wise in his own eyes *and* full of self-conceit?
There is more hope for a fool than for him. [Prov 29:20; Luke 18:11; Rom 12:16; Rev 3:17]

¹³The lazy person [who is self-indulgent and relies on lame excuses] says, "There is a lion in the road!
A lion is in the open square [and if I go outside to work I will be killed]!" [Prov 22:13]

¹⁴As the door turns on its hinges,

- So does the lazy person on his bed [never getting out of it].
- ¹⁵The lazy person buries his hand in the dish [losing opportunity after opportunity];
It wearies him to bring it back to his mouth. [Prov 19:24]
- ¹⁶The lazy person is wiser in his own eyes
Than seven [sensible] men who can give a discreet answer.
- ¹⁷Like one who grabs a dog by the ears [and is likely to be bitten]
Is he who, passing by, stops to meddle with a dispute that is none of his business.
- ¹⁸Like a madman who throws
Firebrands, arrows, and death,
- ¹⁹So is the man who deceives his neighbor (acquaintance, friend)
And then says, “Was I not joking?” [Eph 5:4]
- ²⁰For lack of wood the fire goes out,
And where there is no whisperer [who gossips], contention quiets down.
- ²¹Like charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire,
So is a contentious man to kindle strife. [Prov 15:18; 29:22]
- ²²The words of a whisperer (gossip) are like dainty morsels [to be greedily eaten];
They go down into the innermost chambers of the body [to be remembered and mused upon]. [Prov 18:8]
- ²³Like a [common] clay vessel covered with the silver dross [making it appear silver when it has no real value]
Are burning lips [murmuring manipulative words] and a

wicked heart.

²⁴He who hates, disguises it with his lips,
But he stores up deceit in his heart.

²⁵When he speaks graciously *and* kindly [to conceal his
malice], do not trust him,
For seven abominations are in his heart.

²⁶*Though* his hatred covers itself with guile *and* deceit,
His malevolence will be revealed openly before the
assembly.

²⁷Whoever digs a pit [for another man's feet] will fall into it,
And he who rolls a stone [up a hill to do mischief], it will
come back on him. [Ps 7:15, 16; 9:15; 10:2; 57:6; Prov 28:10;
Eccl 10:8]

²⁸A lying tongue hates those it wounds *and* crushes,
And a flattering mouth works ruin.

27 DO NOT boast about tomorrow,

For you do not know what a day may bring. [Luke 12:19, 20;
James 4:13]

²Let another praise you, and not your own mouth;
A stranger, and not your own lips.

³Stone is heavy and the sand weighty,
But a fool's [unreasonable] wrath is heavier *and* more
burdensome than both of them.

⁴Wrath is cruel and anger is an overwhelming flood,
But who is able to endure *and* stand before [the sin of]

jealousy?

⁵Better is an open reprimand [of loving correction]
Than love that is hidden. [Prov 28:23; Gal 2:14]

⁶Faithful are the wounds of a friend [who corrects out of love
and concern],
But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful [because they
serve his hidden agenda].

⁷He who is satisfied loathes honey,
But to the hungry soul any bitter thing is sweet.

⁸Like a bird that wanders from her nest [with its comfort and
safety],
So is a man who wanders from his home.

⁹Oil and perfume make the heart glad;
So does the sweetness of a friend's counsel that comes
from the heart.

¹⁰Do not abandon your own friend and your father's friend,
And do not go to your brother's house in the day of your
disaster.
Better is a neighbor who is near than a brother who is far
away.

¹¹My son, be wise, and make my heart glad,
That I may reply to him who reproaches (reprimands,
criticizes) me. [Prov 10:1; 23:15, 24]

¹²A prudent man sees evil and hides himself *and* avoids it,
But the naive [who are easily misled] continue on and are
punished [by suffering the consequences of sin]. [Prov
22:3]

- ¹³[The judge tells the creditor,] “Take the garment of one who is surety (guarantees a loan) for a stranger; And hold him in pledge when he is surety for an immoral woman [for it is unlikely the debt will be repaid].” [Prov 20:16]
- ¹⁴He who blesses his neighbor with a loud voice early in the morning,
It will be counted as a curse to him [for it will either be annoying or his purpose will be suspect].
- ¹⁵A constant dripping on a day of steady rain
And a contentious (quarrelsome) woman are alike; [Prov 19:13]
- ¹⁶Whoever attempts to restrain her [criticism] might as well try to stop the wind,
And grasps oil with his right hand.
- ¹⁷As iron sharpens iron,
So one man sharpens [and influences] another [through discussion].
- ¹⁸He who tends the fig tree will eat its fruit,
And he who faithfully protects *and* cares for his master will be honored. [1 Cor 9:7, 13]
- ¹⁹As in water face *reflects* face,
So the heart of man reflects man.
- ²⁰Sheol (the place of the dead) and Abaddon (the underworld) are never satisfied;
Nor are the eyes of man ever satisfied. [Prov 30:16; Hab 2:5]

POWERPOINT

Jealousy and envy are negative emotions that torment us (see Prov. 27:4). It is difficult to not be jealous of anyone who looks better than we do or has talents that we don't have. We may want to be happy for that other person, but something in us won't allow it. What God does for you or me may not be what He does for someone else, but we must remember what Jesus said to Peter: Don't be concerned about what I choose to do with someone else—you follow Me (see John 21:22).



- ²¹The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold [to separate the impurities of the metal], And each is tested by the praise given to him [and his response to it, whether humble or proud].

²²Even though you pound a [hardened, arrogant] fool [who rejects wisdom] in a mortar with a pestle like grain, Yet his foolishness will not leave him.

²³Be diligent to know the condition of your flocks,
And pay attention to your herds;

²⁴For riches are not forever,
Nor does a crown *endure* to all generations.

²⁵When the grass is gone, the new growth is seen,
And herbs of the mountain are gathered in,

²⁶The lambs will *supply wool* for your clothing,
And the goats will bring the price of a field.

²⁷And *there will be* enough goats' milk for your food,
For the food of your household,
And for the maintenance of your maids.

28 THE WICKED flee when no one pursues them, But the righteous are as bold as a lion. [Lev 26:17, 36; Ps 53:5]

²When a land does wrong, it has many princes,
But when the ruler is a man of understanding and knowledge, its stability endures.

³A poor man who oppresses *and* exploits the lowly
Is like a sweeping rain which leaves no food. [Matt 18:28]

⁴Those who set aside the law [of God and man] praise the wicked,
But those who keep the law [of God and man] struggle with them. [Prov 29:18]

- ⁵ Evil men do not understand justice,
But they who long for *and* seek the LORD understand it
fully. [John 7:17; 1 Cor 2:15; 1 John 2:20, 27]
- ⁶ Better is the poor who walks in his integrity
Than he who is crooked *and* two-faced though he is rich.
[Prov 19:1]
- ⁷ He who keeps the law [of God and man] is a wise *and*
discerning son,
But he who is a companion of gluttons humiliates his father
[and himself].
- ⁸ He who increases his wealth by interest and usury
(excessive interest)
Gathers it for him who is gracious to the poor. [Job 27:16, 17;
Prov 13:22; Eccl 2:26]
- ⁹ He who turns his ear away from listening to the law [of God
and man],
Even his prayer is repulsive [to God]. [Ps 66:18; 109:7; Prov
15:8; Zech 7:11]
- ¹⁰ He who leads the upright astray on an evil path
Will himself fall into his own pit,
But the blameless will inherit good.
- ¹¹ The rich man [who is conceited and relies on his wealth
instead of God] is wise in his own eyes, But the poor man
who has understanding [because he relies on God] is able
to see through him.
- ¹² When the righteous triumph, there is great glory *and*
celebration;

But when the wicked rise [to prominence], men hide themselves.

¹³He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper,
But whoever confesses and turns away from his sins will
find compassion *and* mercy. [Ps 32:3, 5; 1 John 1:8–10]

¹⁴Blessed *and* favored by God is the man who fears [sin and
its consequence] at all times, But he who hardens his
heart [and is determined to sin] will fall into disaster.

¹⁵Like a roaring lion and a charging bear
Is a wicked ruler over a poor people.

¹⁶A leader who is a great oppressor lacks understanding *and*
common sense [and his wickedness shortens his days],
But he who hates unjust gain will [be blessed and]
prolong his days.

¹⁷A man who is burdened with the guilt of human blood
(murder)
Will be a fugitive until death; let no one support him *or* give
him refuge.

¹⁸He who walks blamelessly *and* uprightly will be kept safe,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Run to God

One way to maintain peace with God is to never attempt to conceal sin. We should always be honest with God and keep good communication open with Him. God is not surprised by our weaknesses and failures; actually, He knows about our mistakes before we even make them. All we need to do is admit to them and repent of them, and He is faithful to forgive us continually from all sin and to show compassion and mercy (see Prov. 28:13).

It is important to do the best you can out of your love for God. Since none of us is perfect, we will make mistakes. When we do, we can talk openly to our Father about them and maintain a relationship of peace with Him. When you need cleansing, don't ever run from God, run to Him!

But he who is crooked (perverse) will suddenly fall.

¹⁹He who cultivates his land will have plenty of bread,
But he who follows worthless people *and* frivolous pursuits
will have plenty of poverty.

²⁰A faithful (right-minded) man will abound with blessings,
But he who hurries to be rich will not go unpunished. [Prov
13:11; 20:21; 23:4; 1 Tim 6:9]

²¹To have regard for one person over another *and* to show
favoritism is not good,

Because for a piece of bread a man will transgress.

²²He who has an evil *and* envious eye hurries to be rich
And does not know that poverty will come upon him. [Prov
21:5; 28:20]

²³He who [appropriately] reprimands a [wise] man will
afterward find more favor
Than he who flatters with the tongue.

²⁴He who robs his father or his mother
And says, “This is no sin,”
Is [not only a thief but also] the companion of a man who
destroys.

²⁵An arrogant *and* greedy man stirs up strife,
But he who trusts in the LORD will be blessed *and* prosper.

²⁶He who trusts confidently in his own heart is a [dull,
thickheaded] fool,
But he who walks in [skillful and godly] wisdom will be
rescued. [James 1:5]

²⁷He who gives to the poor will never want,
But he who shuts his eyes [from their need] will have many
curses. [Deut 15:7; Prov 19:17; 22:9]

²⁸When the wicked rise [to power], men hide themselves;
But when the wicked perish, the [consistently] righteous
increase *and* become great. [Prov 28:12]

29 HE WHO hardens his neck *and* refuses instruction after
being often reproved (corrected, criticized), Will suddenly be
broken beyond repair.

- ²When the righteous are in authority *and* become great, the people rejoice;
But when the wicked man rules, the people groan *and* sigh.
- ³A man who loves [skillful and godly] wisdom makes his father joyful,
But he who associates with prostitutes wastes his wealth.
- ⁴The king establishes (stabilizes) the land by justice,
But a man who takes bribes overthrows it.
- ⁵A man who flatters his neighbor [with smooth words intending to do harm]
Is spreading a net for his own feet.
- ⁶By his wicked plan an evil man is trapped,
But the righteous man sings and rejoices [for his plan brings good things to him].
- ⁷The righteous man cares for the rights of the poor,
But the wicked man has no interest in such knowledge. [Job 29:16; 31:13; Ps 41:1]
- ⁸Scoffers set a city afire [by stirring up trouble],
But wise men turn away anger [and restore order with their good judgment].
- ⁹If a wise man has a controversy with a foolish *and* arrogant man,
The foolish man [ignores logic and fairness and] only rages or laughs, and there is no peace (rest, agreement).
- ¹⁰The bloodthirsty hate the blameless [because of his integrity],
But the upright are concerned for his life. [Gen 4:5, 8; 1 John

3:12]

¹¹A [shortsighted] fool always loses his temper *and* displays his anger,

But a wise man [uses self-control and] holds it back.

¹²If a ruler pays attention to lies [and encourages corruption], All his officials *will become* wicked.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Refuse To Fear

Fear robs many people of their faith. Fear of failure, fear of man, and fear of rejection are some of the strongest fears that Satan employs to hinder our progress. Proverbs 29:25 says, “The fear of man brings a snare.” But no matter what kind of fear the enemy sends against us, the important thing is to overcome it. When we are faced with fear, we should not give in to it. It is imperative to our victory that we determine, “I will not fear!”

The normal reaction to fear is flight (to run). Satan wants us to run; God wants us to stand still and see His deliverance (see 2 Chr. 20:17).

Because of fear, many people do not confront their issues; they spend their lives running away from them. We can learn to stand our ground and face the fear, secure in the knowledge that “we are more than conquerors and gain an overwhelming victory through Him who loved us [so much that He died for us]” (Rom. 8:37).

Fear of failure torments multitudes. We fear what people will think of us if we fail. If we step out and fail, some people may hear about it; but they quickly forget if we forget it and go on. It is better to try something and fail than to try nothing and succeed.

Approach life with boldness. The Spirit of the Lord is in you—

so make up your mind not to fear.

¹³The poor man and the oppressor have this in common:
The LORD gives light to the eyes of both. [Prov 22:2]

¹⁴If a king faithfully *and* truthfully judges the poor,
His throne shall be established forever.

¹⁵The rod and reproof (godly instruction) give wisdom,
But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his
mother.

¹⁶When the wicked are in authority, transgression increases,
But the righteous will see the downfall of the wicked.

¹⁷Correct your son, and he will give you comfort;
Yes, he will delight your soul.

¹⁸Where there is no vision [no revelation of God and His
word], the people are unrestrained;
But happy *and* blessed is he who keeps the law [of God]. [1
Sam 3:1; Amos 8:11, 12]

¹⁹A servant will not be corrected by words *alone*;
For though he understands, he will not respond [nor pay
attention].

²⁰Do you see a [conceited] man who speaks quickly [offering
his opinions or answering without thinking]?
There is more hope for a [thickheaded] fool than for him.

²¹He who pampers his slave from childhood
Will find him to be a son in the end.

²²An angry man stirs up strife,
And a hot-tempered *and* undisciplined man commits many

transgressions.

²³A man's pride *and* sense of self-importance will bring him down,

But he who has a humble spirit will obtain honor. [Prov 15:33; 18:12; Is 66:2; Dan 4:30; Matt 23:12; James 4:6, 10; 1 Pet 5:5]

²⁴Whoever is partner with a thief hates his own life;
He hears the curse [when swearing an oath to testify], but discloses nothing [and commits perjury by omission].

²⁵The fear of man brings a snare,
But whoever trusts in *and* puts his confidence in the LORD will be exalted *and* safe.

²⁶Many seek the ruler's favor,
But justice for man comes from the LORD.

²⁷An unjust man is repulsive to the righteous,
And he who is upright in the way [of the LORD] is repulsive to the wicked.

30 THE WORDS of Agur the son of Jakeh, the oracle: The man says to Ithiel, to Ithiel and to Ucal:

²Surely I am more brutish *and* stupid than any man,
And I do not have the understanding of a man [for I do not know what I do not know].

³I have not learned [skillful and godly] wisdom,
Nor do I have knowledge of the Holy One [who is the source of wisdom].

⁴Who has ascended into heaven and descended?
Who has gathered the wind in His fists?
Who has bound the waters in His garment?
Who has established all the ends of the earth?
What is His name, and what is His Son's name?
Certainly you know! [John 3:13; Rev 19:12]

⁵Every word of God is tested *and* refined [like silver];
He is a shield to those who trust *and* take refuge in Him. [Ps
18:30; 84:11; 115:9–11]

⁶Do not add to His words,
Or He will reprove you, and you will be found a liar.

⁷Two things I have asked of You;
Do not deny them to me before I die:

⁸Keep deception and lies far from me;
Give me neither poverty nor riches;
Feed me with the food that is my portion,

⁹So that I will not be full and deny You and say, "Who is the
LORD?"
Or that I will not be poor and steal,
And so profane the name of my God. [Deut 8:12, 14, 17; Neh
9:25, 26; Job 31:24; Hos 13:6]

¹⁰Do not slander *or* malign a servant before his master [stay
out of another's personal life], Or he will curse you [for
your interference], and you will be found guilty.

¹¹There is a generation (class of people) that curses its father

And does not bless its mother.

¹²There is a generation (class of people) that is pure in its own eyes,

Yet is not washed from its filthiness.

¹³There is a generation (class of people)—oh, how lofty are their eyes!

And their eyelids are raised *in arrogance*.

¹⁴There is a generation (class of people) whose teeth are like swords

And whose jaw teeth are like knives,

To devour the afflicted from the earth

And the needy from among men.

¹⁵The leech has two daughters,

“Give, give!”

There are three things that are never satisfied,

Four that do not say, “It is enough”:

¹⁶Sheol, and the barren womb,

Earth that is never satisfied with water,

And fire that never says, “It is enough.”

¹⁷The eye that mocks a father

And scorns a mother,

The ravens of the valley will pick it out,

And the young vultures will devour it. [Lev 20:9; Prov 20:20; 23:22]

¹⁸There are three things which are too astounding *and* unexpectedly wonderful for me, Four which I do not understand:

- ¹⁹The way of an eagle in the air,
The way of a serpent on a rock,
The way of a ship in the middle of the sea,
And the way of a man with a maid.
- ²⁰This is the way of an adulterous woman:
She eats and wipes her mouth
And says, "I have done no wrong."
- ²¹Under three things the earth is disquieted *and* quakes,
And under four it cannot bear up:
- ²²Under a servant when he reigns,
Under a [spiritually blind] fool when he is filled with food,
- ²³Under an unloved woman when she gets married,
And *under* a maidservant when she supplants her mistress.
- ²⁴There are four things that are small on the earth,
But they are exceedingly wise:
- ²⁵The ants are not a strong people,
Yet they prepare their food in the summer; [Prov 6:6]
- ²⁶The shephanim are not a mighty folk,
Yet they make their houses in the rocks; [Ps 104:18]
- ²⁷The locusts have no king,
Yet all of them go out in groups;
- ²⁸You may grasp the lizard with your hands,
Yet it is in kings' palaces.
- ²⁹There are three things which are stately in step,
Even four which are stately in their stride:

- ³⁰The lion, which is mighty among beasts
And does not turn back before any;
- ³¹The strutting rooster, the male goat also,
And the king *when his* army is with him.
- ³²If you have foolishly exalted yourself,
Or if you have plotted *evil*, *put your* hand on your mouth.
[Job 21:5; 40:4]
- ³³Surely the churning of milk produces butter,
And wringing the nose produces blood;
So the churning of anger produces strife.

31 THE WORDS of King Lemuel, the oracle, which his
mother taught him: ²What, O my son?

And what, O son of my womb?

And what [shall I advise you], O son of my vows?

³Do not give your [generative] strength to women [neither
foreign wives in marriages of alliances, nor concubines],
Nor your ways to that which destroys kings.

⁴It is not for kings, O Lemuel,
It is not for kings to drink wine,

**A Prayer To
Renew Your
Mind**

YOU CAN PRAY
THIS PRAYER FOR
YOURSELF OR FOR
A WOMAN YOU
KNOW.

*Lord, I pray that I
will be an excellent
woman, one who is
spiritual, capable,
intelligent, and
virtuous. I am more
precious than jewels
and my worth is far
above rubies or
pearls. I pray that
the heart of my
husband will trust
in me with
confidence, and he
will have no lack of
gain. Help me to
comfort, encourage,
and do him good,
not evil, all the days
of my life.*

• adapted from Proverbs 31:10–12

Or for rulers to desire strong drink, [Eccl 10:17; Hos 4:11]
⁵Otherwise they drink and forget the law *and* its decrees,

And pervert the rights *and* justice of all the afflicted.

⁶Give strong drink [as medicine] to him who is ready to pass away,

And wine to him whose life is bitter.

⁷Let him drink and forget his poverty
And no longer remember his trouble.

⁸Open your mouth for the mute,
For the rights of all who are unfortunate *and* defenseless; [1
Sam 19:4; Esth 4:16; Job 29:15, 16]

⁹Open your mouth, judge righteously,
And administer justice for the afflicted and needy. [Lev
19:15; Deut 1:16; Job 29:12; Is 1:17; Jer 22:16]

¹⁰An excellent woman [one who is spiritual, capable,
intelligent, and virtuous], who is he who can find her?
Her value is more precious than jewels *and* her worth is far
above rubies *or* pearls. [Prov 12:4; 18:22; 19:14]

¹¹The heart of her husband trusts in her [with secure
confidence],
And he will have no lack of gain.

¹²She comforts, encourages, *and* does him only good and not
evil
All the days of her life.

¹³She looks for wool and flax
And works with willing hands in delight.

¹⁴She is like the merchant ships [abounding with treasure];
She brings her [household's] food from far away.

¹⁵She rises also while it is still night

And gives food to her household
And assigns tasks to her maids. [Job 23:12]

¹⁶She considers a field before she buys *or* accepts it
[expanding her business prudently]; With her profits she
plants fruitful vines in her vineyard.

¹⁷She equips herself with strength [spiritual, mental, and
physical fitness for her God-given task]
And makes her arms strong.

¹⁸She sees that her gain is good;
Her lamp does not go out, but it burns continually through
the night [she is prepared for whatever lies ahead].

¹⁹She stretches out her hands to the distaff,
And her hands hold the spindle [as she spins wool into
thread for clothing].

²⁰She opens *and* extends her hand to the poor,
And she reaches out her filled hands to the needy.

²¹She does not fear the snow for her household,
For all in her household are clothed in [expensive] scarlet
[wool]. [Josh 2:18, 19; Heb 9:19–22]

²²She makes for herself coverlets, cushions, *and* rugs of
tapestry.
Her clothing is linen, pure *and* fine, and purple [wool]. [Is
61:10; 1 Tim 2:9; Rev 3:5; 19:8, 14]

²³Her husband is known in the [city's] gates,
When he sits among the elders of the land. [Prov 12:4]

²⁴She makes [fine] linen garments and sells them;
And supplies sashes to the merchants.

²⁵Strength and dignity are her clothing *and* her position is strong and secure;

And she smiles at the future [knowing that she and her family are prepared].

²⁶She opens her mouth in [skillful and godly] wisdom,
And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue [giving counsel and instruction].

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Kindness on Your Tongue

For years I was angry and spoke harshly as a result of being mistreated and abused as a child. I ended up with a harsh, hard spirit; therefore, all the words I spoke were harsh and hard. As a young adult, I determined that no one would ever hurt me again, and that attitude permeated my thoughts and influenced my speech.

Though I tried to say things that were right and pleasing to others, once those comments had passed through my soul (my mind, my will, and my emotions) and picked up the hardness and bitterness hidden there, they came out sounding angry and impatient.

No matter how right people's hearts may be before the Lord, if they have pride, anger, or resentment in their soul, they cannot open their mouths without somehow expressing that negativity. They may not even recognize the harshness in their tone of voice, but others will.

Jesus said that the reason we cannot keep our thoughts and emotions from influencing our words is this: "For the

mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart” (Matt. 12:34). Whatever is in us will come out in our words.

Because I spent years as a harsh, angry person, the Lord had to do quite a work in order for me to develop gentleness. Part of what God revealed to me in His Word concerning this issue was Proverbs 31:26. When I read it, I thought, *Oh, Lord, I need help!* I felt that whenever I opened my mouth, out came a hammer.

Maybe you can relate to what I experienced. You may have been mistreated and abused as a young person as I was, and you are now filled with hatred, resentment, distrust, anger, and hostility. Instead of kindness, you express harshness and hardness, even when you do not want to.

Spending time in God’s Word and in fellowship with Him, letting Him heal the hurts of your past, seeking counseling if you need it, and working to overcome the negativity you have grown up with are worth the effort. When the law of kindness is on your tongue, not only will the people around you benefit, you will also feel better about yourself and be more able to enjoy your life.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord, whatever it takes for You to heal me and help me to learn to speak kindly and gently, I ask You to do it in my life. I don’t want to speak words that sound harsh, but words that bless and encourage the people around me. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

- ²⁷ She looks well to how things go in her household,
And does not eat the bread of idleness. [1 Tim 5:14; Titus 2:5]
- ²⁸ Her children rise up and call her blessed (happy,
prosperous, to be admired);
Her husband also, and he praises her, *saying*,
- ²⁹ “Many daughters have done nobly, *and* well [with the
strength of character that is steadfast in goodness], But
you excel them all.”
- ³⁰ Charm *and* grace are deceptive, and [superficial] beauty is
vain,
But a woman who fears the LORD [reverently worshiping,
obeying, serving, and trusting Him with awe-filled
respect], she shall be praised.
- ³¹ Give her of the product of her hands,
And let her own works praise her in the gates [of the city].
[Phil 4:8]

Ecclesiastes

Author: |
Traditionally, Solomon

Date: |
Traditionally, around
the time of Solomon's
death (about 931 BC)

Solomon, the writer of Ecclesiastes, was desperate to find the secret to happiness and fulfillment in life. He looked for it in everything the world had to offer. After much disappointment, he ultimately realized that the key to true and lasting joy is in fearing God and obeying His Word. In fact, one of my favorite verses is the one Solomon wrote at the end of Ecclesiastes: "When all has been heard, the end of the matter is: fear God [worship Him with awe-filled reverence, knowing that He is almighty God] and keep His commandments, for this applies to every person" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

No matter where you look in your search for happiness and fulfillment, you will only find it in loving God and following

His ways.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM ECCLESIASTES:

Trying to find earthly fulfillment in the things of the world is like chasing the wind and trying to grasp it. It will never happen (see Ecclesiastes 1:14).

Being able to enjoy your work and the various things you do is a great blessing and is necessary for a blessed life (see Ecclesiastes 2:24).

There is an appropriate time for everything in life, and it is important to do things in their proper timing (see Ecclesiastes 3:1–8).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM ECCLESIASTES:

For wisdom is a protection even as money is a protection, but the [excellent] advantage of knowledge is that wisdom shields and preserves the lives of its possessors. | Ecclesiastes 7:12

It is good that you take hold of one thing (righteousness) and also not let go of the other (wisdom); for the one who fears and worships God [with awe-filled reverence] will come forth with both of them. | Ecclesiastes 7:18

The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious and win him favor; but the lips of a fool consume him. | Ecclesiastes 10:12

ECCLESIASTES

1 THE WORDS of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

²“Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher.

“Vanity of vanities! All [that is done without God’s guidance] is vanity [futile, meaningless—a wisp of smoke, a vapor that vanishes, merely chasing the wind].” [Rom 8:20]

³What advantage does man have from all his work
Which he does under the sun (while earthbound)?

⁴One generation goes and another generation comes,
But the earth remains forever. [Ps 119:90]

⁵Also, the sun rises and the sun sets;
And hurries to the place where it rises again.

⁶The wind blows toward the south,
Then circles toward the north;
The wind circles *and* swirls endlessly,
And on its circular course the wind returns. [John 3:8]

⁷All the rivers flow into the sea,
Yet the sea is not full.
To the place where the rivers flow,

There they flow again.

⁸All things are wearisome *and* all words are frail;
Man cannot express it.

The eye is not satisfied with seeing,
Nor is the ear filled with hearing. [Prov 27:20]

⁹That which has been is that which will be [again],
And that which has been done is that which will be done
again.

So there is nothing new under the sun.

¹⁰Is there anything of which it can be said,
“See this, it is new”?
It has already existed for [the vast] ages [of time recorded or
unrecorded]
Which were before us.

¹¹There is no remembrance of earlier things,
Nor also of the later things that are to come;
There will be for them no remembrance
By generations who will come after them.

¹²I, the Preacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.

¹³And I set my mind to seek and explore by [man’s] wisdom
all [human activity] that has been done under heaven. It is a
miserable business *and* a burdensome task which God has
given the sons of men with which to be busy *and* distressed.

¹⁴I have seen all the works which have been done under
the sun, and behold, all is vanity, a futile grasping *and* chasing
after the wind.

¹⁵What is crooked cannot be straightened and what is
defective *and* lacking cannot be counted.

16I spoke with my heart, saying, “Behold, I have acquired great [human] wisdom *and* experience, more than all who were over Jerusalem before me; and my mind has observed a wealth of [moral] wisdom and [scientific] knowledge.”

POWERPOINT

These words are from the wisest man in the world, who had access to and searched out every earthly pursuit that so many of us run after. Solomon said that trying to find fulfillment in anything in this world is like chasing after the wind or trying to grasp it in our hands (see Eccl. 1:14). No matter how hard we try, it always evades us and leaves us unfulfilled and bitter. Let's stop chasing after the things of this world and start going after the things of God.



KEYS to a Victorious Life

Talk Yourself into Something Good

Solomon reached the point where he actually uttered the sad words: “I hated life” (Eccl. 2:17). I think each time we say we “hate” something, it makes it that much harder to do it with joy the next time.

Though “I hate” is a commonly used phrase, it is a good phrase to eliminate from your vocabulary. Instead, start thinking and saying by faith that you enjoy those things you find challenging. Start thinking it and saying it, and soon you will find them to be more enjoyable.

We all have situations we don't like that come our way. By the grace of God, we can go through and even learn valuable lessons from them or gain strength because of them. The Holy Spirit is always willing to lead and guide us. He often prompts us to think about or do things that will relieve the stress that comes with what we don't enjoy doing.

We can talk ourselves into things and out of things. You can talk yourself into despising something you need to do, or you can choose a good attitude and speak good words about it and make it a lot more pleasant. When you encounter an undesirable task or situation, use your words to talk yourself into something good.

¹⁷And I set my mind to know [practical] wisdom and to

discern [the character of] madness and folly [in which men seem to find satisfaction]; I realized that this too is a futile grasping *and* chasing after the wind. [1 Thess 5:21]

¹⁸For in much [human] wisdom there is much displeasure *and* exasperation; increasing knowledge increases sorrow.

2 I SAID to myself, “Come now, I will test you with pleasure *and* gratification; so enjoy yourself *and* have a good time.” But behold, this too was vanity (futility, meaninglessness). [Luke 12:19, 20]

²I said of laughter, “It is madness,” and of pleasure, “What does it accomplish?”

³I explored with my mind how to gratify myself with wine while [at the same time] having my mind remain steady *and* guide me wisely; and how to take control of foolishness, until I could see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their lives.

⁴I made great works: I built houses for myself; I planted vineyards for myself;

⁵I made gardens and orchards for myself and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees;

⁶I made pools of water for myself from which to water the forest *and* make the trees bud.

⁷I bought male and female slaves and had slaves born in my house. I also possessed herds and flocks larger than any who preceded me in Jerusalem.

⁸Also, I collected for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I provided for myself male

singers and female singers, and the delights *and* pleasures of men—many concubines. [1 Kin 9:28; 10:10, 14, 21]

⁹So I became great and excelled more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also remained with me.

¹⁰Whatever my eyes looked at with desire I did not refuse them. I did not withhold from my heart any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor; and this was my reward for all my labor.

¹¹Then I considered all which my hands had done and labored to do, and behold, all was vanity and chasing after the wind and there was no profit (nothing of lasting value) under the sun. [Matt 16:26]

¹²So I turned to consider [secular] wisdom, madness, and folly; for what will the man do who succeeds the king? Nothing *except* what has already been done.

¹³Then I saw that [even secular] wisdom [that brings sorrow] is better than [the pleasures of] folly *and* self-indulgence as light excels darkness.

¹⁴The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness; and yet I know that [in the end] one fate happens to them both. [Prov 17:24]

¹⁵Then I said to myself, "As it happens to the fool, so death will also happen to me. What use is it then for me to be extremely wise?" Then I said in my heart, "This too is vanity (meaningless)."

¹⁶For there is no [more] lasting remembrance of the wise man than of the fool, since in the days to come all will be long forgotten. And how does the wise man die? Even as the fool!

¹⁷So I hated life, for the work which had been done under

the sun caused me only great sorrow; because all is futility and chasing after the wind.

¹⁸So I hated all the fruit (gain) of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will succeed me. [Ps 49:10]

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Lord, I am thankful that there is a season (a time appointed) for everything and a time for every purpose under heaven... A time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance. A time to throw away stones and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing. A time to search and a time to give up as lost; a time to keep and a time to

throw away.

• *adapted from Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4–*

6

¹⁹And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the fruit of my labor for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun. This too is vanity (futility, self-conceit).

²⁰So I turned aside and let my heart despair over all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun.

²¹For there is a man who has labored with wisdom and knowledge and skill, yet gives his legacy to one who has not labored for it. This too is vanity and a great evil.

²²For what does a man get from all his labor and from the striving *and* sorrow of his heart with which he labors under the sun?

²³For all his days his work is painful and sorrowful; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is vanity (worthless).

²⁴There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and assure himself that there is good in his labor. Even this, I have seen, is from the hand of God.

²⁵For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him?

²⁶For to the person who pleases Him God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy; but to the sinner He gives the work of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who pleases God. This too is vanity and chasing after the wind.

3 THERE IS a season (a time appointed) for everything and a time for every delight *and* event *or* purpose under heaven—

² A time to be born and a time to die;

A time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted. [Heb 9:27]

³ A time to kill and a time to heal;

A time to tear down and a time to build up.

⁴ A time to weep and a time to laugh;

A time to mourn and a time to dance.

⁵ A time to throw away stones and a time to gather stones;

A time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing.

⁶ A time to search and a time to give up as lost;

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

A Time for Every Change

Ecclesiastes 3 addresses the fact that things change and that God has a certain timing for the changes in our lives. I believe the enemy offers us two lies concerning issues of timing—the “forever” lie and the “never” lie. When we face negative circumstances, he tries to make us believe they will go on *forever*; and that things will *never* change. Both these lies create worry and fear in our heart and a battle in our mind. Both are untrue because, sooner or later, everything in our life will change.

The difficulties we encounter won’t last forever, and even the good things that we enjoy in our lives may not stay the same forever. It is important for us to learn to adapt ourselves to the seasons of change, as they are part of the process of spiritual maturity. Difficulties eventually give way to victory, and good times become better times. Only God never changes. And although everything else does, we don’t have to be afraid of change!

Whatever exists in our lives now, or will exist in the future,

will be temporary, because life is a continual process in which nothing stays the same. No matter what we are going through at any given moment, sooner or later it will pass. In the meantime, we can count on God to be with us, to deliver and honor us, to satisfy us with long life and show us His salvation (see Ps. 91:14–16). We will face some trials and tribulations during certain seasons of our life, but as we continue to believe God and place our trust in Him, He will fulfill His promises to us, and those troubled times will give way to better days.

Yes, things are always changing. Sometimes change is exciting, filling us with joy; sometimes change is difficult or painful. Either way, we will make it through the changes of life without worrying or becoming fearful or upset if we keep our eyes on Jesus. Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ is [eternally changeless, always] the same yesterday and today and forever.” He never ever changes! In a world filled with change, He is the one constant.

APRAYER FOR VICTORY

Thank You, Lord, that You are in control of the changes and the timing in my life. Help me to stay close to You through every season of change, always relying on Jesus as the one constant in my life. In His name, I pray. Amen.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Thank You, God, for making everything beautiful in its time and for planting eternity in my heart—a mysterious longing that only You can satisfy.

• *adapted from Ecclesiastes 3:11*

A time to keep and a time to throw away.

⁷A time to tear apart and a time to sew together;
A time to keep silent and a time to speak. [Amos 5:13]

⁸A time to love and a time to hate;
A time for war and a time for peace. [Luke 14:26]

⁹What profit is there for the worker from that in which he labors?

¹⁰I have seen the task which God has given to the sons of men with which to occupy themselves.

¹¹He has made everything beautiful *and* appropriate in its time. He has also planted eternity [a sense of divine purpose] in the human heart [a mysterious longing which nothing under the sun can satisfy, except God]—yet man cannot find out (comprehend, grasp) what God has done (His overall plan) from the beginning to the end.

¹²I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good as long as they live;

¹³and also that every man should eat and drink and see *and* enjoy the good of all his labor—it is the gift of God.

¹⁴I know that whatever God does, it endures forever; nothing can be added to it nor can anything be taken from it, for God does it so that men will fear *and* worship Him [with awe-filled reverence, knowing that He is God]. [Ps 19:9; James 1:17]

¹⁵That which is has already been, and that which will be has already been, for God seeks what has passed by [so that history repeats itself].

¹⁶Moreover, I have seen under the sun that in the place of justice there is wickedness, and in the place of righteousness there is wickedness.

¹⁷I said to myself, “God will judge both the righteous and the wicked,” for there is a time [appointed] for every matter and for every deed.

¹⁸I said to myself regarding the sons of men, “God is surely testing them in order for them to see that [by themselves, without God] they are [only] animals.”

¹⁹For the [earthly] fate of the sons of men and the fate of animals is the same. As one dies, so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no preeminence *or* advantage for man [in and of himself] over an animal, for all is vanity.

²⁰All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust.

²¹Who knows if the spirit of man ascends upward and the spirit of the animal descends downward to the earth?

²²So I have seen that there is nothing better than that a man should be happy in his own works *and* activities, for that is his portion (share). For who will bring him [back] to see what will happen after he is gone?

4 THEN I looked again *and* considered all the acts of oppression that were being practiced under the sun. And behold *I saw* the tears of the oppressed and they had no one to comfort them; and on the side of their oppressors was power, but they had no one to comfort them.

POWERPOINT

Staying focused as we go about our lives is very important because one way the enemy wages the battle of the mind is to distract us mentally (see Eccl. 5:1). He wants us to think we are weak because we cannot maintain our focus. But the truth is that we simply need to learn to discipline our minds, not allowing them to think random thoughts or to stop paying attention to the matter at hand. If you struggle to stay focused, ask God to help you and begin today to keep your mind on what you're doing. Forming a new habit takes time, effort, and a lot of help from God; it can be done and will be worth it in the end.



KEYS to a Victorious Life

Keep It Simple

I have learned to pray and make my requests to God with as few words as possible (see Eccl. 5:2). If I keep my request very simple and not confuse the issue with too many words, my prayer actually seems more clear and powerful.

We need to spend our energy releasing our faith, not repeating phrases over and over, which only serves only to make the prayer long and involved.

Keeping my prayers short and simple was not easy in the beginning. I had to learn how to pray more effectively. I began to realize that my problem in praying was that I didn't have faith that my prayer would get through if it was only short, simple, and to the point. I had fallen into the same trap that many people do—"the longer the better" mentality. I am not advocating praying for only a short period of time, but I am suggesting that each prayer be simple, direct, to the point, and filled with faith (see Matt. 6:7–8).

In learning this, I have experienced a much greater release of my faith, and I know that God has heard me and will answer.

If your prayers are complicated, let me encourage you to simplify them, believing that God is listening and will answer you.

²So I congratulated *and* thought more fortunate are those who are already dead than the living who are still living.

³But better off than either of them is the one who has not yet been born, who has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun.

⁴I have seen that every [effort in] labor and every skill in work *comes from* man's rivalry with his neighbor. This too is vanity (futility, false pride) and chasing after the wind.

⁵The fool folds his hands [together] and consumes his own flesh [destroying himself by idleness and apathy].

⁶One hand full of rest *and* patience is better than two fists full of labor and chasing after the wind.

⁷Then I looked again at vanity under the sun [in one of its peculiar forms].

⁸There was a certain man—without a dependent, having neither a child nor a brother, yet there was no end to all his labor. Indeed, his eyes were not satisfied with riches *and he never asked*, “For whom do I labor and deprive myself of pleasure?” This too is vanity (a wisp of smoke, self-conceit); yes, it is a painful effort *and* an unhappy task. [Prov 27:20; 1 John 2:16]

⁹Two are better than one because they have a more satisfying return for their labor;

¹⁰for if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and does not have another to lift him up.

¹¹Again, if two lie down together, then they keep warm; but how can one be warm *alone*?

¹²And though one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three *strands* is not quickly broken.

¹³A poor yet wise youth is better than an old and foolish king who no longer knows how to receive instruction *and* counsel (friendly reproof, warning)—

¹⁴for the poor youth has [used his wisdom and] come out of prison to become king, even though he was born poor in his kingdom.

¹⁵I have seen all the living under the sun join with the second youth (the king's acknowledged successor) who replaces him.

¹⁶There is no end to all the people; to all who were before them. Yet those who come later will not be happy with him. Surely this also is vanity (emptiness) and chasing after the wind.

5 GUARD YOUR steps *and* focus on what you are doing as you go to the house of God and draw near to listen rather than to offer the [careless or irreverent] sacrifice of fools; for they are too ignorant to know they are doing evil. [Gen 35:1–4; Ex 3:5]

²Do not be hasty with your mouth [speaking careless words or vows] or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter before God. For God is in heaven and you are on earth; therefore let your words be few.

³For the dream comes through much effort, and the voice of the fool through many words.

⁴When you make a vow *or* a pledge to God, do not put off

paying it; for *God takes* no pleasure in fools [who thoughtlessly mock Him]. Pay what you vow. [Ps 50:14; 66:13, 14; 76:11]

⁵It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. [Prov 20:25; Acts 5:4]

⁶Do not allow your speech to cause you to sin, and do not say before the messenger (priest) *of God* that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry because of your voice (words) and destroy the work of your hands? [Mal 2:7]

⁷For in a multitude of dreams and in a flood of words there is worthlessness. Rather [reverently] fear God [and worship Him with awe-filled respect, knowing who He is].

⁸If you see the oppression of the poor and the denial of justice and righteousness in the province, do not be shocked at the sight [of corruption]; for a higher official watches over another official, and there are higher ones over them [looking out for one another].

⁹After all, a king who cultivates the field is an advantage to the land.

¹⁰He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance *with its* gain. This too is vanity (emptiness).

¹¹When good things increase, those who consume them increase. So what advantage is there to their owners except to see them with their eyes?

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Pursue Your Dream

Ecclesiastes 5:3 says that “the dream comes through much effort.” In other words, when you have a dream, it won’t just materialize someday. It will happen because you pray about it and you work toward it. I wonder, what is your dream? What is it that you are most passionate about? What is the thing you get excited about when you simply think about it? Starting a nonprofit? Volunteering in your community? Earning a degree? Building a company? Raising a family?

Many times the dreams in your heart are so strong because God is the One Who put them there. Whatever your dream is, submit it to God, ask for His direction, and if you feel peace about it, take steps to make it happen.

Following God’s plan for your life is not about sitting back and waiting for Him to bring it to pass supernaturally; it’s about being courageous and stepping into what He has called you to do.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Don't Just Endure, Enjoy!

In Ecclesiastes 5:18, King Solomon, who is considered to have been very wise, said a person is to “find enjoyment in all the labor in which he labors under the sun” (see also Eccl. 2:24). That sounds as if enjoying our work is something we can choose to do on purpose. We can learn to enjoy all of life, even things others might consider ordinary, laborious, or unexciting.

Many people have the mentality of just trying to “endure” large portions of their lives, but I believe it is tragic to live and not enjoy every moment. I admit some things are more emotionally pleasant than others, but we can learn to enjoy God’s presence in everything we do. Try repeating internally throughout the day to yourself: God is with me, and the moment I have right now is a gift from Him.

¹²The sleep of a working man is sweet, whether he eats little or much; but the full stomach (greed) of the rich [who hungers for even more] will not let him sleep.

¹³There is a grievous evil which I have seen under the sun: riches being kept *and* hoarded by their owner to his own misery.

¹⁴For when those riches are lost in bad investments and he becomes the father of a son, then there is nothing in his hand

[for the support of the child].

¹⁵As he came naked from his mother's womb, so he will return as he came; and he will take away nothing from all his labor that he can carry in his hand. [Job 1:21; 1 Tim 6:7]

¹⁶This also is a grievous evil—exactly as he was born, so he shall die. So what advantage has he who labors for the wind? [1 Tim 6:6]

¹⁷All of his life he also eats in darkness [cheerlessly, without sweetness and light], with great frustration, sickness, and anger.

¹⁸Behold, here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat and drink, and to find enjoyment in all the labor in which he labors under the sun during the few days of his life which God gives him—for this is his [allotted] reward. [1 Tim 6:17]

¹⁹Also, every man to whom God has given riches and possessions, He has also given the power *and* ability to enjoy them and to receive [this as] his [allotted] portion and to rejoice in his labor—this is the gift of God [to him].

²⁰For he will not often consider the [troubled] days of his life, because God keeps him occupied *and* focused on the joy of his heart [and the tranquility of God indwells him].

6 THERE IS an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it weighs heavily on men:

²a man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honor, so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God has not given him the power *or* capacity to enjoy them [all those things which are gifts from God], but a stranger [in whom

he has no interest succeeds him and] enjoys them. This is vanity and it is a [cause of] great distress. [Luke 12:20]

³If a man fathers a hundred *children* and lives many years, however many they may be, but his soul is not satisfied with good things and he is not respected *and* is not given a *proper* burial [he is not laid to rest in the sepulcher of his fathers], then I say, “Better the miscarriage than he, [Job 3:16]

⁴for the miscarriage comes in futility (in vain) and passes into obscurity; and its name is covered in obscurity.

⁵“It has not seen the sun nor had any knowledge; yet it has more rest *and* is better off than he.

⁶“Even if the *other* man lives a thousand years twice over and yet has seen no good *and* experienced no enjoyment—do not both go to one place [the grave]?”

⁷All the labor of man is for his mouth [for self-preservation and enjoyment], and yet the desire [of his soul] is not satisfied. [Prov 16:26]

⁸For what advantage has the wise man over the fool [for being worldly-wise is not the secret to happiness]? What *advantage* has the poor man who has learned how to walk [publicly] among the living [with men’s eyes on him; for being poor is not the secret to happiness either]?

⁹What the eyes see [enjoying what is available] is better than [craving] what the soul desires. This too is futility and chasing after the wind.

¹⁰Whatever exists has already been named [long ago], and it is known what [a frail being] man is; for he cannot dispute with Him who is mightier than he.

¹¹For there are many other words that increase futility.

What then is the advantage for a man?

¹²For who [limited by human wisdom] knows what is good for man during his lifetime, during the few days of his futile life? He spends them like a shadow [staying busy, but achieving nothing of lasting value]. For who can tell a man what will happen after him [to his work, his treasure, his plans] under the sun [after his life is over]?

1 A GOOD name is better than precious perfume,

And the day of one's death better than the day of one's birth.

²It is better to go to the house of mourning

Than to go to the house of feasting,

For that [day of death] is the end of every man,

And the living will take it to heart *and* solemnly ponder its meaning.

Speak God's Word

*I will not be eager in my
heart to be angry, for anger
dwells in the heart of fools.*

| adapted from ECCLESIASTES
7:9 |

- ³Sorrow is better than laughter,
For when a face is sad (deep in thought) the heart may be
happy [because it is growing in wisdom]. [2 Cor 7:10]
- ⁴The heart of the wise [learns when it] is in the house of
mourning,
But the heart of fools is [senseless] in the house of
pleasure.
- ⁵It is better to listen to the rebuke of the wise man *and*
pursue wisdom
Than for one to listen to the song of fools *and* pursue
stupidity.
- ⁶For like the crackling of [burning] thorn bushes under a pot,
So is the laughter of the fool;
And this too is vanity (futility).
- ⁷For oppression makes a wise man foolish,
And a bribe corrupts the [good judgment of the] heart.

- ⁸The end of a matter is better than its beginning;
Patience of spirit is better than haughtiness of spirit (pride).
- ⁹Do not be eager in your heart to be angry,
For anger dwells in the heart of fools. [James 1:19, 20]
- ¹⁰Do not say, “Why were the old days better than these?”
For it is not from wisdom that you ask about this.
- ¹¹Wisdom along with an inheritance is good
And an [excellent] advantage for those who see the sun.
- ¹²For wisdom is a protection *even as* money is a protection,
But the [excellent] advantage of knowledge is that wisdom
shields *and* preserves the lives of its possessors.
- ¹³Consider the work of God:
Who can make straight what He has bent?
- ¹⁴In the day of prosperity be joyful,
But in the day of adversity consider that
God has made the one as well as the other,
So that man will not find out anything *that will be* after him.
- ¹⁵I have seen everything during my [fleeting] days of
futility; there is a righteous man who perishes in [spite of] his
righteousness, and there is a wicked man who lives a long *life*
in [spite of] his wickedness.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, help me to always take
hold of what I should take
hold of, and let go of what I
should let go of.*

• adapted from Ecclesiastes 7:18

¹⁶Do not be excessively righteous [like those given to self-conceit], and do not be overly wise (pretentious)—why should you bring yourself to ruin?

¹⁷Do not be excessively *or* willfully wicked and do not be a fool. Why should you die before your time?

¹⁸It is good that you take hold of one thing (righteousness) and also not let go of the other (wisdom); for the one who fears *and* worships God [with awe-filled reverence] will come forth with both of them.

¹⁹Wisdom strengthens the wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city. [Ps 127:1; 2 Tim 3:15]

²⁰Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who *always* does good and who never sins. [Is 53:6; Rom 3:23]

²¹Also, do not take seriously everything that is said, so that you will not hear your servant cursing you,

²²for you also know that you too have cursed others many times.

²³I have tested all this with wisdom. I said, “I will be wise

[independently of God],” but true wisdom was far from me.

²⁴Whatever has been is far off, deeply remote and exceedingly mysterious. Who can discover it [for it is beyond the grasp of man]? [Job 28:12–28; 1 Cor 2:9–16]

²⁵I turned around *and* directed my heart to know, to investigate and to seek [skillful and godly] wisdom and the reason for things, and to know that wickedness is folly and that foolishness is madness [leading to stupidity and recklessness].

²⁶And I discovered that [of all irrational sins none has been so destructive in beguiling one away from God as immoral women for] more bitter than death is the woman whose heart is [composed of] snares and nets, and whose hands are chains. Whoever pleases God will escape from her, but the sinner will be taken captive by her [evil].

²⁷“Behold, I have discovered this,” says the Preacher, “while *adding* one thing to another to find an explanation,

²⁸which I am still seeking but have not found. I have found one man among a thousand [who pleases God], but I have not found [such] a woman among all these [a thousand in my harem]. [1 Kin 11:3]

²⁹“Behold, I have found only this [as a reason]: God made man upright *and* uncorrupted, but they [both men and women] have sought out many devices [for evil].”

8 WHO IS like the wise man?

And who knows the interpretation of a matter?

A man’s wisdom illumines his face,

And causes his stern face to beam.

²I counsel you to keep the command of the king because of the oath before God [by which you swore loyalty to him]. [2 Sam 21:7]

³Do not be in a hurry to get out of his presence. Do not join in a malevolent matter, for the king will do whatever he pleases.

⁴For the word of a king is authoritative *and* powerful,
And who will say to him, “What are you doing?”

⁵Whoever keeps *and* observes a *royal* command will
experience neither trouble *nor* misery;
For a wise heart will know the proper time and [appropriate]
procedure.

⁶For there is a proper time and [appropriate] procedure for
every delight,
Though mankind’s misery *and* trouble lies heavily upon him
[who rebels against the king].

⁷For no one knows what will happen;
So who can tell him how *and* when it will happen?

⁸There is no man who has power *and* authority over the
wind to restrain the wind,
Nor does he have authority over the day of death;
There is no discharge [from service] during time of war,
And evil will not rescue those who [actively seek to]
practice it.

⁹All this I have seen while applying my mind to every deed
that is done under the sun. There is a time in which one man
has exercised power over others to their detriment.

¹⁰So then, I have seen the wicked buried, those who used to go in and out of the holy place [but did not thereby escape their doom], and they are [praised in spite of their evil and] soon forgotten in the city where they did such things. This too is futility (vanity, emptiness).

¹¹Because the sentence against an evil act is not executed quickly, the hearts of the sons of men are fully set to do evil.

¹²Though a sinner does evil a hundred *times* and his life [seemingly] is prolonged [in spite of his wickedness], still I know that it will be well with those who [reverently] fear God, who fear *and* worship Him openly [realizing His omnipresence and His power]. [Ps 37:11, 18, 19; Is 3:10, 11; Matt 25:34]

¹³But it will not be well for the evil man, nor will he lengthen his days like a shadow, because he does not fear God. [Matt 25:41]

¹⁴There is a meaningless *and* futile thing which is done on the earth: that is, there are righteous men whose gain is as though they were evil, and evil men whose gain is as though they were righteous. I say that this too is futility (meaningless, vain).

¹⁵Then I commended pleasure *and* enjoyment, because a man [without God] has no better thing under the sun than to eat and to drink and to be merry, for this will stand by him in his toil through the days of his life which God has given him under the sun.

¹⁶When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to see the activities [of mankind] that take place upon the earth—how some men seem to sleep neither day nor night—

¹⁷and I saw all the work of God, I *concluded* that man

cannot discover the work that is done under the sun. Even though man may labor in seeking, he will not discover; and [more than that], though a wise man thinks *and* claims he knows, he will not be able to find it out. [Deut 29:29; Rom 11:33]

9 FOR I have taken all this to heart, exploring *and* examining it all, how the righteous (those in right standing with God) and the wise and their deeds are in the hands of God. No man knows whether it will be love or hatred; anything awaits him.

²It is the same for all. There is one fate for the righteous and for the wicked; for the good, for the clean and for the unclean; for the man who offers sacrifices and for the one who does not sacrifice. As the good man is, so is the sinner; as he who swears *an oath* is, so is he who is afraid to swear *an oath*.

³This evil is in all that is done under the sun, that one fate comes to all. Also, the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and afterwards they go to the dead.

⁴[There is no exemption,] but whoever is joined with all the living, has hope; surely a live dog is better than a dead lion.

⁵For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they no longer have a reward [here], for the memory of them is forgotten.

⁶Indeed their love, their hatred and their zeal have already perished, and they will no longer have a share [in this age] in anything that is done under the sun.

⁷Go *your way*, eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a cheerful heart [if you are righteous, wise, and in the

hands of God]; for God has already approved *and* accepted your works.

POWERPOINT

King Solomon encourages us in Ecclesiastes 9:10 to do whatever we do with all our might. In other words, we are to give all our mental focus and physical energy to it. Let me encourage you to be determined to give yourself and your mind completely to what you are doing at the present time. No matter where your body is, you are where your mind is. For example, if a person is sitting in church, but her mind is on the grocery list, she won't hear or remember much about the church service. Doing everything "with all your might" results in being able to focus on each moment of the present and to better enjoy your life.



⁸Let your clothes always be white [with purity], and do not let the oil [of gladness] be lacking on your head.

⁹Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given you under the sun—all the days of vanity *and* futility. For this is your reward in life and in your work in which you have labored under the sun.

¹⁰Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol (the nether world, the place of the dead) where you are going.

¹¹I again saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift and the battle is not to the strong, and neither is bread to the wise nor riches to those of intelligence *and* understanding nor favor to men of ability; but time and chance overtake them all. [Ps 33:16–19; Rom 9:16]

¹²For man also does not know his time [of death]; like fish caught in a treacherous net, and birds caught in the snare, so the sons of men are ensnared in an evil time when a dark cloud suddenly falls on them.

¹³This [illustration of] wisdom I have also seen under the sun, and great it was to me:

¹⁴There was a little city with few men in it and a great king came against it and besieged it and built great battlements against it.

¹⁵But there was found in it a poor wise man, and by his wisdom he rescued the city. Yet no man [seriously] remembered that poor man.

¹⁶But I say that wisdom is better than strength, though the poor man's wisdom is despised and his words are not heeded.

¹⁷The words of wise men heard in quietness are *better* than the shouting of one who rules among fools.

¹⁸Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.

10 DEAD FLIES make the oil of the perfumer give off a foul odor; so a little foolishness [in one who is esteemed] outweighs wisdom and honor.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Help me, Lord, to stay composed and calm, no matter who loses their temper around me. According to Your Word, I believe that calmness and composure prevent great offenses.

• adapted from Ecclesiastes 10:4

²A wise man's heart *turns him* toward the right [which is the way of blessing], but a fool's heart *turns him* toward the left [which is the way of condemnation]. [Matt 25:31–41]

³Even when a fool walks along the road, his [common] sense *and* good judgment fail him and he demonstrates to everyone that he is a fool.

⁴If the temper of the ruler rises against you, do not leave your post [showing resistance], because composure *and* calmness prevent great offenses.

⁵There is an evil I have seen under the sun, like an error which proceeds from the ruler—

⁶folly is set in many exalted places *and* in great dignity while the rich sit in humble places.

⁷I have seen slaves *riding* on horses and princes walking like slaves on the ground.

⁸He who digs a pit [for others] may fall into it, and a serpent may bite him who breaks through a [stone] wall. [Ps 57:6]

⁹He who quarries stones may be hurt with them, and he who splits logs may be endangered by them. [Prov 26:27]

¹⁰If the axe is dull and he does not sharpen its edge, then he must exert more strength; but wisdom [to sharpen the axe] helps him succeed [with less effort].

¹¹If the serpent bites before being charmed, then there is no profit for the charmer.

¹²The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious *and* win him favor, but the lips of a fool consume him;

¹³the beginning of his talking is foolishness and the end of his talk is wicked madness.

¹⁴Yet the fool multiplies words, though no man knows what will happen, and who can tell him what will come after he is gone?

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Timing Is Everything

Timing truly is everything. In 1984, I began Joyce Meyer Ministries. I labored faithfully and did what I believed God wanted me to do. I had a sense that God had bigger things for me, but for nine years, nothing “bigger” happened.

In 1993, the opportunity came to take Joyce Meyer Ministries into television. That was exciting—and frightening. Had I given in to old ways of negative thinking, I would never have moved forward. As Dave and I prayed, God let me know clearly that He was the One who was opening the door. We sensed that if we didn’t take the opportunity at that time, it would not pass our way again. That same day Dave and I said yes to the Lord and began making plans toward the goal of teaching God’s Word on television.

Even though we were obedient, we still faced obstacles. For several days, all kinds of voices hit my mind as if to taunt me and say, *You’re going to fall flat on your face*. God enabled me to not listen to them—as powerful as they were. I believed we had heard from God, and I was going to do what He told me to

do, regardless of the results.

I share this story for two reasons. First, Solomon says, “He who watches the wind [waiting for all conditions to be perfect] will not sow [seed], and he who looks at the clouds will not reap [a harvest]” (Eccl. 11:4). If we wait for perfect conditions, we’ll always find reasons not to obey God. In fact, sometimes when we say yes to God, the enemy tries to attack with logic, to make us change our minds, to arouse doubt and confusion, to make us wonder, *Did God really call me?*

The second reason involves timing. When God says “Now!” that’s exactly what He means. God told the people of Israel to go into the Promised Land, but they refused (see Num. 14:39–43). The next morning, they decided to go into the land even though God said it was too late. It was no longer the right time. Despite a clear warning, they went anyway and were struck down in battle.

God does show us what He wants us to do, and He does not say, “Do it when you’re ready.” Part of listening to the guidance of the Holy Spirit is acting when God wants us to act. The timing is everything, because His timing is perfect.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God, it’s so easy to miss Your will by not saying yes at the right time. Through Jesus Christ, I ask You to help me so that I’ll be quick to hear Your voice and just as quick to obey. Amen.

¹⁵The labor of a fool so wearies him [because he is ignorant] that he does not even know how to go to a city.

¹⁶Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child and when your [incompetent] officials *and* princes feast in the morning.

¹⁷Blessed [prosperous and admired] are you, O land, when your king is a man of noble birth, and your princes *and* officials feast at the proper time—for strength and not for drunkenness. [Is 32:8]

¹⁸Through laziness the rafters [of state affairs] decay *and* the roof sags, and through idleness [the roof of] the house leaks.

¹⁹*The officials* make a feast for enjoyment [instead of repairing what is broken], and serve wine to make life merry, and money is the answer to everything.

²⁰Moreover, do not curse the king, even in your bedroom, and in your sleeping rooms do not curse the rich, for a bird of the air will carry the sound and a winged creature will make the matter known. [Ex 22:28]

11 CAST YOUR bread on the surface of the waters, [be diligently active, make thoughtful decisions], for you will find it after many days.

²Give a portion to seven, or even [divide it] to eight, for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth.

³If the clouds are full [of rain], they empty themselves on the earth; and if a tree falls toward the south or toward the

north, in the place where the tree falls, there it lies.

⁴He who watches the wind [waiting for all conditions to be perfect] will not sow [seed], and he who looks at the clouds will not reap [a harvest].

⁵Just as you do not know the way *and* path of the wind or how the bones *are formed* in the womb of a pregnant woman, even so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things.

⁶Sow your seed in the morning and do not be idle with your hands in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening planting will succeed, whether this or that, or whether both alike will be good.

⁷The light is sweet *and* pleasant, and it is good for the eyes to see the sun.

⁸Yes, if a man should live many years, let him rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they will be many. All that is to come will be futility.

⁹Rejoice, young man, in your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant in the days of your young manhood. And walk in the ways of your heart and in the desires of your eyes, but know that God will bring you into judgment for all these things.

¹⁰Therefore, remove sorrow and anger from your heart and put away pain from your body, for childhood and the prime of life are fleeting. [2 Cor 7:1; 2 Tim 2:22]

12 REMEMBER [thoughtfully] also your Creator in the days of your youth [for you are not your own, but His], before the evil days come or the years draw near when you will say [of

physical pleasures], “I have no enjoyment *and* delight in them”; [2 Sam 19:35]

²before the sun and the light, and the moon and the stars are darkened [by impaired vision], and the clouds [of depression] return after the rain [of tears];

³in the day when the keepers of the house (hands, arms) tremble, and the strong men (feet, knees) bow themselves, and the grinders (molar teeth) cease because they are few, and those (eyes) who look through the windows grow dim;

⁴when the doors (lips) are shut in the streets and the sound of the grinding [of the teeth] is low, and one rises at the sound of a bird *and* the crowing of a rooster, and all the daughters of music (voice, ears) sing softly.

⁵Furthermore, they are afraid of a high place and of dangers on the road; the almond tree (hair) blossoms [white], and the grasshopper (a little thing) is a burden, and the caperberry (desire, appetite) fails. For man goes to his eternal home and the mourners go about the streets *and* market places. [Job 17:13]

⁶*Earnestly remember your Creator* before the silver cord [of life] is broken, or the golden bowl is crushed, or the pitcher at the fountain is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed;

⁷then the dust [out of which God made man's body] will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

⁸“Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher. “All [that is done without God's guidance] is vanity (futility).” [Eccl 1:2; Rom 8:20]

⁹Furthermore, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; and he pondered and searched out and arranged many proverbs.

¹⁰The Preacher sought to find delightful words, even to write correctly words of truth.

¹¹The words of the wise are like [prodding] goads, and *these* collected sayings are [firmly fixed in the mind] like well-driven nails; they are given by one Shepherd. [Ezek 37:24]

¹²But beyond this my son, [about going further than the words given by one Shepherd], be warned: the writing of many books is endless [so do not believe everything you read], and excessive study *and* devotion *to books* is wearying to the body.

¹³When all has been heard, the end of the matter is: fear God [worship Him with awe-filled reverence, knowing that He is almighty God] and keep His commandments, for this applies to every person.

POWERPOINT

Solomon spent his lifetime trying everything the world had to offer, and his final conclusion was that the only thing that mattered and that made any sense at all was God. What he learned from all his searching and experimenting was that the best way to find lasting enjoyment is to fear God and obey Him. I encourage you to learn from Solomon and make reverently fearing the Lord and obeying Him as your highest purpose and goal in life.



¹⁴For God will bring every act to judgment, every hidden *and* secret thing, whether it is good or evil. [Matt 12:36; Acts 17:30, 31; Rom 2:16; 1 Cor 4:5]

Song of Solomon

Author: |
Attributed to Solomon
Date: | Probably
between 970 BC—930
BC

There are several different interpretations of Song of Solomon, ranging from one that says the book is entirely about the physical relationship between a man and woman to one that says the book is pure allegory, describing God's feelings toward Israel. For our purposes in this Bible, let me simply say that any relationship, whether it's an intimate relationship with a spouse or a relationship with the Lord, needs to include healthy thoughts and positive words toward your friends, husband or wife, other family members, coworkers, and God.

The lovers in Song of Solomon think often of each other, always in affirming ways, and they communicate their thoughts through words of appreciation and praise. Today, we may not connect with the language they use or their

descriptions of the love they feel for each other, but the point is that they think and say beautiful and meaningful things about each other and the love they share.

In all your relationships, think and speak the best of the other persons, and use your thoughts and words to let them know how much they mean to you.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM SONG OF SOLOMON:

As God draws you, run after Him with all your heart (see Song of Solomon 1:4).

It's not usually the big things in life that cause us to veer off course and perhaps end up in trouble; it's a series of smaller, seemingly minor decisions or insignificant actions and little things (see Song of Solomon 2:15).

When we truly love someone, we can overlook their flaws and focus on the best in them (see Song of Solomon 4:7).

When you are a Christian, you belong to God and God belongs to you (see Song of Solomon 6:3).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM SONG OF SOLOMON:

My beloved speaks and says to me, “Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. For behold, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth once again; the time for singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.” | Song of Solomon 2:10–12

Put me like a seal on your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, jealousy is as severe and cruel as Sheol (the place of the dead). | Song of Solomon 8:6

THE SONG OF SOLOMON

1 THE SONG of Songs [the best of songs], which is Solomon's. [1 Kin 4:32]

(The Shulammitte Bride)

2“May he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!” [Solomon arrives, she turns to him, saying,]

“For your love is better than wine.

3“*The aroma of your oils is fragrant and pleasing; Your name is perfume poured out;*

Therefore the maidens love you.

4“*Draw me away with you and let us run together!*

Let the king bring me into his chambers.”

(The Chorus)

“We will rejoice and be glad in you; We will remember *and* extol your love more [sweet and fragrant] than wine.

Rightly do they love you.”

(The Shulammitte Bride)

5“*I am deeply tanned but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, [I am dark] like the tents of [the Bedouins of] Kedar, Like the*

[beautiful] curtains of Solomon.

6“Do not gaze at me because I am deeply tanned, [I have worked in] the sun; it has left its mark on me.

My mother’s sons were angry with me;

They made me keeper of the vineyards,

But my own vineyard (my complexion) I have not kept.”

7“Tell me, O you whom my soul loves, Where do you pasture
your flock,

Where do you make it lie down at noon?

For why should I be like one who is veiled

Beside the flocks of your companions?” [Ps 23:1, 2]

(The Bridegroom)

8“If you do not know [where your lover is], O you fairest
among women,

Run along, follow the tracks of the flock,

And pasture your young goats

By the tents of the shepherds.

9“To me, my love, you are like My [favorite] mare among the
chariots of Pharaoh.

10“Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, Your neck with
strings of jewels.”

(The Chorus)

11“We will make for you chains *and* ornaments of gold,
[Studded] with beads of silver.”

(The Shulammite Bride)

12“While the king was at his table, My perfume (Solomon)

sent forth [his] fragrance [surrounding me].

13“My beloved is to me like a pouch of myrrh Which lies all night between my breasts.

14“My beloved is to me a cluster of henna flowers In the [fragrant] vineyards of Engedi.”

(The Bridegroom)

15“Behold, how beautiful you are, my darling, Behold, how beautiful you are!

Your eyes are dove’s eyes.”

(The Shulammite Bride)

16“Behold, how fair *and* handsome you are, my beloved; *And* so delightful!

Our arbor is green *and* luxuriant.

17“*The* beams of our houses are cedars, Our rafters *and* panels are cypresses.

2 “I AM the rose [of the plain] of Sharon, The lily of the valleys [that grows in deep places].”

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Spring Follows Winter Positive thinking is much easier when life is going smoothly, but we can and should learn to also think positively when we go through difficult times. Knowing we can have joy in adversity is a powerful principle that helps us to live above the clouds. The sun is always shining somewhere above the storm clouds of life, and if we can see it by faith, we won't cave

in to discouragement and depressed thinking.

It is more difficult to think and speak positively during the “winters” of our lives. Winter is merely a time when things are not going well—perhaps a financial difficulty, relationship problems, illness, or some other difficulty. No one goes through life without experiencing a winter season from time to time. The good news is that difficult times don’t last forever (see Ps. 30:5). When we find ourselves in the middle of a challenging season, we can start hoping and expecting things to change because spring always follows winter.

Song of Solomon 2:11–12 encourages us to look for springtime during winter, saying, “For behold, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth once again; the time for singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.”

Have you ever noticed that being upset or downtrodden about problems never changes them? A bad attitude is like a flat tire. If you don’t change it, you won’t go anywhere. Being worried and upset is like sitting in a rocking chair all day and rocking back and forth. It keeps you busy and eventually wears you out, but it gets you nowhere.

It is very important that we each learn how to have the victory in the midst of our problems. God’s Word teaches us that we are more than conquerors in the midst of our trials and tribulations (see Rom. 8:37). When I am in the midst of difficulty, I often turn to Romans 8:35–39, and I remind myself

that no matter how difficult life is, God loves me. We can always be assured of victory. We may go through very difficult times, but God is always with us, and following the principles He has given us in His Word will bring us through to happier days every time.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord God, You have made the seasons of my life just as surely as You have made the seasons of the earth. Help me to remember that spring follows winter, and that the challenges I am facing today will pass. Thank You that victory is always on the way. In Jesus' name. Amen.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Little Things Can Become Big Things

Little disappointments can create frustration, which in turn may lead to bigger problems that can produce a great deal of damage.

Besides the huge disappointment that occurs when we fail to get the job or promotion or house we wanted, we can become just as upset and frustrated by a minor annoyance. For example, suppose someone is scheduled to meet you for lunch and fails to show up, or suppose you dash to the mall to buy a certain sale item, but it is all sold out.

These kinds of frustration are actually minor, but they can add up to cause a lot of frustration and anxiety, which is why we need to learn how to handle them and keep them in perspective. Otherwise, they can get out of hand and be blown out of proportion.

We are to be on our guard against the little foxes that destroy the vineyard, because all together they can do just as much damage as the serious disappointments we face in life (see Song 2:15).

We must learn to do as Paul did in the book of Acts when the serpent attached itself to his hand—he simply shook it off (see Acts 28:1–5)! If we practice dealing quickly with disappointments as they come, they will not pile up to become a mountain of devastation.

Victory is not the absence of problems; it is the presence of God's power enabling us to choose a good and right response.

(The Bridegroom)

2“Like the lily among the thorns, So are you, my darling,
among the maidens.”

(The Shulammite Bride)

3“Like an apple tree [rare and welcome] among the trees of
the forest, So is my beloved among the young men!
In his shade I took great delight and sat down,
And his fruit was sweet *and* delicious to my palate.

4“He has brought me to his banqueting place, And his
banner over me is love [waving overhead to protect and
comfort me].

5“Sustain me with raisin cakes,
Refresh me with apples,
Because I am sick with love.

6“Let his left hand be under my head And his right hand
embrace me.” [Deut 33:27; Matt 28:20]

(The Bridegroom)

7“I command that you take an oath, O daughters of
Jerusalem, By the gazelles or by the does of the field
[which run free], That you do not rouse nor awaken my
love
Until she pleases.”

(The Shulammite Bride)

- 8“Listen! My beloved!
Behold, he comes,
Climbing on the mountains,
Leaping *and* running on the hills! [John 10:27]
- 9“My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag.
Behold, he is standing behind our wall,
He is looking through the windows,
He is gazing through the lattice.
- 10“My beloved speaks and says to me, ‘Arise, my love, my fair one,
And come away.
- 11‘For behold, the winter is past,
The rain is over and gone.
- 12‘The flowers appear on the earth once again; The time for singing has come,
And the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.
- 13‘The fig tree has budded *and* ripens her figs, And the vines are in blossom and give forth their fragrance.
Arise, my love, my fair one,
And come away [to climb the rocky steps of the hillside].”

(The Bridegroom)

- 14“O my dove, [here] in the clefts in the rock, In the sheltered *and* secret place of the steep pathway, Let me see your face,
Let me hear your voice;
For your voice is sweet,
And your face is lovely.”

(The Chorus)

- 15“Catch the foxes for us, The little foxes that spoil *and* ruin the vineyards [of love], While our vineyards are in blossom.”

(The Shulammite Bride)

- 16“My beloved is mine and I am his; He pastures *his flock* among the lilies. [Matt 10:32; Acts 4:12]
- 17“Until the cool of the day when the shadows flee away, Return quickly, my beloved, and be like a gazelle Or a young stag on the mountains of Bether [which separate us].”

(The Shulammite Bride)

- 3 “ON MY bed night after night [I dreamed that] I sought the one Whom my soul loves;
I sought him but did not find him. [Is 26:9]
- 2“*I said* ‘So I must arise now and go out into the city; Into the streets and into the squares [places I do not know] I must seek him whom my soul loves.’
I sought him but I did not find him.
- 3“The watchmen who go around the city found me, *And I said*, ‘Have you seen him whom my soul loves?’
- 4“Scarcely had I passed them
When I found him whom my soul loves.
I held on to him and would not let him go
Until I had brought him to my mother’s house,

And into the chamber of her who conceived me.” [Rom 8:35;
1 Pet 2:25]

(The Bridegroom)

5“ I command that you take an oath, O daughters of
Jerusalem, By the gazelles or by the does of the field,
That you do not rouse nor awaken my love
Until she pleases.”

(The Shulammitte Bride)

6“ What is this coming up from the wilderness Like [stately]
pillars of smoke
Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,
With all the fragrant powders of the merchant?”

(The Chorus)

7“ Behold, it is the couch (palanquin) of Solomon; Sixty
mighty men around it,
Of the mighty men of Israel.

8“ All of them handle the sword,
All expert in war;
Each man has his sword at his thigh,
Guarding against the terrors of the night.

9“ King Solomon has made for himself a palanquin From the
[cedar] wood of Lebanon.

10“ He made its posts of silver,
Its back of gold,
Its seat of purple cloth,
The interior lovingly *and* intricately wrought By the
daughters of Jerusalem.

11“Go forth, O daughters of Zion, And gaze on King Solomon
wearing the crown
With which his mother [Bathsheba] has crowned him On the
day of his wedding,
On the day of his gladness of heart.”

(The Bridegroom)

4 “HOW FAIR *and* beautiful you are, my darling, How very
beautiful!

Your eyes behind your veil are like those of a dove; Your
hair is like [the shimmering black fleece of] a flock of
[Arabian] goats That have descended from Mount Gilead
[beyond the Jordan].

2“Your teeth are like a flock of *newly* shorn ewes Which have
come up from washing,
All of which bear twins,
And not one among them has lost her young.

3“Your lips are like a ribbon of scarlet, And your mouth is
lovely.
Your temples are like a slice of the pomegranate Behind your
veil.

4“Your neck is like the tower of David, Built with rows of
[glistening] stones,
Whereon hang a thousand shields,
All of them shields of warriors.

5“Your two breasts are like two fawns, Twins of a gazelle
Which feed among the lilies.

6“Until the day breaks
And the shadows flee away,
[In my thoughts] I will go my way to the mountain of myrrh
And to the hill of frankincense.

7“O my love, you are altogether beautiful *and* fair.
There is no flaw *nor* blemish in you! [John 14:18; Eph 5:27]

8“*Come away* with me from Lebanon, my [promised] bride,
May you come with me from Lebanon.
Journey down from the top of Amana,
From the summit of Senir and Hermon,
From the dens of lions,
From the mountains of leopards. [2 Cor 11:2, 3]

9“You have ravished my heart *and* given me courage, my
sister, my [promised] bride;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Sees No Flaw in You

The man in Song of Solomon 4:7 is so in love with his bride that he sees “no flaw” in her. We know that no one is perfect, but love does enable us to overlook people’s faults.

Song of Solomon is an allegory of the love story between God and His people. The love the man has for his bride reflects the kind of love God has for us. God loves you and sees the good in you. He sees what you are becoming and what you will be. He is not overly concerned about your faults; He knew them all when He invited you to be in an intimate relationship with Him. All He wants is your love and your willingness to grow in Him.

Your presence is a present to the world. You are unique and one of a kind. Do not ever forget, even for a day, how very special you are and how much God loves you.

You have ravished my heart *and* given me courage with a single glance of your eyes, With one jewel of your necklace.

¹⁰“How beautiful is your love, my sister, my [promised] bride!
How much better is your love than wine,
And the fragrance of your oils
Than all *kinds* of balsam *and* spices. [John 15:9; Rom 8:35]

¹¹“Your lips, my [promised] bride, drip honey [as the honeycomb]; Honey and milk are under your tongue,

And the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon.

12“ A garden enclosed is my sister, my [promised] bride— A rock garden locked, a spring sealed up.

13“Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates, [A paradise] with precious fruits, henna with fragrant plants, [John 15:5; Eph 5:9]

14Fragrant plants and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, With all trees of frankincense,

Myrrh and aloes, along with all the finest spices.

15“*You are* a fountain in a garden, A well of fresh *and* living water,

And streams *flowing* from Lebanon.” [John 4:10; 7:37, 38]

(The Shulammite Bride)

16“Awake, O north *wind*,

And come, south *wind* [blow softly upon my garden]; Make my garden breathe out *fragrance*, [for the one in whom my soul delights], Let its spices flow forth.

Let my beloved come into his garden

And eat its choicest fruits.”

(The Bridegroom)

5 “I HAVE come into my garden, my sister, my [promised] bride; I have gathered my myrrh along with my balsam *and* spice [from your sweet words].

I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey;

I have drunk my wine with my milk.

Eat, friends;
Drink and drink deeply, O lovers.” [John 16:33]

(The Shulammite Bride)

- ²“I was asleep, but my heart was awake.
A voice [in my dream]! My beloved was knocking:
‘Open to me, my sister, my darling,
My dove, my perfect one!
For my head is drenched with the [heavy night] dew; My
hair [is covered] with the dampness of the night.’ [Job
11:13–15]
- ³“I had taken off my dress,
How can I put it on *again*?
I had washed my feet,
How could I get them dirty *again*? [Is 32:9; Heb 3:15]
- ⁴“My beloved extended his hand through the opening [of
the door], And my feelings were aroused for him.
- ⁵“I arose to open for my beloved;
And my hands dripped with myrrh,
And my fingers with liquid [sweet-scented] myrrh, On the
handles of the bolt.
- ⁶“I opened for my beloved,
But my beloved had turned away and was gone.
My heart went out *to him* when he spoke.
I searched for him, but I could not find him;
I called him, but he did not answer me.
- ⁷“The watchmen who make the rounds in the city found me.
They struck me, they wounded me;

The guardsmen of the walls took my shawl from me.
8“I command that you take an oath, O daughters of
Jerusalem, If you find my beloved,
As to what you tell him—
[Say that] I am sick from love [sick from being without
him].” [Ps 63:1]

(The Chorus)

9“What is your beloved more than another beloved, O most
beautiful among women?
What is your beloved more than another beloved,
That you should so command us to take an oath?” [John
10:26]

(The Shulammite Bride)

- 10“My beloved is exquisitely handsome and ruddy,
Outstanding among ten thousand. [Ps 45:2; John 1:14]
- 11“His head is *like* [precious] gold, pure gold; His hair is
[curly] *like* clusters of dates And black as a raven.
- 12“His eyes are like doves
Beside streams of water,
Bathed in milk
And reposed in their setting.
- 13“His cheeks are like a bed of balsam, Banks of sweet,
fragrant herbs.
His lips are lilies
Dripping *sweet-scented* myrrh.
- 14“His hands are rods of gold
Set with beryl;

His abdomen is a figure of carved ivory
Inlaid with sapphires.

¹⁵“His legs are [strong and steady] pillars of alabaster Set
upon pedestals of fine gold.

His appearance is like Lebanon,
Stately *and* choice as the cedars.

¹⁶“His mouth is *full of* sweetness; Yes, he is altogether lovely
and desirable.

This is my beloved and this is my friend,
O daughters of Jerusalem.” [Ps 92:15; Col 1:15]

(The Chorus)

6 “WHERE HAS your beloved gone, O most beautiful among
women?

Where is your beloved hiding himself,
That we may seek him with you?”

(The Shulammitte Bride)

²“My beloved has gone down to his garden, To the beds of
balsam,

To feed *his flock* in the gardens
And gather lilies.

**A Prayer To
Renew Your
Mind**



*I know, Lord, that I am Your
beloved. Thank You that I am
Yours and You are mine.*

*• adapted from Song of Solomon
6:3*

3“*I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine, He who feeds
his flock among the lilies.*”

(The Bridegroom)

4“*You are as beautiful as Tirzah, my darling, As lovely as
Jerusalem,*

As majestic as an army with banners!

5“*Turn your [flashing] eyes away from me, For they have
confused and overcome me; Your hair is like [the
shimmering black fleece of] a flock of [Arabian] goats That
have descended from Mount Gilead.*

6“*Your teeth are like a flock of ewes Which have come up
from their washing,*

All of which bear twins,

And not one among them has lost her young.

7“*Your temples are like a slice of the pomegranate Behind
your veil.*

8“*There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, And*

maidens without number;

⁹But my dove, my perfect one, stands alone [above them all];

She is her mother's only *daughter*;

She is the pure *child* of the one who bore her.

The maidens saw her and called her blessed *and* happy, The
queens and the concubines also, and they praised her,
saying, [Col 2:8, 9]

¹⁰“Who is this that looks down like the dawn, Fair *and*
beautiful as the full moon,

Clear *and* pure as the sun,

As majestic as an army with banners?”

¹¹“I went down to the orchard of nut trees To see the flowers
of the valley,

To see whether the grapevine had budded

And the pomegranates were in flower.

¹²“Before I was aware [of what was happening], my desire had
brought me Into the area of the princes of my people [the
king's retinue].”

(The Chorus)

¹³“Return, return, O Shulammite; Return, return, that we may
gaze at you.”

(The Bridegroom)

“Why should you gaze at the Shulammite, As at the dance
of the two armies?

1 “HOW BEAUTIFUL are your feet in sandals, O prince's

daughter!

The curves of your hips are like jewels,
The work of the hands of an artist.

2“Your navel is a round goblet
Which never lacks mixed wine.
Your belly is like a heap of wheat
Surrounded with lilies.

3“Your two breasts are like two fawns, The twins of a gazelle.

4“Your neck is like a tower of ivory, Your eyes the [sparkling]
pools of Heshbon
By the gate of Bath-rabbim.
Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon
Which looks toward Damascus.

5“Your head crowns you like Mount Carmel, And the flowing
hair of your head like purple threads; I, the king, am held
captive by your tresses.

6“How beautiful and how delightful you are, My love, with
all your delights!

7“Your stature is like that of a palm tree And your breasts
like its clusters [of dates].

8“I said, ‘I will climb the palm tree; I will grasp its branches.
Let your breasts be like clusters of the grapevine, And the
fragrance of your breath like apples,

9‘And your kisses like the best wine!’”

(The Shulammite Bride)

“It goes *down* smoothly *and* sweetly for my beloved,
Gliding gently over his lips while he sleeps.

POWERPOINT

In Song of Solomon 7:13 and throughout the Song of Solomon, the couple shares a oneness—spiritual, emotional, and physical—that can be found in no other relationship. Marriage is such an intimate joining together of two separate entities that they become one. The sexual relationship is to be holy, fun, and wholesome. Being single-hearted toward a person's spouse brings great fulfillment for both partners.



- 10“I am my beloved's, And his desire is for me. [John 10:28]
- 11“Come, my beloved, let us go out into the country, Let us spend the night in the villages. [Luke 14:33]
- 12“Let us go out early to the vineyards; Let us see whether the vine has budded

*And its blossoms have opened,
And whether the pomegranates have flowered.
There I will give you my love.*

¹³“The mandrakes give forth fragrance, And over our doors
are all [kinds of] choice *fruits*,
Both new and old,
Which I have saved up for you, my beloved.

8 “OH, THAT you were like a brother to me, Who nursed at
the breasts of my mother.

If I found you out of doors, I would kiss you;
No one would blame me *or* despise me, either. [Ps 143:6]

²“I would lead you and bring you
Into the house of my mother, who used to instruct me; I
would give you spiced wine to drink from the juice of my
pomegranates.

³“Let his left hand be under my head And his right hand
embrace me.” [Ex 19:4; Deut 33:27]

(The Bridegroom)

⁴“I command you to take an oath, O daughters of Jerusalem,
That you do not rouse nor awaken my love
Until she pleases.”

(The Chorus)

⁵“Who is this coming up from the wilderness Leaning upon
her beloved?”

(The Shulammitte Bride)

“Under the apple tree I awakened you [to my love]; There
your mother was in labor with you,
There she was in labor and gave you birth.

6“Put me like a seal on your heart,
Like a seal on your arm;
For love is as strong as death,
Jealousy is as severe *and* cruel as Sheol (the place of the
dead).
Its flashes are flashes of fire,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

A Key to Happiness

Song of Solomon 8:6 says “jealousy is as severe and cruel as Sheol (the place of the dead).” It is a very powerful negative emotion. Envy and jealousy make us want what other people have and cause us to strive after things that God will give us in His timing, if it is His will for us have them. A jealous and envious heart in no way blesses God. When we are jealous of others, that negativity poisons our attitude toward them, affects our relationship with them, puts negative thoughts in our minds, and can make us miserable.

We need to be happy with what God has given us and trust Him that if we are supposed to enjoy more, He will give it to us when He knows we are able to handle it. Contentment honors God and proves that we trust Him.

At times you may feel that the devil is somehow preventing you from being blessed. Look at it this way. If you are doing what God wants you to do, and your heart is right before Him, no person on earth or devil in hell can keep you from having what God wants you to have. Keep trusting God and in due season you will reap a harvest (see Gal. 6:9).

Sometimes, blaming everything on the devil is just an excuse to not grow up and develop godly character. If we think the enemy is keeping things from us instead of recognizing that God may be withholding things from us for a season and for a

reason, we will not be in the right frame of mind to allow God to do the work He wants to do on the inside of us. Instead of focusing on the works of the enemy, we need to keep our eyes focused on God and let Him take the lead in our lives.

God has a tailor-made, personalized plan for each of us. The key to happiness and fulfillment is trusting God to perform His good plan in our lives until we see results, to be content with who we are, what we have, and what God is doing at the present time.

Speak God's Word

*Nothing can stop God's love
for me. Many waters cannot
quench it, nor can many
rivers drown it. His love for
me never fails!*

| *adapted from* SONG OF
SOLOMON 8:7 |

[A most vehement flame] the very flame of the LORD! [Deut 4:24; Is 49:16; 1 Cor 10:22]

⁷“Many waters cannot quench love,
Nor can rivers drown it.
If a man would offer all the riches of his house for love, It
would be utterly scorned *and* despised.”

(The Chorus)

⁸“We have a little sister And she has no breasts.
What shall we do for our sister
On the day when she is spoken for [in marriage]?

⁹“If she is a wall (discreet, womanly), We will build on her a
turret (dowry) of silver; But if she is a door (bold,
flirtatious),
We will enclose her with planks of cedar.”

(The Shulammite Bride)

- 10“I was a wall, and my breasts were like the towers.
Then I became in the king’s eyes
As one [to be respected and allowed] to find peace.
- 11“Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; He entrusted the
vineyard to caretakers;
Each one was to bring him a thousand *shekels* of silver for
its fruit.
- 12“My very own vineyard is at my disposal; The thousand
[shekels of silver] are for you, O Solomon, And two
hundred are for those who tend the fruit.”

(The Bridegroom)

- 13“O you who sit in the gardens, My companions are listening
for your voice— Let me hear it.”

(The Shulammite Bride)

- 14“Hurry, my beloved *and* come quickly, Like a gazelle or a
young stag [taking me home]
On the mountains of spices.”

Isaiah

Author: | Isaiah

Date: |

Approximately 700

BC–690 BC

The book of Isaiah is full of verses that will help you renew your mind according to God's Word. If you need to know that God loves and cares for you and that He will forgive, redeem, heal, and restore you, you will find those promises in Isaiah. If you need to remember how much hope, peace, comfort, justice, and freedom from fear God offers you, it's in Isaiah. If you want to read prophetic scriptures about Jesus, Isaiah has written them. If you need confidence that God is guiding you, it's also in Isaiah.

The best way to a victorious life is to fill your mind with the Word of God. I encourage you to study and meditate on the many scriptures in Isaiah that show you how God thinks and feels about you.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM ISAIAH:

God is always willing to completely forgive sin and wash us clean. If we are willing and obedient to Him, good things will come to us (see Isaiah 1:18–19).

Always remember that Jesus is your Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace (see Isaiah 9:6).

God is longing to be gracious and compassionate to you (see Isaiah 30:18).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM ISAIAH:

You will keep in perfect and constant peace the one whose mind is steadfast [that is, committed and focused on You—in both inclination and character], because he trusts and takes refuge in You [with hope and confident expectation]. | Isaiah 26:3

But those who wait for the LORD [who expect, look for, and hope in Him] will gain new strength and renew their power; they will lift up their wings [and rise up close to God] like eagles [rising toward the sun]; they will run and not become weary, they will walk and not grow tired. | Isaiah 40:31

Do not fear [anything], for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, be assured I will help you; I will certainly take hold of you with My righteous right hand [a hand of justice, of power, of victory, of salvation]. | Isaiah 41:10

THE BOOK OF
ISAIAH

1 THE VISION of [the prophet] Isaiah the son of Amoz concerning [the kingdom of] Judah and [its capital] Jerusalem, which he saw [as revealed by God] during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

²Hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth;
For the LORD has spoken:
“I have reared and brought up sons,
But they have rebelled against Me *and* have broken away.

³“The ox [instinctively] knows its owner,
And the donkey its master’s feeding trough,
But Israel does not know [Me as LORD],
My people do not understand.”

⁴Ah, sinful nation,
A people loaded down with wickedness [with sin, with
injustice, with wrongdoing],
Offspring of evildoers,
Sons who behave corruptly!
They have abandoned (rejected) the LORD,
They have despised the Holy One of Israel [provoking Him

to anger],
They have turned away from Him.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Obedience from the Heart

It is possible to be obedient in behavior and not be obedient with the heart, which is what Isaiah 1:11 is talking about. Obedience is not just a matter of putting on a show or trying to do the right things, but a matter of having the right attitude of heart.

I want to encourage you to come up higher in your obedience to God, and to make sure your heart is right. Check your motives and do what you do to glorify God and because you love Him. Be quick to obey with all meekness. Don't be the type of person God has to deal with for weeks and weeks to get you to do even the simplest little thing. Just do it. Ask God for an open heart to hear and understand His Word and then obey Him wholeheartedly!

We should be obedient to God whether we feel like it or not, and we're better off when we do it with a good and steadfast attitude. Our lifestyle of obedience to God will ultimately always be rewarded. Higher levels of obedience always produce higher levels of blessing. God is the Rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (see Heb. 11:6). We cannot out give God; it is impossible.

No matter how he persists, the enemy will not succeed when he encounters the obedient heart of a believer in God's Word.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

No Need To Feel Guilty

One of the tactics of the enemy is to try to make us feel guilty about something when we really should not feel guilty about it at all. This is called “false guilt.” One thing that stirs up false guilt is thinking too much about the past. That kind of thinking can eventually become a stronghold in our mind—an area where the enemy digs in and establishes himself. Tearing down a stronghold is much more difficult than forming the habit of saying no to wrong thoughts each time they present themselves.

We need to stop thinking about our past failures if we want to defeat guilt and shame. We must stop focusing on sins that have been forgiven and dealt with, and begin to praise God, thanking Him for His grace. When Satan attacks you with false guilt over something in your past that God has already forgiven, Isaiah 1:18 is a great scripture to remember and speak aloud. Focus on and confess that even though your sins were once as scarlet, they are now white as snow. Because of what Jesus has done for you, you are fully forgiven and there is no longer any need to feel guilty.

⁵Why should you be stricken *and* punished again [since no change results from it]?

You [only] continue to rebel.

The whole head is sick
And the whole heart is faint *and* sick.

⁶From the sole of the foot even to the head
There is nothing healthy in the nation's body,
Only bruises, welts, and raw wounds,
Not pressed out or bandaged,
Nor softened with oil [as a remedy].

⁷Your land lies desolate [because of your disobedience],
Your cities are burned with fire,
Your fields—strangers are devouring them in your very
presence;
It is desolate, as overthrown by strangers.

⁸The Daughter of Zion (Jerusalem) is left like a [deserted]
shelter in a vineyard,
Like a watchman's hut in a cucumber field, like a besieged
city [isolated, surrounded by devastation].

⁹If the LORD of hosts
Had not left us a few survivors,
We would be like Sodom,
We would be like Gomorrah. [Gen 19:24, 25; Rom 9:29]

¹⁰Hear the word of the LORD [rulers of Jerusalem], You rulers
of [another] Sodom,
Listen to the law *and* instruction of our God,
You people of [another] Gomorrah.

¹¹“What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me [without your
repentance]?”
Says the LORD.

“I have had enough of [your] burnt offerings of rams
And the fat of well-fed cattle [without your obedience];
And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls or lambs or
goats [offered without repentance].

12“When you come to appear before Me,
Who requires this of you, this trampling of My [temple]
courts [by your sinful feet]?

13“Do not bring worthless offerings again,
[Your] incense is repulsive to Me;
[Your] New Moon and Sabbath [observances], the calling of
assemblies—

I cannot endure wickedness [your sin, your injustice, your
wrongdoing] and [the squalor of] the festive assembly.

14“I hate [the hypocrisy of] your New Moon festivals and
your appointed feasts.

They have become a burden to Me;
I am weary of bearing them.

15“So when you spread out your hands [in prayer, pleading
for My help],

I will hide My eyes from you;
Yes, even though you offer many prayers,
I will not be listening.
Your hands are full of blood!

16“Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean;
Get your evil deeds out of My sight.
Stop doing evil,

17Learn to do good.

Seek justice,
Rebuke the ruthless,
Defend the fatherless,
Plead for the [rights of the] widow [in court].

18“Come now, and let us reason together,”

Says the LORD.

“Though your sins are like scarlet,
They shall be as white as snow;
Though they are red like crimson,
They shall be like wool.

19“If you are willing and obedient,
You shall eat the best of the land;

20But if you refuse and rebel,
You shall be devoured by the sword.”
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

21How the faithful city has become a prostitute [idolatrous,
despicable],

She who was full of justice!
Right standing with God once lodged in her,
But now murderers.

22Your silver has turned to lead,
Your wine is diluted with water.

23Your rulers are rebels
And companions of thieves;
Everyone loves bribes
And chases after gifts.
They do not defend the fatherless,

Nor does the widow's cause come before them [instead they delay or turn a deaf ear].

²⁴Therefore the Lord GOD of hosts,
The Mighty One of Israel, declares:

“Ah, I will be freed of My adversaries
And avenge Myself on My enemies.

²⁵“And I will turn My hand against you,
And will [thoroughly] purge away your dross as with lye
And remove all your tin (impurity).

²⁶“Then I will restore your judges as at the first,
And your counselors as at the beginning;
Afterward you will be called the city of righteousness,
The faithful city.”

²⁷Zion will be redeemed with justice
And her repentant ones with righteousness.

²⁸But rebels and sinners will be crushed *and* destroyed
together,
And those who abandon (turn away from) the LORD will be
consumed (perish).

²⁹For you will be ashamed [of the degradation] of the oaks in
which you took [idolatrous] pleasure, And you will be
ashamed of the gardens [of passion] which you have
chosen [for pagan worship].

³⁰For you will be like an oak whose leaf withers *and* dies
And like a garden that has no water.

³¹The strong man will become tinder,

And his work a spark.
So both will burn together
And there will be none to quench them.

2 THE WORD [from God] which Isaiah son of Amoz saw [in a vision] concerning [the nation of] Judah and [its capital city] Jerusalem.

²Now it will come to pass that
In the last days
The mountain of the house of the LORD
Will be [firmly] established as the highest of the mountains,
And will be exalted above the hills;
And all the nations will stream to it.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, help me to continually
look to You. Teach me Your
ways, that I may walk in Your
paths.*

- ³ And many peoples shall come and say,
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
To the house (temple) of the God of Jacob;
That He may teach us His ways
And that we may walk in His paths.”
For the law will go out from Zion
And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
- ⁴ And He will judge between the nations,
And will mediate [disputes] for many peoples;
And they will beat their swords into plowshares and their
spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not lift up the sword against nation,
And never again will they learn war. [Mic 4:1–3]
- ⁵ O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD.
- ⁶ Most certainly [LORD] You have abandoned your people,
the house of Jacob, Because they are filled *with influences*
from the east,
And they are soothsayers [who foretell] like the Philistines;
Also they strike *bargains* with the children of foreigners
(pagans). [Deut 18:9–12]
- ⁷ Their land has also been filled with silver and gold
And there is no end to their treasures;
Their land has also been filled with horses
And there is no end to their chariots. [Deut 17:14–17]
- ⁸ Their land has also been filled with idols;

They worship the work of their hands,
That which their own fingers have made.

⁹So the *common* man has been humbled [before idols]
And the man *of importance* has been degraded,
Therefore do not forgive them [O LORD].

¹⁰Go among the rocks and hide in the dust
From the terror of the LORD and from the splendor of His
majesty.

¹¹The proud look of man will be degraded
And the arrogance of men will be humbled,
And the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.

¹²For the LORD of hosts will have a day *of reckoning*
Against all who are proud and arrogant
And against all who are lifted up,
That they may be degraded. [Zeph 2:3; Mal 4:1]

¹³And the wrath of God will be against all the cedars of
Lebanon [west of the Jordan] that are high and lifted up,
Against all the oaks of Bashan [east of the Jordan],

¹⁴Against all the high mountains,
Against all the hills that are lifted up,

¹⁵Against every high tower,
Against every fortified wall,

¹⁶Against all the ships of Tarshish
And against all the beautiful craft.

¹⁷Then the pride of man will be humbled
And the arrogance of men will be degraded;
The LORD alone shall be exalted in that day,

- ¹⁸And the idols will completely vanish (be abolished).
- ¹⁹They [the stricken, deprived of all in which they had trusted] will go into the caves of the rocks And into the holes of the ground [fleeing]
From the terror *and* dread of the LORD
And from the splendor of His majesty,
When He arises to terrify the earth. [Luke 23:30]
- ²⁰In that day men will throw away to the moles and to the bats
Their idols of silver and their idols of gold,
Which they made for themselves [as objects] to worship,
- ²¹To go into the caverns of the rocks and into the clefts of the [ragged] cliffs [as they flee]
From the terror *and* dread of the LORD and the splendor of His majesty, When He arises to terrify the earth.
- ²²Stop regarding man, whose breath [of life] is in his nostrils [for so little time];
For why should he be esteemed?

3 LISTEN CAREFULLY, the Lord GOD of hosts is removing
from Jerusalem and from Judah Both supply and support, the
whole supply of bread

And the whole supply of water;

- ²The brave man and the warrior [He is also removing],
The judge and the prophet,
The diviner and the elder,

- ³The captain of fifty and the man of honor,

The counselor and the expert artisan,
And the skillful enchanter.

⁴And I will make *mere* boys their princes,
And capricious (impulsive, unpredictable) children will rule
over them.

⁵And the people will be oppressed,
Each one by another, and each one by his neighbor;
The boy will be arrogant *and* insolent toward the elder
And the vulgar (common) toward the honorable [person of
rank].

⁶When a man takes hold of his brother in the house of his
father, *saying*,

“You have a robe, you shall be our judge *and* ruler,
And this pile of ruins will be under your control,”

⁷He will protest on that day, saying,

“I will not be a governor;
For in my house there is neither bread nor clothing;
You should not make me a judge *and* ruler of the people.”

⁸For Jerusalem has stumbled and Judah has fallen,
Because their words and their actions are against the LORD,
To rebel against His glorious presence *and* defiantly
provoke Him.

⁹Their partiality testifies against them,

They display their sin like Sodom;
They do not even hide it.

Woe (judgment is coming) to them!

For they have brought evil on themselves [as a reward].

¹⁰Say to the righteous that *it will go* well with them,

For they will eat the fruit of their [righteous] actions.

¹¹Woe (judgment is coming) to the wicked! *It shall go* badly
with him,

For what his hand has done shall be done to him.

¹²O My people! Children are their oppressors,
And women rule over them.

O My people! Your leaders lead you astray
And confuse (destroy, swallow up) the direction of your
paths.

¹³The LORD rises to contend,
And stands to judge the people.

¹⁴The LORD enters into judgment with the elders of His people
and their princes, “For it is you who have devoured the
vineyard [with your oppression, you have robbed the
people and ruined the country]; The plunder of the poor
is in your houses.

¹⁵“What do you mean by crushing My people
And grinding the face of the poor?”
Declares the Lord GOD of hosts.

¹⁶Moreover, the LORD said, “Because the daughters of Zion
are proud And walk with outstretched necks and
seductive (flirtatious, alluring) eyes,
And trip along with mincing steps *and* an affected gait
And walk with jingling anklets on their feet,

¹⁷Therefore the Lord will afflict the crown of the head of the
daughters of Zion with scabs [making them bald], And
the LORD will expose their foreheads (send them into

captivity).”

¹⁸In that day the Lord will take away the beauty of their anklets, [braided] caps, crescent [head] ornaments, ¹⁹dangling earrings, bracelets, and the hanging veils *and* scarves,

²⁰head wraps (turbans), [short, jingling] ankle chains, sashes, perfume boxes, amulets (charms),

²¹signet [finger] rings, nose rings,

²²festival robes, outer tunics, shawls, handbags,

²³hand mirrors, [fine linen] undergarments, headbands, and veils [covering the entire body].

²⁴Now it will come to pass that instead of the sweet fragrance of spices there will be [the stench of] rottenness; Instead of a belt, a rope;

Instead of well-set hair, baldness;

Instead of fine clothes, a robe of sackcloth;

And branding [of captives by the scorching heat] instead of beauty.

²⁵Your men will fall by the sword

And your mighty men in battle.

²⁶And Jerusalem's gates will lament (cry out in grief) and mourn [as those who wail for the dead]; And she, being ruined *and* desolate, will sit upon the ground.

4 AND IN that day seven women will take hold of one man, saying, “We will eat our own food and wear [and provide] our own clothes; only let us be called by your name; take away our shame [of being unmarried].”

²In that day the Branch of the LORD will be splendid and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be excellent and lovely to those of Israel who have survived. [Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech 3:8; 6:12]

³It will come to pass that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy (set apart for God)—everyone who is recorded for [eternal] life in Jerusalem. [Joel 3:17; Phil 4:3]

⁴When the Lord has washed away the [moral] filth of the daughters of Zion and has cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning, ⁵then the LORD will create over the entire site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies, a cloud by day, smoke, and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory *and* brilliance will be a canopy [a defense, a covering of His divine love and protection].

⁶And there will be a pavilion for shade from the heat by day, and a refuge and a shelter from the storm and the rain.

5 NOW LET me sing for my greatly Beloved [LORD]

A song of my Beloved about His vineyard (His chosen people).

My greatly Beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile slope (the promised land, Canaan). [Song 6:3; Matt 21:33–40]

²He dug it all around and cleared away its stones,
And planted it with the choicest vine (the people of Judah).
And He built a tower in the center of it;
And also hewed out a wine vat in it.

Then He expected it to produce [the choicest] grapes,
But it produced *only* worthless ones.

³“And now, *says the LORD*, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge between Me and My vineyard (My people).

⁴“What more could have been done for My vineyard that I have not done in it?
When I expected it to produce *good* grapes, why did it yield worthless ones?

⁵“So now let me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard:
I will take away its thorn-hedge, and it will be burned up;
I will break down its stone wall and it will be trampled down [by enemies].

⁶“I will turn it into a wasteland;
It will not be pruned or cultivated,
But briars and thorns will come up.
I will also command the clouds not to rain on it.”

⁷For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house (nation) of Israel And the men of Judah are His delightful planting [which He loves].
So He looked for justice, but in fact, [He saw] bloodshed *and* lawlessness;
[He looked] for righteousness, but in fact, [He heard] a cry of distress *and* oppression.

⁸Woe (judgment is coming) to those who join house to

house and join field to field [to increase their holdings by depriving others], Until there is no more room [for others],
So that you have to live alone in the midst of the land!

⁹In my ears the LORD of hosts *said*, “Be assured that many houses will become desolate, *Even* great and beautiful ones will be unoccupied.

¹⁰“For ten acres of vineyard will yield [only] one bath *of wine*,
And a homer (six bushels) of seed will produce [only] one ephah of grain.”

¹¹Woe (judgment is coming) to those who rise early in the morning to pursue intoxicating drink,
Who stay up late in the night till wine inflames them!

¹²They have lyre and harp, tambourine and flute, and wine at their feasts;
But they do not regard *nor* even pay attention to the deeds of the LORD, Nor do they consider the work of His hands.

¹³Therefore My people go into exile because they lack knowledge [of God];
And their honorable men are famished,
And their common people are parched with thirst.

¹⁴Therefore Sheol (the realm of the dead) has increased its appetite and opened its mouth beyond measure; And Jerusalem’s splendor, her multitude, her [boisterous] uproar and her [drunken] revelers descend *into it*.

¹⁵So the *common* man will be bowed down and the man of *importance* degraded,
And the eyes of the proud (arrogant) will be degraded.

- ¹⁶But the LORD of hosts will be exalted in justice,
And God, the Holy One, will show Himself holy in
righteousness [through His righteous judgments].
- ¹⁷Then the lambs will graze [among the ruins] as in their own
pasture,
And strangers will eat in the desolate places of the [exiled]
wealthy.
- ¹⁸Woe (judgment is coming) to those who drag along
wickedness with cords of falsehood, And sin as if with
cart ropes [towing their own punishment];
- ¹⁹Who say, “Let Him move speedily, let Him expedite His work
[His promised vengeance], so that we may see it; And let
the purpose of the Holy One of Israel approach
And come to pass, so that we may know it!”
- ²⁰Woe (judgment is coming) to those who call evil good, and
good evil;
Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness;
Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!
- ²¹Woe (judgment is coming) to those who are wise in their
own eyes
And clever *and* shrewd in their own sight!
- ²²Woe (judgment is coming) to those who are heroes at
drinking wine
And men of strength in mixing intoxicating drinks,
- ²³Who justify the wicked *and* acquit the guilty for a bribe,
And take away the rights of those who are in the right!

²⁴Therefore, as the tongue of fire consumes the stubble [from straw]

And the dry grass collapses into the flame,
So their root will become like rot and their blossom blow away like fine dust;
Because they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts
And despised *and* discarded the word of the Holy One of Israel.

²⁵Therefore the anger of the LORD has burned against His people,

And He has stretched out His hand against them and has struck them down.
And the mountains trembled, and their dead bodies lay like rubbish in the middle of the streets.

In *spite of* all this God's anger is not turned away,
But His hand is still stretched out [in judgment].

²⁶He will lift up a flag to [call] the distant nations [to bring His judgment on Judah], And will whistle for them from the ends of the earth;

And indeed, they will come with great speed swiftly.

²⁷No one among them is weary or stumbles,
No one slumbers or sleeps;
Nor is the belt at their waist undone [as if unprepared for action],
Nor is the strap of their sandal broken.

²⁸Their arrows are sharp and all their bows are strung *and* bent;

Their horses' hoofs seem like flint and their *chariot* wheels like a whirlwind.

²⁹Their roaring is like a lioness, they roar like young lions;
They growl and seize their prey
And carry it off and there is no one to save it.

³⁰And in that day they will roar against them (Judah) like the roaring of the sea.
And if one looks to the land, in fact, there is darkness and distress;
Even the light will be darkened by its clouds.

6 IN THE year that King Uzziah died, I saw [in a vision] the Lord sitting on a throne, high and exalted, with the train of His royal robe filling the [most holy part of the] temple. [John 12:41]

²Above Him seraphim (heavenly beings) stood; each one had six wings: with two *wings* he covered his face, with two *wings* he covered his feet, and with two *wings* he flew.

³And one called out to another, saying,

“Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD of hosts;
The whole earth is filled with His glory.”

⁴And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, and the temple was filling with smoke.

⁵Then I said,

“Woe is me! For I am ruined,
Because I am a man of [ceremonially] unclean lips,
And I live among a people of unclean lips;

For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”

⁶Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs.

⁷He touched my mouth *with it* and said, “Listen carefully, this has touched your lips; your wickedness [your sin, your injustice, your wrongdoing] is taken away and your sin atoned for *and* forgiven.”

⁸Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

⁹And He said, “Go, and tell this people:

‘Keep on listening, but do not understand;
Keep on looking, but do not comprehend.’

¹⁰“Make the heart of this people insensitive,
Their ears dull,
And their eyes dim,
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,
Hear with their ears,
Understand with their hearts,
And return and be healed.”

¹¹Then I said, “Lord, how long?” And He answered,
“Until cities are devastated and without inhabitant,
And houses are without people
And the land is utterly desolate,

¹²The LORD has removed [His] people far away,
And there are many deserted places in the midst of the land.

¹³“And though a tenth [of the people] remain in the land,

It will again be *subject* to destruction [consumed and burned],

Like a massive terebinth tree or like an oak

Whose stump remains when it is chopped down.

The holy seed [the elect remnant] is its stump [the substance of Israel].”

1 NOW IT came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin king of Aram (Syria) and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but they could not conquer it.

²When the house of David (Judah) was told, “Aram is allied with Ephraim (Israel),” the hearts of Ahaz and his people trembled as the trees of the forest tremble in the wind.

³Then the LORD said to Isaiah, “Go out to meet Ahaz [king of Judah], you and your son Shear-jashub, at the end of the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the highway to the Fuller’s Field;

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Your Lips Can Be Cleansed

The more we understand the power of our words, the more we will want to grow in speaking positively and using our words for good. We might say we need a cleansing process for our mouths.

We all make mistakes with our words. When we do, we can ask God to forgive us and then keep pressing forward. When Isaiah found himself in the presence of God, one of the first things he realized was that he was a man of unclean lips (see Isa. 6:5). God sent an angel with coals of fire to cleanse Isaiah's mouth, saying, "Listen carefully, this has touched your lips; your wickedness... is taken away and your sin atoned for *and* forgiven" (Isa. 6:7). We can see from the angel's words, "Listen carefully," that it was very important for Isaiah to know with certainty that he had been forgiven.

Praise God we can be forgiven and have a fresh start. God never runs out of new beginnings, and His mercies are new every morning.

When you first begin trying to speak more positive words, you may be overwhelmed by the mistakes you make. You've

probably been making these same mistakes all along, but now you are becoming aware of them because you are learning to choose better words. This is actually good news, because the truth is setting you free. Never feel discouraged when the Holy Spirit convicts you of speaking words you should not say. In fact, you should never feel discouraged when He convicts you of sin in any area of your life, but instead rejoice that you can recognize His conviction, repent, and start again.

The enemy wants us to feel worthless. He often reminds us of things we have said that have been wrong or hurtful to others. He is an expert at recalling words we regret and bringing them to our mind. We need to recognize and resist these attempts to make us feel guilty. Satan is the accuser of the brethren, and when he accuses you, you can respond by saying, “All the words I regret have been forgiven. I am God’s child and He loves me. I may not be perfect, but I am making progress.”

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord God, thank You for providing forgiveness for every unclean, hurtful, negative word I have spoken. Please help me continue to grow in the ability to speak positive, encouraging, life-giving words. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

⁴and say to him, ‘Take care and be calm, do not fear and be weak-hearted because of these two stumps of smoldering logs, on account of the fierce anger of [King] Rezin and Aram and of the son of Remaliah (Pekah, usurper of the throne of Israel).

⁵‘Because Aram, *along with* Ephraim (Israel) and the son of Remaliah, have planned evil against you (Judah), saying, ⁶“Let us go up against Judah and terrorize it; and let us breach its wall *and* tear it apart [each of us taking a portion] and set up the son of Tabeel over it as its [puppet] king,”

⁷for this is what the Lord GOD says, “It shall not stand nor shall it happen.

⁸“For the head (capital) of Aram is Damascus and the head of Damascus is [King] Rezin (now within sixty-five years Ephraim will be broken to pieces and will no longer be a people).

⁹“And the head (capital) of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah’s son [King Pekah]. If you will not believe [and trust in God and His message], be assured that you will not be established.””

¹⁰Then the LORD spoke again to [King] Ahaz, saying,

¹¹“Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God [one that will convince you that God has spoken and will keep His word]; make your request as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven.”

¹²But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!”

¹³Then Isaiah said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too small a thing for you to try the patience of men, but will you try

the patience of my God as well?

¹⁴“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Listen carefully, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and she will call his name Immanuel (God with us). [Is 9:6; Jer 31:22; Mic 5:3–5; Matt 1:22, 23]

¹⁵“He will eat curds and honey when he knows *enough* to refuse evil and choose good.

¹⁶“For before the child will know *enough* to refuse evil and choose good, the land (Canaan) whose two kings you dread will be deserted [both Ephraim and Aram]. [Is 7:2]

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, for sending
Your Son, who is Immanuel,
God with us. I know that He is
always with me.*

• adapted from Isaiah 7:14

¹⁷“The LORD will bring on you, on your people, and on your father’s house such days as have not come since the day

that Ephraim (the ten northern tribes) separated from Judah— [He will call for] the king of Assyria.”

¹⁸In that day the LORD will whistle for the fly that is in the mouth of the rivers *and* canals of Egypt and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria.

¹⁹These [armies, like flies and bees] will all come and settle on the steep *and* rugged ravines and in the clefts of the rocks, and on all the thorn bushes and in all the watering places.

²⁰In that day [when foreign armies swarm the land] the Lord will shave with a razor, hired from the regions beyond the Euphrates (*that is*, with the king of Assyria), [that razor will shave] the head and the hair of the legs; and it will also remove the beard [leaving Judah stripped, shamed and scorned]. [2 Kin 16:7, 8; 18:13–16]

²¹Now in that day [because of the poverty caused by the invaders] a man will keep alive only a young milk cow and two sheep; ²²and because of the abundance of milk produced he will eat curds, for everyone that is left in the land will eat [only] curds and [wild] honey.

²³And it will come to pass in that day, in every place where there used to be a thousand vines, *worth* a thousand silver *shekels*, there will be briars and thorns.

²⁴People will come there [to hunt] with arrows and with bows because all the land will be briars and thorns.

²⁵As for all the hills which used to be cultivated with the pick *and* the hoe, you will no longer go there for fear of briars and thorns; but they will become a place where oxen are pastured and where sheep tread.

8 THEN THE LORD said to me, “Take for yourself a large tablet [for public display] and write on it in ordinary characters: *Belonging to *Maher-shalal-hash-baz.*

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Look at Life from God's Perspective

Much of the early part of the book of Isaiah is about devastation and troubles that came to various nations, such as the trials mentioned concerning the nation of Judah in Isaiah 7:17–25. Some of those situations were very bad, just as some situations on earth today are bad. I wonder how many times each day someone thinks, *The world is a mess!*

Each of us has a perspective on life. We see and think about things in specific ways. Some are quick to see problems and magnify them, which makes the problems harder to deal with. Others choose to minimize the impact of difficulty by looking for the beauty, the good in life and in people, which allow them to have joy in the midst of trouble.

When circumstances are bad in any society or anyone's personal life, focusing on them and saying negative things about already negative situations doesn't increase anyone's joy. Jesus taught by word and example to be positive about the

problems of life. He said that in the world we will have tribulation but that we should cheer up because He has overcome the world (see John 16:33). Awesome! Keep that in mind when life seems bleak.

When the disciples were frightened in a severe storm as Jesus slept in the boat, they were focused only on the storm. Jesus rebuked them for their lack of faith and asked them why they were upset since He was with them (see Mark 4:36–40). Jesus wanted them to see Him as greater than the storm.

God sees things differently than we often do. We see problems; He sees possibilities. We see messes; He sees miracles. We see endings; He sees new beginnings. We see pain and pressure; He sees spiritual growth.

You might wonder, *Doesn't God care about all the horrible problems in the world?* Yes, He certainly does, and let me assure you that God does have a good plan, not only for society in general, but also for each of us individually. Hang on to that biblical truth and don't let anything that is going on in the world take it from you. We should think, speak, and behave as if we believe God's promises. Let's learn to see things as God does. Let's learn to have His perspective!

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Loving and caring Father, it is so much easier for me to see problems than it is to see possibilities and miracles. Help me to see more of my life through Your eyes and keep reminding me that You are greater than any trouble in the world and any trouble in my life. Amen.

²“And I will get faithful witnesses to attest [to this prophecy] for me, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah.”

³So I approached [my wife] the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. Then the LORD said to me, “Name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz [to remind the people of the prophecy]; ⁴for before the boy knows how to say, ‘My father’ or ‘My mother,’ the riches of Damascus (Aram’s capital) and the spoil of Samaria (Israel’s capital) will be carried away by the king of Assyria.”

⁵Again the LORD spoke to me, saying,

⁶“Because these people (Judah) have refused the gently flowing waters of Shiloah
And rejoice in Rezin [the king of Aram] and Remaliah’s son [Pekah the king of Israel],

⁷Now therefore, listen carefully, the Lord is about to bring on them the waters of the [Euphrates] River, strong and abundant— The king of Assyria and all his glory;
And it will rise over all its channels *and* canals and go far beyond its banks. [Is 7:17]

⁸“Then it will sweep on into Judah; it will overflow and pass through [the hills],
Reaching even to the neck [of which Jerusalem is the head],
And its outstretched wings (the armies of Assyria) will fill the width of Your land, O Immanuel. [Num 14:9; Ps 46:7]

⁹“Be broken [in pieces], O peoples, and be shattered!

Listen, all you [our enemies from the] far countries.
Prepare yourselves [for war], and be shattered;

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that You are
a sanctuary for me, a sacred,
indestructible shelter for all
those who fear and trust You.*

• adapted from Isaiah 8:14

Prepare yourselves [for war], and be shattered.

¹⁰“Take counsel together [against Judah], but it will come to nothing;
Speak the word, but it will not stand,
For God is with us (Immanuel).”

¹¹For in this way the LORD spoke to me with His strong hand [upon me] and instructed me not to walk in the way of this people [behaving as they do], saying, ¹²“You are not to say, ‘It is a conspiracy!’”

In regard to all that this people call a conspiracy,
And you are not to fear what they fear nor be in dread of it.

¹³“It is the LORD of hosts whom you are to regard as holy *and* awesome.

He shall be your [source of] fear,
He shall be your [source of] dread [not man].

¹⁴“Then He shall be a sanctuary [a sacred, indestructible shelter for those who fear and trust Him]; But to both the houses of Israel [both the northern and southern kingdoms—Israel and Judah, He will be] a stone on which to stumble and a rock on which to trip, A trap and a snare for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. [Is 28:6; Rom 9:33; 1 Pet 2:6–8]

¹⁵“Many [among them] will stumble over them;
Then they will fall and be broken,
They will even be snared and trapped.”

¹⁶Bind up the testimony, seal the law *and* the teaching among my (Isaiah’s) disciples.

¹⁷And I will wait for the LORD who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; and I will look eagerly for Him.

¹⁸Listen carefully, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are for signs and wonders [that will occur] in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.

¹⁹When the people [instead of trusting God] say to you, “Consult the mediums [who try to talk to the dead] and the soothsayers who chirp *and* whisper and mutter,” should not a people consult their God? *Should they consult* the dead on behalf of the living?

²⁰[Direct those people] to the law and to the testimony! If their teachings are not in accord with this word, it is because they have no dawn.

²¹They [who consult mediums and soothsayers] will pass through the land deeply distressed and hungry, and when they are hungry, they will become enraged and will curse their king and their God as they look upward.

²²Then they will look to the earth, they will see only distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and *they will be* driven away into darkness *and* overwhelming night.

9 BUT THERE will be no *more* gloom for her who was in anguish [for with judgment comes the promise of salvation]. In earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He will make them honored [by the presence of the Messiah], by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.

²The people who walk in [spiritual] darkness
Will see a great Light;
Those who live in the dark land,
The Light will shine on them. [Is 42:6; Matt 4:15, 16]

³You [O God] will increase the nation,
You will multiply their joy;
They will rejoice before You
Like the joy *and* jubilation of the harvest,
As men rejoice when they divide the spoil [of victory].

⁴For You will break the yoke of Israel's burden and the staff

(goad) on their shoulders,
The rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian. [Judg
7:8–22]

⁵For every boot of the marching warrior in the *battle* tumult,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Gives Us Peace

Several years ago, I went to a doctor because I was constantly sick. He told me that my symptoms were the result of being under stress. I was eating improperly, not sleeping enough, and pushing myself harder and harder—all in the name of working for the Lord.

The word stress was originally an engineering term used to refer to the amount of force that a beam or other physical support could bear without collapsing under the strain. In our time, stress has been expanded to include mental and emotional tension.

Stress is a normal part of everyone's life. God has created us to withstand a certain amount of pressure and tension. The problem comes when we push beyond our limitations and head toward doing permanent damage to ourselves.

Peace is meant to be the normal condition for every believer in Jesus Christ. In fact, according to Isaiah 9:6, one of the names of Jesus is the "Prince of Peace," and in Him we find our own inheritance of peace. It is a gift from the Holy Spirit, which He gives as we live in obedience to His Word.

The peace Jesus gives operates in good or bad times, when we are abounding or when we are struggling. His peace operates in the middle of life's storms. Peace comes to every situation when we choose to listen to and obey the Lord.

And [every soldier's] garment rolled in blood, will be *used*
for burning, fuel for the fire.

⁶For to us a Child shall be born, to us a Son shall be given;
And the government shall be upon His shoulder,
And His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty
God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. [Is 25:1; 40:9–11; Matt
28:18; Luke 2:11]

⁷There shall be no end to the increase of His government
and of peace,
[He shall rule] on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and
righteousness
From that time forward and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this. [Dan
2:44; 1 Cor 15:25–28; Heb 1:8]

⁸The Lord sends a word (message) against Jacob,
And it falls on Israel [the ten northern tribes, the kingdom of
Ephraim].

⁹And all the people know it,
That is, Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria [its capital],
Who say in pride and arrogance of heart:

¹⁰“The bricks have fallen down,
But we will rebuild [all the better] with ashlar (hewed
stones);
The sycamores have been cut down,

But we will replace them with [expensive] cedars.”

¹¹Therefore the LORD raises against Ephraim adversaries from
Rezin [king of Aram]

And spurs their enemies on,

¹²The Arameans on the east and the Philistines on the west;
And they devour Israel with gaping jaws.

In *spite of* all this, God’s anger does not turn away
But His hand is still stretched out [in judgment].

¹³Yet the people do not turn back [in repentance] to Him who
struck them,
Nor do they seek the LORD of hosts [as their most essential
need].

¹⁴Therefore the LORD cuts off head and tail [the highest and
the lowest] from Israel, *Both* [the high] palm branch and
[the low] bulrush in one day.

¹⁵The elderly and honorable man, he is the head;
And the prophet who teaches lies, he is the tail.

¹⁶For those who lead this people are causing *them* to go
astray;
And those who are led [astray] by them are swallowed up.

¹⁷Therefore the Lord does not rejoice over their young men,
Nor does He have compassion on their fatherless or their
widows;

For every one of them is godless and an evildoer,
And every mouth is speaking foolishness.
In *spite of* all this, God’s anger does not turn away
But His hand is still stretched out [in judgment].

18For wickedness burns like a fire;

POWERPOINT

Isaiah 9:8–21 clearly illustrates that God can become angry, but it is a righteous anger. When you and I become angry with other people, it usually happens because they did something we did not like or they did not do something we thought they should have done. We also become angry with people when they hurt or offend us. When God gets angry, it is not because of what we are doing to Him; it is because of what we are doing to ourselves by not following His ways. We could even say that His anger is for us and not against us. God's love is everlasting, and even His anger and displeasure are intended to drive us away from sin and back to Him. His anger is for a moment, but His favor (mercy) is for a lifetime (see Ps. 30:5).



It consumes briars and thorns,
It even sets the forest thickets ablaze;
And it swirls upward in a column of smoke.

¹⁹By the wrath of the LORD of hosts the land is burned up,
And the people are like fuel for the fire;
No man spares his brother.

²⁰They slice off [in discord] *what is* on the right hand but are
still hungry,
And they eat *what is* on the left hand but they are not
satisfied;
Each eats the flesh of his own arm.

²¹[The tribe of] Manasseh *devours* [the tribe of his brother]
Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh, And together they are
against Judah (the southern kingdom, the house of
David).

In *spite of* all this, God's anger does not turn away
But His hand is still stretched out [in judgment].

10 WOE (JUDGMENT is coming) to those [judges] who
issue evil statutes, And to those [magistrates] who constantly
record unjust *and* oppressive decisions,

²So as to deprive the needy of justice

And rob the poor of My people of rightful claims,
So that widows may be their spoil
And that they may plunder the fatherless.

³Now what will you do in the day of [God's] punishment,
And in the storm of devastation which will come from far
away?

To whom will you flee for help?
And where will you leave your wealth [for safekeeping]?

⁴Nothing *remains* but to crouch among the captives
Or fall [dead] among the slain [on the battlefield].
In *spite of* all this, God's anger does not turn away,
But His hand is still stretched out [in judgment].

⁵Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger [against Israel],
The staff in whose hand is My indignation *and* fury
[against Israel's disobedience]!

⁶I send Assyria against a godless nation
And commission it against the people of My wrath
To take the spoil and to seize the plunder,
And to trample them down like mud in the streets.

⁷Yet it is not Assyria's intention [to do My will],
Nor does it plan so in its heart,
But instead it is its purpose to destroy
And to cut off many nations.

⁸For Assyria says, "Are not my princes all kings?

⁹"Is not Calno [conquered] like Carchemish [on the
Euphrates]?
Is not Hamath [subdued] like Arpad [her neighbor]?

Is not Samaria [in Israel] like Damascus [in Aram]?

¹⁰“As my hand has reached to the kingdoms of the idols,
Whose carved images were greater *and* more feared than
those of Jerusalem and Samaria,

¹¹Shall I not do to Jerusalem and her images
Just as I have done to Samaria and her idols?” [declares
Assyria].

¹²So when the Lord has completed all His work [of
judgment] on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, *He will say*, “I will
punish the fruit [the thoughts, the declarations, and the
actions] of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the
haughtiness of his pride.”

¹³For the Assyrian king has said,

“I have done this by the power of my [own] hand and by my
wisdom,

For I have understanding *and* skill.

I have removed the boundaries of the peoples

And have plundered their treasures;

Like a bull I have brought down those who sat on thrones.

¹⁴“My hand has found the wealth of the people like a nest,
And as one gathers eggs that are abandoned, so I have
gathered all the earth;

And there was not one that flapped its wing, or that opened
its beak and chirped.”

¹⁵Is the axe able to lift itself over the one who chops with it?
Is the saw able to magnify itself over the one who wields it?
That would be like a club moving those who lift it,

Or like a staff raising *him who* is not [made of] wood [like itself]!

¹⁶Therefore the Lord, the GOD of hosts, will send a wasting disease among the stout warriors of Assyria; And under his glory a fire will be kindled like a burning flame.

¹⁷And the Light of Israel will become a fire and His Holy One a flame,
And it will burn and devour Assyria's thorns and briars in a single day. [2 Kin 19:35–37; Is 31:8, 9; 37:36]

¹⁸The Lord will consume the glory of Assyria's forest and of its fruitful garden, both soul and body, And it will be as when a sick man wastes away.

¹⁹And the remaining trees of Assyria's forest will be so few in number
That a child could write them down.

²⁰Now in that day the remnant of Israel, and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped, will never again rely on the one who struck them, but will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.

²¹A remnant will return, a remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God.

²²For though your people, O Israel, may be as the sand of the sea,

Only a remnant within them will return;

The destruction is determined [it is decided and destined for completion], overflowing with justice (righteous punishment). [Rom 9:27, 28]

²³For the Lord, the GOD of hosts, will execute a complete destruction, one that is decreed, in the midst of all the land.

²⁴Therefore, the Lord GOD of hosts says this, “O My people who dwell in Zion, do not be afraid of the Assyrian who strikes you with a rod and lifts up his staff against you, as [the king of] Egypt did. [Ex 5]

²⁵“For yet a very little while and My indignation [against you] will be fulfilled and My anger *will be directed* toward the destruction of the Assyrian.”

²⁶The LORD of hosts will brandish a whip against them like the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb; and His staff will be over the [Red] Sea and He will lift it up the way *He did* in [the flight from] Egypt. [Ex 14:26–31; Judg 7:24, 25]

²⁷So it will be in that day, that the burden of the Assyrian will be removed from your shoulders and his yoke from your neck. The yoke will be broken because of the fat. [Deut 32:15]

²⁸The Assyrian has come against Aiath [in Judah],
He has passed through Migron [with his army];
At Michmash he stored his equipment.

²⁹They have gone through the pass, *saying*,
“Geba will be our lodging place for the night.”
Ramah trembles, and Gibeah [the city] of Saul has fled.

³⁰Cry aloud with your voice [in consternation], O Daughter of Gallim!

Pay attention, Laishah! Answer her, Anathoth!

³¹Madmenah has fled;
The inhabitants of Gebim have fled [with their belongings]

to safety.

³²Yet today the Assyrian will halt at Nob [the city of priests];
He shakes his fist at the mountain of the Daughter of Zion,
at the hill of Jerusalem.

³³Listen carefully, the Lord, the GOD of hosts, will lop off the
[beautiful] boughs with terrifying force; The tall in stature
will be cut down

And the lofty will be abased *and* humiliated.

³⁴He will cut down the thickets of the forest with an iron *axe*,
And Lebanon (the Assyrian) will fall by the Mighty One.
[Gen 49:24; Is 9:6]

11 THEN A Shoot (the Messiah) will spring from the stock of
Jesse [David's father],

POWERPOINT

God's Spirit Who was upon Jesus and is in us is the "Spirit of wisdom and understanding" (Isa. 11:2). Jesus did not make decisions "by what His eyes see" or "by what His ears hear" (Isa. 11:3). If we follow His example, not relying on our natural senses but listening for the Holy Spirit to lead us in our hearts, we will receive wisdom that we would otherwise not gain in a lifetime. We should not be led by our own mind or emotions, but by the Holy Spirit Who lives in us.



And a Branch from his roots will bear fruit. [Is 4:2; Matt 2:23; Rev 5:5; 22:16]

²And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him—

The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,

The Spirit of counsel and strength,

The Spirit of knowledge and of the [reverential and

obedient] fear of the LORD—³And He will delight in the fear of the LORD,

And He will not judge by what His eyes see,

Nor make decisions by what His ears hear;

⁴But with righteousness *and* justice He will judge the poor,
And decide with fairness for the downtrodden of the earth;
And He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.

- ⁵ And righteousness will be the belt around His loins,
And faithfulness the belt around His waist.
- ⁶ And the wolf will dwell with the lamb,
And the leopard will lie down with the young goat,
And the calf and the young lion and the fatted steer
together;
And a little child will lead them.
- ⁷ And the cow and the bear will graze [together],
Their young will lie down together,
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
- ⁸ And the nursing child will [safely] play over the hole of the
cobra,
And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den
[and not be hurt].
- ⁹ They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain,
For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
As the waters cover the sea.
- ¹⁰ Then in that day
The nations will make supplications to the Root of Jesse
Who will stand as a signal for the peoples;
And His resting place will be glorious. [John 12:32]
- ¹¹ Then it will happen on that day that the Lord
Will again acquire with His hand a second time
The remnant of His people, who will remain,
From Assyria, from [Lower] Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush
(Ethiopia), from Elam [in Persia], from Shinar [Babylonia],

from Hamath [in Aram], And from the coastlands
bordering the [Mediterranean] Sea. [Jer 23:5–8]

¹² And He will lift up a signal for the nations
And assemble the outcasts of Israel,
And will gather the dispersed of Judah
From the four corners of the earth.

¹³ Then the jealousy of Ephraim will depart,
And those who harass Judah will be cut off;
Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah,
And Judah will not harass Ephraim.

¹⁴ Ephraim and Judah will [unite and] swoop down on the
slopes of the Philistines toward the west;
Together they will plunder the sons (Arabs) of the east.
They will possess Edom and Moab,
And the sons of Ammon will be subject to them.

¹⁵ And the LORD will utterly destroy
The tongue of the Sea of Egypt;
And with His scorching wind
He will wave His hand over the River;
He will strike *and* divide it into seven channels
And make [it possible for] people [to] walk over in sandals.

¹⁶ And there will be a highway from Assyria
For the remnant of His people who will be left,
Just as there was for Israel
In the day when they came up out of the land of Egypt.

12 AND ON that day you will say, “I will give thanks to You,

O LORD;

For though You were angry with me,
Your anger has turned away,
And You comfort me.

²“Behold, God, my salvation!

I will trust and not be afraid,
For the LORD GOD is my strength and song;
Yes, He has become my salvation.”

³Therefore with joy you will draw water
From the springs of salvation.

⁴And in that day you will say,

“Give thanks to the LORD, call on His name [in prayer].
Make His deeds known among the peoples [of the earth];
Proclaim [to them] that His name is exalted!”

⁵Sing praises to the LORD, for He has done excellent *and*
glorious things; Let this be known throughout the earth.

⁶Rejoice and shout for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,
For great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

Speak God's Word

*Behold, God, my salvation! I
will trust and not be afraid,
for the Lord God is my
strength and song; yes, He
has become my salvation.*

| *adapted from* ISAIAH 12:2 |

13 THE [MOURNFUL, inspired] oracle (a burden to be carried) concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw [in a prophetic vision]: ²Lift up a signal banner on the bare mountain,

Summon them [the Medes and Persians] with a loud voice,
Wave the [beckoning] hand so that they may enter the
doorways of the [Babylonian] nobles.

³I [the LORD] have commanded My consecrated ones,
I have even called My great warriors,
My proudly exulting ones [the Medes and the Persians who
triumph for My honor]—
To *execute* My anger.

⁴A sound of tumult on the mountains,
Like that of many people!

A sound of the uproar of the kingdoms,
Of nations gathered together!
The LORD of hosts is mustering an army for battle.

⁵They are coming from a distant country,
From the end of heaven [the farthest horizon]—
The LORD and the weapons of His indignation—
To destroy the whole land. [Ps 19:4–6; Is 5:26]

⁶Wail, for the day of the LORD is at hand!
It will come as destruction from the Almighty (All Sufficient
One—Invincible God)! [Gen 17:1]

⁷Therefore all hands will fall limp,
And every man's heart will melt.

⁸They [of Babylon] will be shocked *and* terrified,
Pains and anguish will grip them;
They will be in pain like a woman in childbirth.
They will stare aghast *and* horrified at one another,
Their faces aflame [from the effects of the unprecedented
warfare].

⁹Listen carefully, the day of the LORD is coming,
Cruel, with wrath and raging anger,
To make the land a horror [of devastation];

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

God Is Your Salvation

Some years ago I had to face the fact that although I said with my mouth, “Behold, God, my salvation! I will trust and not be afraid, for the LORD GOD is my strength and song” (Isa. 12:2), the truth was that I worried and felt fearful and anxious in many situations. Being truthful with myself helped me begin to deal with the negative mental habits that were hindering my faith. I have come a long way in my battle to be worry-free; and the less I worry, the less stress I have! There is no doubt that our thoughts and our stress levels are closely connected.

When we worry, we are searching for answers to our problems, hoping we will find a way to control situations in our life; but the truth is that we were never in control anyway, because God is. Instead of using our thoughts to worry about situations and people we cannot control, we should use them to trust God!

We will never lower our stress level unless we learn to believe the best while trusting God to take care of our problems. We can make any problem worse by worrying about

it! To avoid worry, we must choose to think positively, on purpose. If we are passive in troubled times, our mind will be filled with worry, fear, and anxiety. We can choose to avoid the stress of those exhausting habits by deciding how to think. It is not God's will that we live under the pressure of stress, and He has provided a way for us to avoid much of it (see John 14:1, 27; Phil. 4:6–7).

It is very important to remember to always lean on God and ask for His grace (strength, ability) to help you to do whatever needs to be done (see Prov. 3:5). When it comes to renewing our minds and learning to think the way God thinks, mere “trying” in our own strength won't work. We need God's help every step of the way. He has equipped us with the “mind of Christ” (see 1 Cor. 2:16) to make right thinking possible for us, still with His help. He is waiting to help you—just ask!

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Gracious and forgiving Father, You know how often I talk about trusting You and yet at times I worry and am anxious over different situations. I lean on You now and ask You for grace to be renewed in my mind and thinking right thoughts that glorify Your name. Amen.

And He shall exterminate its sinners from it. [Is 2:10–22; Rev 19:11–21]

¹⁰For the stars of heaven and their constellations
Will not flash with their light;
The sun will be dark when it rises,
And the moon will not shed its light.

¹¹In this way I will punish the world for its evil
And the wicked for their wickedness [their sin, their
injustice, their wrongdoing];
I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud
And will abase the arrogance of the tyrant.

¹²I will make mortal man more rare than fine gold,
And mankind [scarcer] than the pure gold of Ophir.

¹³Therefore I will make the heavens tremble;
And the earth will be shaken from its place
At the wrath of the LORD of hosts
In the day of His burning anger.

¹⁴And like the hunted gazelle,
Or like sheep that no man gathers,
Each [foreign resident] will turn [and go back] to his own
people,
And each one flee to his own land.

¹⁵Anyone who is found will be pierced through,
And anyone who is captured will fall by the sword.

¹⁶Their children also will be smashed to pieces
Before their eyes;

Their houses will be looted
And their wives ravished.

¹⁷ Listen carefully, I will put the Medes [in motion] against them,
Who have no regard for silver and do not delight in gold
[and therefore cannot be bribed].

¹⁸ Their bows will cut down the young men [of Babylon];
They will take no pity on the fruit of the womb,
Their eyes will not look with compassion on the children.

¹⁹ And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the
Chaldeans' pride,
Will be like Sodom and Gomorrah when God overthrew
them.

²⁰ Babylon will never be inhabited or lived in from generation
to generation;
Nor will the Arab pitch his tent there,
Nor will the shepherds let *their sheep* lie down there.

²¹ But desert creatures will lie down there,
And their houses will be full of owls;
Ostriches also will live there, and wild goats will dance
there.

²² Hyenas will howl in their castles,
And jackals in their luxurious palaces.
Babylon's time has nearly come,
And her days will not be prolonged.

14 FOR THE LORD will have compassion on Jacob (the captives in Babylon) and will again choose Israel, and will settle them in their own land. Foreigners (Gentiles) will join them [as proselytes] and will attach themselves to the house of Jacob (Israel). [Esth 8:17]

²The peoples will take them along and bring them to their own place (Judea), and the house of Israel will possess them as an inheritance in the land of the LORD as male and female servants; and they will take captive those whose captives they have been, and they will rule over their [former] oppressors. [Ezra 1]

³And it will be in the day when the LORD gives you rest from your pain and turmoil and from the harsh service in which you have been enslaved, ⁴that you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon, and say,

“How the oppressor has ceased [his insolence],
And how the fury has ceased!

⁵“The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked,
The scepter of the [tyrant] rulers

⁶Which used to strike the peoples in anger with incessant blows,
Which subdued *and* ruled the nations in wrath with unrelenting persecution.

⁷“The whole earth is at rest and is quiet;
They break into shouts of joy.

⁸“Even the cypress trees rejoice over you [kings of Babylon], even the cedars of Lebanon, *saying*,

‘Since you were laid low, no woodcutter comes up against us.’

9“‘Sheol below is excited about you to meet you when you come [you tyrant of Babylon];

It stirs up the spirits of the dead [to greet you], all the leaders of the earth;

It raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones [in astonishment at your fall].

10“‘All of them will respond [tauntingly] and say to you,

‘You have become as weak as we are.

You have become like us.

11‘Your pomp and magnificence have been brought down to Sheol,

Along with the music of your harps;

The maggots [which prey on the dead] are spread out under you [as a bed]

And worms are your covering [Babylonian rulers].’

12“‘How you have fallen from heaven,

O star of the morning [light-bringer], son of the dawn!

You have been cut down to the ground,

You who have weakened the nations [king of Babylon]!

13“‘But you said in your heart,

‘I will ascend to heaven;

I will raise my throne above the stars of God;

I will sit on the mount of assembly

In the remote parts of the north.

14‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;

I will make myself like the Most High.’

- 15“But [in fact] you will be brought down to Sheol,
To the remote recesses of the pit (the region of the dead).
- 16“Those who see you will gaze at you,
They will consider you, *saying*,
‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble,
Who shook kingdoms,
17Who made the world like a wilderness
And overthrew its cities,
Who did not permit his prisoners to return home?’
- 18“All the kings of the nations, all of them lie [dead] in
glorious array,
Each one in his own sepulcher.
- 19“But you [king of Babylon] have been cast out of your tomb
(denied burial)
Like a rejected branch,
Clothed with the slain who are pierced by the sword,
Who go down to the stones of the pit [into which carcasses
are thrown],
Like a dead body trampled [underfoot].
- 20“‘You will not be united with them in burial,
Because you have destroyed your land,
You have slain your people.
May the descendants of evildoers never be named!
- 21“Prepare a slaughtering place for his sons
Because of the wickedness [the sin, the injustice, the
wrongdoing] of their fathers.
They must not rise and take possession of the earth,
And fill the face of the world with cities.”

²²“I will rise up against them,” says the LORD of hosts, “and will cut off from Babylon name and survivors, and son and grandson,” declares the LORD.

²³“I will also make Babylon a possession of the hedgehog and of swamps of water, and I will sweep it away with the broom of destruction,” declares the LORD of hosts.

²⁴The LORD of hosts has sworn [an oath], saying, “Just as I have intended, so it has certainly happened, and just as I have planned, so it will stand—²⁵to break the Assyrian in My land, and on My mountains I will trample him underfoot. Then the Assyrian’s yoke will be removed from them (the people of Judah) and his burden removed from their shoulder.

²⁶“This is the plan [of God] decided for the whole earth [regarded as conquered and put under tribute by Assyria]; and this is the hand [of God] that is stretched out over all the nations.

²⁷“For the LORD of hosts has decided *and* planned, and who can annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?”

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that when
You decide and plan to do
something, You do it. No one
can annul your decisions and
plans.*

• adapted from Isaiah 14:27

²⁸In the year that King Ahaz [of Judah] died this [mournful, inspired] oracle (a burden to be carried) came: ²⁹“Do not rejoice, O Philistia, any of you,

Because the rod [of Judah] that struck you is broken;
For out of the serpent’s root will come a viper [King
Hezekiah of Judah],

And its offspring will be a flying serpent. [2 Kin 18:1, 3, 8]

³⁰“The firstborn of the helpless [of Judah] will feed [on My meadows],

And the needy will lie down in safety;
But I will kill your root with famine,
And your survivors will be put to death.

³¹“Howl, O gate; cry, O city!

Melt away, O Philistia, all of you;
For smoke comes out of the north,
And there is no straggler in his ranks *and* no one stands
detached [in Hezekiah’s battalions].

32“Then what answer will one give the messengers of the
[Philistine] nation?
That the LORD has founded Zion,
And the afflicted of His people will seek *and* find refuge in
it.”

15 THE [MOURNFUL, inspired] oracle (a burden to be
carried) concerning Moab: Because in a night Ar of Moab is
devastated and ruined;

Because in a night Kir of Moab is devastated and ruined.

²They have gone up to the temple and to Dibon, to the high
places to weep.

Moab wails over Nebo and over Medeba;

Everyone's head is shaved, and every beard is cut off [in
mourning]. [Jer 48:37]

³In their streets they have wrapped themselves with
sackcloth;

On their [flat] housetops and in their open squares

Everyone is wailing, dissolved in tears.

⁴Heshbon and Elealeh [cities claimed by Moab] cry out;

Their voice is heard as far as Jahaz.

Therefore the armed men of Moab cry out;

Moab's soul trembles within him.

⁵My heart cries out for Moab;

His fugitives are [fleeing] as far as Zoar and Eglath-
shelishiyah.

For they go up the ascent of Luhith weeping;

For on the road to Horonaim they raise a cry of distress
over their destruction. [Jer 48:5]

⁶For the waters of Nimrim are desolate.

Indeed the grass is withered, the new growth dies;
There is no green thing.

⁷Therefore the abundance *which* they have acquired and
stored away

They carry off over the Brook of the Willows.

⁸For the cry of distress has echoed around the territory of
Moab;

The wailing *goes* as far as Eglaim and the mournful cry to
Beer-elim.

⁹For the waters of Dimon are full of blood;

Yet I will bring even more *woes* on Dimon—

A lion upon those of Moab who escape and upon the
remnant of the land.

16 SEND LAMBS to the ruler of the land [you Moabites],
From Sela [that is, Petra in Edom] through the wilderness to the
mountain of the Daughter of Zion (Jerusalem). [2 Kin 3:4, 5]

²For like wandering birds or scattered nestlings,

The daughters of Moab will be at the fords of the [river]
Arnon.

³[Say to the ruler] “Give us advice, make a decision [for
Moab, king of Judah];

Cast your shadow [over us] like night in the midst of noon;
Hide the outcasts, do not betray the fugitive [to his

pursuer].

- ⁴“Let our outcasts of Moab live among you;
Be a [sheltered] hiding place to them from the destroyer.”
For the extortioner has come to an end, destruction has
ceased,
Oppressors [who trample men] have completely
disappeared from the land,
- ⁵A throne will be established in lovingkindness,
And One will sit on it in faithfulness in the tent (dynasty,
family) of David;
Judging *and* seeking justice
And being prompt to do righteousness. [Ps 96:13; Jer 48:47]
- ⁶We have heard of the pride of Moab, an excessive pride—
Even of his arrogance, his conceit, his rage,
His untruthful boasting.
- ⁷Therefore Moab will wail for Moab; everyone will wail.
You will mourn for the raisin cakes of Kir-hareseth,
As those who are utterly stricken *and* discouraged.
- ⁸For the fields of Heshbon have languished *and* withered,
and the vines of Sibmah *as well*;
The lords of the nations have trampled down [Moab’s]
choice vine branches,
Which reached as far as Jazer and wandered into the
wilderness;
Its tendrils stretched out, they passed over [the shores of]
the [Dead] Sea.
- ⁹Therefore I (Isaiah) will weep bitterly for Jazer, for the vines

of Sibmah.

I will drench you with my tears, O Heshbon and Elealeh;
For the war-cry [of the enemy] has fallen on your summer
fruits and your harvest.

¹⁰Gladness and joy are taken away from the fruitful field;
In the vineyards there will be no singing or joyful sound;
No treader treads out wine in the presses,
For I (God) put an end to the joyful shouting.

¹¹Therefore my heart sounds like a harp [in mournful
compassion] for Moab,
And my inner being *mourns* for Kir-hareseth.

¹²So it will come to pass when Moab presents himself,
When he wearies himself [worshiping] on his high place [of
idolatry]
And comes to his sanctuary [of Chemosh, god of Moab] to
pray,
That he will not prevail. [Jer 48:13]

¹³This is the word which the LORD spoke earlier concerning
Moab [when Moab's pride and resistance to God were first
known].

¹⁴But now the LORD speaks, saying, "Within three years, as
the years of a hired man [who will not serve longer than the
agreed time], the glory of Moab will be degraded along with all
the great population, and the remnant [that survives] will be
very small and of no account."

17 THE [MOURNFUL, inspired] oracle (a burden to be

carried) concerning Damascus [capital of Aram (Syria), and Israel's defense against Assyria].

“Listen carefully, Damascus will cease to be a city
And will become a fallen ruin.

2“‘The cities of Aroer [east of the Jordan] are deserted;
They will be [only a refuge] for flocks to lie down in,
And there will be no one to make them afraid.

3“‘The fortified city will disappear from Ephraim,
And the kingdom from Damascus
And the remnant of Aram (Syria);
They will be like the [departed] glory of [her ally] the
children of Israel,”
Declares the LORD of hosts.

4“‘Now in that day the [former] glory of Jacob [Israel—his
might, his population, his prosperity] will fade, And the
fatness of his flesh will become lean.

5“‘And it will be like the reaper gathering the standing grain,
As his arm harvests the ears of grain;
Yes, it will be like one gleaning ears of grain
In the [fertile] Valley of Rephaim.

6“‘Yet gleanings will be left in the land [of Israel] like the
shaking of the olive tree,
Two or three olives on the topmost branch,
Four or five on the [outermost] branches of the fruitful
tree,”

Declares the LORD, the God of Israel.

7In that day man will have regard for his Maker,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Stand on the Rock

Why do you think Jesus is referred to as “the Rock” in Isaiah 17:10 (see 1 Cor. 10:4)? Because He is stable and never changing, like a huge rock. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever—and we can learn to be stable as He is.

Waiting to see how you feel each day before taking action is never a good idea. Has anyone ever invited you to do something and you responded, “Let me wait and see how I feel”? That attitude gives the devil room to make sure you don’t feel like doing what you need to do or what can benefit you. We will sometimes have unpleasant times, but we don’t have to live by our feelings; we can choose to stand firm and be stable when we find our strength in the “God of your salvation... the Rock of your Stronghold” (Isa. 17:10).

And his eyes will regard the Holy One of Israel [with awe-inspired reverence].

⁸And he will not have regard for the [idolatrous] altars, the work of his hands,
Nor will he look to that which his fingers have made,
Neither the Asherim (symbols of the goddess Asherah) nor the incense altars.

⁹In that day the strong cities of Aram and Israel will be like deserted places in the forest,

Or like branches which they abandoned before the children
of Israel;
And the land will be a desolation.

- ¹⁰Because you [Judah] have forgotten the God of your
salvation
And have not remembered the Rock of your Stronghold—
Therefore you plant lovely plants
And set the grounds with vine slips of a strange *god*,
¹¹In the day that you plant it you carefully fence it in,
And in the morning you bring your seed to blossom;
Yet [promising as it is] the harvest will be a heap [of ruins
that passes away]
In the day of sickness and incurable pain.

- ¹²Oh, the uproar of many peoples
Who roar like the roaring of the seas,
And the noise of nations
Who roar like the rumbling of mighty waters!

- ¹³The nations roar on like the roaring of many waters,
But God will rebuke them and they will flee far away,
And be chased like chaff on the mountains before the wind,
Or like whirling dust before the storm.

- ¹⁴At evening time, now look, sudden terror!
Before morning the Assyrians are no more.
This is the portion (fate) of those who plunder us,
And the lot of those who pillage us.

18 WOE (JUDGMENT is coming) to the land of whirling
wings Which is beyond the rivers of Cush (Ethiopia),

²Which sends ambassadors by the sea,
Even in vessels of papyrus on the surface of the waters.
Go, swift messengers, to a nation [of people] tall and
smooth (clean shaven),
To a people feared far and wide,
A powerful and oppressive nation
Whose land the rivers divide.

³All you inhabitants of the world, you who dwell on the
earth,
When a banner is raised on the mountains, you will see it!
When a trumpet is blown, you will hear it!

⁴For this is what the LORD has said to me,
“I will be quiet and I will look on from My dwelling place,
Like shimmering heat above the sunshine,
Like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest.”
⁵For before the harvest, when the blossom is over
And the flower becomes a ripening grape,
He will cut off the sprigs [without buds] with pruning
knives,
And [He will] remove and cut away the spreading branches.

⁶They (warriors) will be left together for the mountain birds
of prey,
And for the beasts of the earth;
And the birds of prey will [spend the] summer *feeding* on

them,
And all the beasts of the earth will spend harvest time on
them.

⁷At that time a gift of homage will be brought to the LORD of
hosts From a people tall and smooth (clean shaven),
From a people feared far and wide,
A powerful and oppressive nation,
Whose land the rivers divide—
To the place [of worship] of the name of the LORD of hosts,
to Mount Zion [in Jerusalem]. [Deut 12:5; 2 Chr 32:23; Is
16:1; 45:14; Zeph 3:10]

19 THE [MOURNFUL, inspired] oracle (a burden to be
carried) concerning Egypt: Listen carefully, the LORD is riding
on a swift cloud and is about to come to Egypt; The idols of
Egypt will tremble at His presence,

And the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them.

²“So I will provoke Egyptians against Egyptians;
And they will fight, each one against his brother and each
one against his neighbor,
City against city, kingdom against kingdom.

³“Then the spirit of the Egyptians will become exhausted
within them *and* emptied out;
And I will confuse their strategy,
So that they will consult the idols and the spirits of the
dead,
And mediums and soothsayers.

- ⁴“And I will hand over the Egyptians to a hard *and* cruel master,
And a mighty king will rule over them,” declares the Lord
GOD of hosts.
- ⁵The waters from the sea will dry up,
And the river will be parched and dry.
- ⁶The canals will become foul-smelling,
The streams of Egypt will thin out and dry up,
The reeds and the rushes will rot away.
- ⁷The meadows by the Nile, by the edge of the Nile,
And all the sown fields of the Nile
Will become dry, be blown away, and be no more.
- ⁸The fishermen will lament (cry out in grief),
And all those who cast a hook into the Nile will mourn,
And those who spread nets upon the waters will languish.
- ⁹Moreover, those who make linen from combed flax
And those who weave white cloth will be ashamed.
- ¹⁰[Those who are] the pillars *and* foundations *of Egypt* will be
crushed;
And all those who work for wages will be grieved in soul.
- ¹¹The princes of Zoan are complete fools;
The counsel of the Pharaoh’s wisest advisors has become
stupid.
How can you say to Pharaoh,
“I am a son of the wise, a son of ancient kings?”
- ¹²Where then are your wise men?
Please let them tell you,

And let them understand what the LORD of hosts
Has purposed against Egypt [if they can].

¹³The princes of Zoan have acted like fools,
The princes of Memphis are deluded [and entertain false
hope];
Those who are the cornerstone of her tribes
Have led Egypt astray.

¹⁴The LORD has mixed a spirit of distortion within her;
Her leaders have caused Egypt to stagger in all that she
does,
As a drunken man staggers in his vomit.

¹⁵There will be no work for Egypt
Which head or tail, [high] palm branch or [low] bulrush, may
do.

¹⁶In that day the Egyptians will become like [helpless]
women, and they will tremble and be frightened because of the
waving of the hand of the LORD of hosts, which He is going to
wave over them.

¹⁷The land of Judah [Assyria's ally] will become a terror to
the Egyptians; everyone to whom Judah is mentioned will be in
dread of it, because of the purpose of the LORD of hosts which
He is planning against Egypt.

¹⁸In that day five cities in the land of Egypt will speak the
language of [the Hebrews of] Canaan and swear *allegiance* to
the LORD of hosts. One [of them] will be called the City of
Destruction.

¹⁹In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst
of the land of Egypt, and a memorial stone to the LORD near its

border.

²⁰It will become a sign and a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt; for they will cry to the LORD because of oppressors, and He will send them a Savior, a [Great] Defender, and He will rescue them. [Judg 2:18; 3:9, 15]

²¹And so the LORD will make Himself known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know [heed, honor, and cherish] the LORD in that day. They will even worship with sacrifices [of animals] and offerings [of produce]; they will make a vow to the LORD and fulfill it.

²²The LORD will strike Egypt, striking but healing it; so they will return to the LORD, and He will respond to them and heal them.

²³In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrians will come into Egypt and the Egyptians into Assyria; and the Egyptians will worship *and* serve [the LORD] with the Assyrians.

²⁴In that day Israel will be the third *party* with Egypt and with Assyria [in a Messianic league], a blessing in the midst of the earth, ²⁵whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, “Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My heritage.”

20 IN THE year that the Tartan [the Assyrian commander in chief] came to Ashdod [in Philistia], when Sargon king of Assyria sent him and he fought against Ashdod and captured it, ²at that time the LORD spoke through Isaiah the son of

Amoz, saying, “Go, untie the sackcloth from your hips and take your sandals off your feet.” And he did so, walking around stripped [to his loincloth] and barefoot. [Mic 1:8]

³And the LORD said, “Even as My servant Isaiah has walked stripped and barefoot for three years as a sign and forewarning concerning Egypt and Cush (Ethiopia), ⁴in the same way the king of Assyria will lead away the Egyptian captives and the Cushite exiles, young and old, stripped and barefoot, even with buttocks uncovered—to the shame of Egypt.

⁵“Then they will be dismayed and ashamed because of Cush their hope and Egypt their boast.

⁶“So the inhabitants of this coastland [the Israelites and their neighbors] will say in that day, ‘Look what has happened to those in whom we hoped *and* trusted and to whom we fled for help to be spared from the king of Assyria! But we, how will we escape [captivity and exile]?’”

21 THE [MOURNFUL, inspired] oracle (a burden to be carried) concerning the Desert of the Sea (the seasonally flooded plains just south of Babylon): As windstorms in the Negev (the South) sweep through,

So it (God’s judgment) comes from the desert, from [the hostile armies of] a terrifying land.

²A harsh vision has been shown to me;

The treacherous one deals treacherously, and the destroyer destroys.

Go up, Elam! Lay siege, Media!

All the groaning [caused by Babylon's ruthless oppressions] I [the LORD] have brought to an end. [Is 11:11; 13:17]

³Therefore [continues Isaiah] my loins are filled with anguish;
Pains have seized me like the pains of a woman in childbirth;
I am so bent *and* bewildered that I cannot hear, I am so terrified that I cannot see.

⁴My mind reels, horror overwhelms me;
The twilight I longed for has been turned into fear *and* trembling for me. [Dan 5:1–4]

⁵They set the table [for the doomed banquet], they spread out the cloth, they eat, they drink;
“Rise up, captains [of Belshazzar's court], oil your shields [for battle, for your enemy is at the gates]!”

⁶This is what the Lord says to me,
“Go, station the lookout, let him report what he sees.

⁷“When he sees a chariot, horsemen in pairs,
A train of donkeys and a train of camels,
Let him pay attention *and* listen closely, very closely.”

⁸And the lookout called *like* a lion,
“O Lord, I stand continually on the watchtower by day,
And I am stationed every night at my guard post.

⁹“Now look! Here comes a troop of riders, horsemen in pairs.”
And one said, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon;

And all the carved images of her gods are shattered on the ground.”

¹⁰O my threshed *people* [Judah, who must be judged and trampled down by Babylon], my afflicted of the threshing floor.

What I have heard from the LORD of hosts,
The God of Israel, I have [joyfully] announced to you [that Babylon is to fall].

¹¹The [mournful, inspired] oracle (a burden to be carried) concerning Dumah (Edom):

Someone keeps calling to me from Seir (Edom),
“Watchman, what is left of the night [of Assyrian oppression]?

Watchman, what is left of the night? [How long until morning?]”

¹²The watchman says,

“The morning comes [only briefly], but also [comes] the night [of Babylonian oppression].

If you would ask [of me then], ask [again, if Edom really wishes to know];
Come back again.”

¹³The [mournful, inspired] oracle (a burden to be carried) concerning Arabia:

In the thickets of Arabia you must spend the night,
Caravans of Dedanites.

¹⁴Bring water for the thirsty [Dedanites],
O inhabitants of the land of Tema [in Arabia];

Meet the fugitive with bread.

¹⁵For they have fled from the swords,
From the drawn sword, from the bent bow
And from the press of battle *and* grief of war.

¹⁶For the Lord has said this to me, “Within a year,
according to the years of a hired man [who will work no longer
than was agreed], all the splendor of [the tribe of] Kedar will
end; ¹⁷and the remainder of the number of archers, the mighty
men of the sons of Kedar, will be few; for the LORD, the God of
Israel, has spoken.”

22 THE [MOURNFUL, inspired] oracle (a burden to be
carried) concerning the Valley of Vision: What is the matter with
you now, that you have all gone up to the housetops,

²You [Jerusalem] who were full of noise,
A tumultuous city, a joyous *and* exuberant city;
Your slain were not slain [in a glorious death] with the
sword,
Nor did they die in battle.

³All your leaders have fled together [with your king],
And have been captured without the bow [which they had
thrown away];
All of you who were found were taken captive together,
Though they had fled far away.

⁴Therefore I say, “Look away from me;
Let me weep bitterly.
Do not try to comfort me over the destruction of the

daughter of my people.”

⁵For the Lord GOD of hosts has a day of panic *and* of tumult,
of trampling, of confusion In the Valley of Vision,
A [day of] breaking down walls
And a crying [for help] to the mountain.

⁶Elam took up the quiver
With the chariots, infantry and horsemen;
And Kir uncovered the shield.

⁷And it came to pass that your choicest valleys were full of
chariots,
And the horsemen took their fixed positions [in an offensive
array] at the gate [of Jerusalem]. [2 Chr 32; Is 36]

⁸Then God removed the [protective] covering of Judah;
And in that day you looked to the weapons of the House of
the Forest (Solomon’s armory). [1 Kin 7:2; 10:17, 21]

⁹You saw that the breaches
In the wall of the City of David [the citadel of Zion] were
many;
You collected [within the city’s walls] the waters of the
Lower Pool (Siloam).

¹⁰Then you counted the houses of Jerusalem
And you tore down the houses [to get materials] to fortify
the city wall [by extending it].

¹¹You also made a reservoir between the two walls
For the waters of the Old Pool,
But you did not look to its Maker,
Nor did you recognize Him who planned it long ago.

¹²Therefore in that day the Lord GOD of hosts called you to weeping, to mourning, To shaving the head and to wearing sackcloth [in humiliation].

¹³Instead, there is joy and jubilation,
Killing of oxen and slaughtering of sheep,
Eating meat and drinking wine, *saying*,
“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we may die.”

¹⁴But the LORD of hosts revealed Himself in my ears,
“This sin absolutely will not be forgiven you
Until you die,” says the Lord GOD of hosts.

¹⁵For the Lord GOD of hosts says this, “Go to this [contemptible] steward, To Shebna, who is in charge of the *royal* household [but is building himself a tomb worthy of a king, and say to him], ¹⁶“What business do you have here?

And whom do you have here,
That you have hewn out a tomb here for yourself,
You who hew a sepulcher on the height,
You who carve a resting place for yourself in the rock?

¹⁷“Listen carefully, the LORD is about to hurl you away violently, O man; And He is about to grasp you firmly

¹⁸And roll you up tightly like a ball
And toss you into a vast country;
There you will die
And there your splendid chariots will be,
You shame of your master’s house.’

¹⁹“I will depose you from your office,

And you will be pulled down from your position [of importance].

²⁰“Then it will come to pass in that day
That I will summon My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah.

²¹“And I will clothe him with your tunic [of distinction]
And tie your sash securely around him.
I will entrust him with your authority;
He will become a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and
to the house of Judah.

²²“Then I will set on his shoulder the key of the house of
David;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Opens and Closes Doors

Of course you want to be able to know for certain what God wants you to do in every situation, but you don't. You only must step out in faith and eventually do one thing or the other. Along the way, God will open and close doors for you. As you follow Him, you find yourself in His will.

As you seek to know what God wants you to do, pray that if what you are doing is not what He has for you, God will graciously close the door before you make a mistake (see Isa. 22:22). If you don't have peace about something, don't do it. If after prayer and waiting you feel you still don't have a clear direction from God, it may mean He is simply giving you the freedom of making your own choice. If you make a decision that turns out to be wrong, God will meet you where you are and bring you back to the right path. God is merciful, and you don't have to be afraid to make decisions. The best way to learn is to start moving forward. Walk through the doors God opens, and back away from the ones He closes.

When he opens no one will shut,

When he shuts no one will open.

²³“I will drive him *like* a peg in a firm place,

And he will become a throne of honor *and* glory to his father's house.

²⁴“So they will hang on him all the honor *and* glory [the complete responsibility] of his father’s house, offspring and issue [of the family, high and low], all the least of the articles, from the bowls to all the jars.

²⁵“In that day,” declares the LORD of hosts, “the peg (Eliakim) that was driven into the firm place will give way; it will even break off and fall, and the burden hanging on it will be cut off, for the LORD has spoken.”

23 THE [MOURNFUL, inspired] oracle (a burden to be carried) concerning Tyre: Wail, O ships of Tarshish,
For Tyre is destroyed, without house, without harbor;
It is reported to them from the land of Cyprus (Kittim).

²Be silent, you inhabitants of the coastland,
You merchants of Sidon;
Your messengers crossed the sea

³And *they were* on great waters.
The grain of the Shihor, the harvest of the Nile River, was
Tyre’s revenue;
And she was the market of nations.

⁴Be ashamed, O Sidon [mother-city of Tyre, now like a widow bereaved of her children];
For the sea speaks, the stronghold of the sea, saying,
“I have neither labored nor given birth [to children];
I have neither brought up young men nor reared virgins.”

⁵When the report *reaches* Egypt,
They will be in agony at the report about Tyre.

- ⁶Cross over to Tarshish [to seek safety as exiles];
Wail, O inhabitants of the coastland [of Tyre].
- ⁷Is this your jubilant *city*,
Whose origin dates back to antiquity,
Whose feet used to carry her [far away] to colonize distant
places?
- ⁸Who has planned this against Tyre, the bestower of
crowns,
Whose merchants were princes, whose traders were the
honored of the earth?
- ⁹The LORD of hosts has planned it, to defile the pride of all
beauty, To bring into contempt *and* humiliation all the
honored of the earth.
- ¹⁰Overflow your land like [the overflow of] the Nile, O
Daughter of Tarshish;
There is no more restraint [on you to make you pay tribute
to Tyre].
- ¹¹He has stretched out His hand over the sea,
He has shaken the kingdoms;
The LORD has given a command concerning Canaan to
destroy her strongholds *and* her fortresses [like Tyre and
Sidon].
- ¹²He has said, “You shall never again exult [in triumph], O
crushed Virgin Daughter of Sidon.
Arise, cross over to Cyprus; even there you will find no
rest.”

¹³Now look at the land of the Chaldeans (Babylonia)—this is the people which was not; the Assyrians allocated Tyre for desert creatures—they set up their siege towers, they stripped its palaces, they made it a ruin.

¹⁴Wail, O ships of Tarshish,
For your stronghold [of Tyre] is destroyed.

¹⁵Now in that day Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years, like the days of one king. At the end of seventy years it will happen to Tyre as in the prostitute's song: ¹⁶Take a harp, walk around the city,

O forgotten prostitute;
Play the strings skillfully, sing many songs,
That you may be remembered.

¹⁷It will come to pass at the end of seventy years that the LORD will remember Tyre. Then she will return to her prostitute's wages and will play the [role of a] prostitute [by trading] with all the kingdoms on the face of the earth.

¹⁸But her commercial gain and her prostitute's wages will be dedicated to the LORD; it will not be treasured or stored up, but her commercial gain will become sufficient food and stately clothing for those who dwell (minister) in the presence of the LORD.

24 BEHOLD, THE LORD lays waste to the earth, devastates it, twists *and* distorts its face and scatters its inhabitants.

²And the people will be like the priest, the servant like his master, the maid like her mistress, the buyer like the seller, the

lender like the borrower, the creditor like the debtor [as God's impartial judgment of sin comes on all].

³The earth will be completely laid waste and utterly pillaged, for the LORD has spoken this word.

⁴The earth dries up and crumbles away, the world dries out and crumbles away, the exalted of the people of the earth fade away.

⁵The earth also is polluted by its inhabitants, because they have transgressed laws, violated statutes, and broken the everlasting covenant. [Gen 9:1–17; Deut 29:20]

⁶Therefore, a curse devours the earth, and those who live on it suffer the punishment of their guilt. Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are burned [under the curse of God's wrath], and few people are left. [Rom 1:20]

⁷The new wine mourns,
The vine decays;
All the merry-hearted sigh *and* groan.

⁸The mirth of the timbrels (tambourines) ceases,
The noise of those who rejoice ends,
The joy of the harp ceases.

⁹They do not drink wine with a song;
Strong drink is bitter to those who drink it.

¹⁰The city of chaos is broken down;
Every house is shut up so that no one may enter.

¹¹There is an outcry in the streets concerning the wine;
All jubilation is darkened,
The joy of the earth is banished.

- ¹²Horrible desolation is left in the city,
And the gate is battered into ruins.
- ¹³For so it will be in the midst of the earth among the peoples,
As the shaking of an olive tree,
As the gleanings when the grape harvest is over [and only
a little of the fruit remains].
- ¹⁴They [who have escaped and remain] raise their voices,
they shout for joy;
They rejoice from the [Mediterranean] Sea in the majesty of
the LORD.
- ¹⁵Therefore honor *and* glorify the LORD in the east [in the
region of light], The name of the LORD, the God of Israel
[honor His name],
In the coastlands *and* islands of the [Mediterranean] Sea.
- ¹⁶From the ends of the earth we hear songs, “Glory *and* honor
to the Righteous One,”
But I say, “I waste away, I waste away. Woe to me!
The treacherous deal treacherously,
Indeed, the treacherous deal very treacherously.”
- ¹⁷Terror and pit [of destruction] and snare
Confront you, O inhabitant of the earth.
- ¹⁸Then it will be that he who flees at the sound of terror will
fall into the pit,
And he who comes up out of the pit will be caught in the
snare;
For the windows of heaven are opened, and the
foundations of the earth tremble.

- ¹⁹The earth is broken completely apart,
The earth is split apart,
The earth is shaken violently.
- ²⁰The earth reels back and forth like a drunkard
And sways like a shack;
Its transgression lies heavily upon it,
And it will fall and not rise again.
- ²¹So it will happen in that day
That the LORD will visit *and* punish the host (fallen angels)
of heaven on high, And the kings of the earth on the
earth. [1 Cor 15:25; Eph 3:10; 6:12]
- ²²They will be gathered together
As prisoners [are gathered] in a dungeon;
They will be shut up in prison,
And after many days they will be visited *and* punished.
[Zech 9:11, 12; 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6]
- ²³Then the full moon will be embarrassed and the sun
ashamed,
For the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in
Jerusalem,
And *His* glory *and* brilliance will shine before His elders.

25 O LORD, You are my God; I will exalt You, I will praise *and*
give thanks to Your name;
For You have done miraculous things,
Plans *formed* long, long ago, [fulfilled] with perfect
faithfulness.

²For You have made a city into a heap [of trash],
A fortified city into a ruin;
A palace of foreigners is no longer a city,
It will never be rebuilt.

³Therefore a strong people will honor You;
Cities of terrible *and* violent nations will fear You.

⁴For You have been a stronghold for the helpless,
A stronghold for the poor in his distress,
A shelter from the storm, a shade from the heat;
For the breath of tyrants
Is like a rainstorm *against* a wall.

⁵Like heat in a dry land, You will subdue the noise of
foreigners [rejoicing over their enemies]; Like heat in the
shadow of a cloud, the song of the tyrants is silenced.

⁶On this mountain [Zion] the LORD of hosts will prepare a
lavish banquet for all peoples [to welcome His reign on
earth], A banquet of aged wines—choice pieces [flavored]
with marrow,
Of refined, aged wines.

⁷And on this mountain He will destroy the covering that is
[cast] over all peoples,
And the veil [of death] that is woven *and* spread over all
the nations.

⁸He will swallow up death [and abolish it] for all time.
And the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces,
And He will take away the disgrace of His people from all
the earth;

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*I am grateful, Lord, that You
will swallow up death and
abolish it for all time. I take
comfort in the promise that
You will wipe away tears from
all faces.*

• adapted from Isaiah 25:8

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Security in God

A sense of security is something everyone needs and desires. Security enables us to enjoy healthy thinking and living. It means we feel safe, accepted, and approved of. When we are secure, we approve of who we are in Christ, we have confidence, and we accept and love ourselves in a balanced way.

I believe God's will for each one of us is to have the security that Isaiah spoke about: "Indeed, this is our God for whom we have waited that He would save us" (Isa. 25:9). The foundation for this security is in knowing who we are in Christ, accepting God's unconditional love, and accepting ourselves even though we realize we have weaknesses and are not perfect. Remember, when God looks at you, He sees the righteousness of His Son, Jesus (see 2 Cor. 5:21).

For the LORD has spoken. [1 Cor 15:26, 54; 2 Tim 1:10]

⁹It will be said in that day,

"Indeed, this is our God for whom we have waited that He would save us.

This is the LORD for whom we have waited;

Let us shout for joy and rejoice in His salvation."

¹⁰For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain [Zion],
And Moab will be trampled down in his place

As straw is trampled down in the [filthy] water of a manure pile.

¹¹ And Moab will spread out his hands in the middle of the filth

As a swimmer spreads out *his hands* to swim,
But *the Lord* will humiliate his pride in spite of the [skillful] movements of his hands.

¹² The high fortifications of your walls He will bring down,
Lay low, and cast to the ground, to the dust.

26 IN THAT day this song will be sung in the land of Judah:

“We have a strong city;
He sets up salvation as walls and ramparts.

² “Open the gates, that the righteous nation may enter,
The one that remains faithful *and* trustworthy.

³ “You will keep in perfect *and* constant peace *the one* whose mind is steadfast [that is, committed and focused on You—in both inclination and character], Because he trusts *and* takes refuge in You [with hope and confident expectation].

⁴ “Trust [confidently] in the LORD forever [He is your fortress, your shield, your banner], For the LORD GOD is an everlasting Rock [the Rock of Ages].

Speak God's Word

*God keeps me in perfect and
constant peace because my
mind is steadfast, committed,
and focused on Him—in both
inclination and character—
because I trust and take
refuge in Him with hope and
confident expectation.*

| adapted from ISAIAH 26:3 |

⁵“For He has thrown down the [arrogant] ones who dwell on high, the lofty *and* inaccessible city; He lays it low, He lays it low to the ground, He hurls it to the dust.

⁶“The foot will trample it,
Even the feet of the suffering, and the steps of the helpless.”

⁷The way of the righteous [those in right-standing with God—living in moral and spiritual integrity] is smooth *and* level; O Upright One, make a level path for the just *and* righteous.

⁸Indeed, in the path of Your judgments, O LORD,
We have waited expectantly for You;

Your name, even Your memory, is the desire *and* deep longing of our souls.

⁹In the night my soul longs for You [O LORD],
Indeed, my spirit within me seeks You diligently;
For [only] when Your judgments are experienced on the earth

Will the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.

¹⁰*Though* the wicked is shown compassion *and* favor,
He does not learn righteousness;
In the land of uprightness he deals unjustly,
And refuses to see the majesty of the LORD.

¹¹*Though* Your hand is lifted up [to strike], O LORD, the wicked do not see it.

Let them see Your zeal for *Your* people and be put to shame;
Indeed, let the fire reserved for Your enemies consume them.

¹²LORD, You will establish peace for us,
Since You have also performed for us all that we have done.

¹³O LORD our God, other masters besides You have ruled over us;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Steadfast Mind

We function best when we have a steadfast mind that is committed and focused on God (see Isa. 26:3). When the mind is calm and steadfast, it is free from fear, worry, or torment. It is also clear and focused, so we can look at situations and decide what to do about them.

Many of us get into trouble when we get out of balance or become unsteady in our minds. Either we move into a state of total passivity in which we do nothing, expecting God to do everything for us, or we become hyperactive, operating most of the time in the flesh. God wants our minds to be steadfast so that we are able to face any situation in life, believing God will help us and give us victory.

Instead of getting distraught and full of fear and worry, we need to go before God and say, "Lord, I'm believing that You will help me in this situation, and if there is something You want me to do, show me what it is."

Whatever God shows us to do about our problem, we need to be diligent to do it. Once we have done all we know to do, we can trust God with the rest. That is what I call faith and steadfastness. I often say, "Do what you can do, and God will do what you cannot do."

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

A Focused, Disciplined Mind

When we worry, we let our minds wander from the past to the present to the future, we wonder or reason about what is going to happen to us, and we lose our peace. God intends for us to keep our minds on what we are doing. To learn from the past or to make plans for the future should be something we do purposefully, and not come as the result of an unfocused or undisciplined mind. All these types of thoughts will pressure us, because they are not God's will.

The prophet Isaiah said, "You will keep in perfect *and* constant peace *the one* whose mind is steadfast [that is, committed and focused on You—in both inclination and character], because he trusts *and* takes refuge in You [with hope and confident expectation]" (Isa. 26:3). The writer of Proverbs stated that the good man would be satisfied with "his ways [the godly thought and action which his heart pursues and in which he delights]" (Prov. 14:14).

Do you want to be peaceful, guarded by God, and satisfied? Then realize that it begins with the thoughts that you

choose to think. Your mind is connected to every feeling you have and every action you take.

If you give yourself over to worry and reasoning, your thoughts may go like this: *How am I going to do everything I have to do? This is more than I can handle.* Instead of worrying about the future, you could think such thoughts as, *God loves me, and He will take care of everything in my future. He will give me the strength and ability to do each thing I need to do as it comes up.*

“Unthinking” thoughts (thoughts we think without thinking about what we are thinking about) never go in a direction that will help us. They are useless at best and tormenting at worst. When you begin making an effort to do your own thinking, you may feel that you are trying to tame a wild animal in your mind. It will take time, patience, and help from God. Learning to choose your own thoughts also requires the wisdom to not condemn yourself when you are not successful. Guilt and condemnation steal your energy and accomplish nothing. They keep you going around and around the same mountain, so to speak. However, the person whose mind is steadfast and focused will find peace. Be encouraged that although thinking right thoughts is challenging at first, it will become easier and more natural the more you practice.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God of perfect and constant peace, I cannot begin to tame my thoughts on my own. I commit myself to steadfastly focusing on You, and I believe that You will guard and keep my heart and mind in Christ Jesus. Amen.

But through You alone we confess Your name.

¹⁴The [wicked] dead will not live [again], the spirits of the dead will not rise *and* return; Therefore You have punished and destroyed them,
And You have wiped out every memory of them [every trace of them].

¹⁵You have increased the nation, O LORD;
You have increased the nation, You are glorified;
You have extended all the borders of the land.

¹⁶O LORD, they sought You in distress;
They managed only a prayerful whisper
When Your discipline was upon them.

¹⁷As a woman with child approaches *the time* to give birth,
She is in pain *and* struggles and cries out in her labor,
So we were before You, O LORD.

¹⁸We have been with child, we have twisted *and* struggled *in labor*;
We gave birth, as it seems, *only* to wind.
We could not accomplish salvation for the earth,
Nor were inhabitants of the world born.

¹⁹Your dead will live;
Their dead bodies will rise.
You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy!
For your dew is a dew of [celestial] light [heavenly, supernatural],
And the earth will give birth to the spirits of the dead. [Ezek

37:11, 12]

²⁰Come, my people, enter your chambers
And shut your doors behind you;
Hide for a little while
Until the [LORD's] wrath is past.

²¹Listen carefully, the LORD is about to come out of His
[heavenly] place To punish the inhabitants of the earth
for their wickedness [their sin, their injustice, their
wrongdoing];
The earth will reveal the [innocent] blood shed upon her
And will no longer cover her slain.

27 IN THAT day the Lord will punish Leviathan the fleeing
serpent With His fierce and great and mighty sword [rescuing
Israel from her enemy],
Even Leviathan the twisted serpent;
And He will kill the dragon who *lives* in the sea.

²In that day [it will be said of the redeemed nation of Israel],
“A vineyard of wine, sing in praise of it!

³“I, the LORD, am its Keeper;
I water it every moment.
So that no one will harm it,
I guard it night and day.

⁴“I have no wrath.
Should anyone give Me briars *and* thorns in battle,
I would step on them, I would set them all on fire.

- ⁵“Or let him (Israel) cling to My strength *and* rely on My protection [My stronghold],
Let him make peace with Me,
Let him make peace with Me.”
- ⁶In the generations to come Jacob will take root;
Israel will blossom and sprout,
And they will fill the surface of the world with fruit. [Hos 14:1–6; Rom 11:12]
- ⁷Like the striking by Him who has struck them, has He struck them?
Or like the slaughter of His slain, have they been slain?
- ⁸You contended with them by exile, by driving them away [from Canaan];
He has expelled them with His fierce wind on the day of the east wind.
- ⁹Therefore through this the wickedness [the sin, the injustice, the wrongdoing] of Jacob (Israel) will be atoned for *and* forgiven; And this will be the full price [that God requires] for taking away his sin:
When Israel makes all the stones of the [pagan] altars like crushed chalk stones;
When the Asherim and the incense altars will not stand.
- ¹⁰For the fortified city is isolated,
A settlement deserted and abandoned like the desert;
There the calf will graze,
And there it will lie down and feed on its branches.
- ¹¹When its branches are dry, they are broken off;

The women come and make a fire with them.
For they are not a people of understanding,
Therefore He who made them will not have compassion on
them,
And He who created them will not be gracious to them.

¹²In that day the LORD will thresh [out His grain] from the
flowing stream of the River [Euphrates] to the Brook of Egypt,
and you will be gathered up one by one, O sons of Israel.

¹³It will come to pass in that day that a great trumpet will be
blown, and those who were lost *and* perishing in the land of
Assyria and who were scattered in the land of Egypt will come
and worship the LORD on the holy mountain at Jerusalem.
[Zech 14:16; Matt 24:31; Rev 11:15]

28 WOE (JUDGMENT is coming) to [Samaria] the splendid
crown of the drunkards of Ephraim, And to the fading flower of
its glorious beauty,

Which is at the head of the rich valley
Of those who are overcome with wine!

²Listen carefully, the Lord has a strong and mighty *agent*
[the Assyrian];
Like a tempest of hail, a disastrous storm,
Like a tempest of mighty overflowing waters,
He has cast it down to the earth with *His* hand.

³The splendid crown of the drunkards of Ephraim is trampled
by [the foreigners'] feet.

⁴And the fading flower of its glorious beauty,

Which is at the head of the rich valley,
Will be like the early fig before the summer,
Which one sees,
And as soon as it is in his hand
He [greedily] swallows it [and so will the Assyrians rapidly
devour Samaria, Israel's capital].

⁵In that day the LORD of hosts will become a magnificent
crown
And a glorious diadem to the [converted] remnant of His
people,

⁶A spirit of justice for him who sits in judgment
[administering the law],
A strength to those who drive back the battle at the gate.

⁷But even these reel with wine and stagger from strong drink:
The priest and the prophet reel with strong drink;
They are confused by wine, they stagger from strong drink;
They reel while seeing visions,
They stagger *when pronouncing* judgment.

⁸For all the tables are full of filthy vomit, so that there is no
place [that is clean.]

⁹*They say* "To whom would He teach knowledge?
And to whom would He explain the message?
Those *just* weaned from milk?
Those *just* taken from the breast?

¹⁰"For *He says*,
'Precept upon precept, precept upon precept,
Rule upon rule, rule upon rule,

Here a little, there a little.”

¹¹Indeed, the LORD will teach this people [in a more humiliating way]

By [men with] stammering lips and a foreign tongue,

¹²He who said to them, “This is the place of quiet, give rest to the weary,”

And, “This is the resting place,” yet they would not listen.

¹³Therefore the word of the LORD to them will be [merely monotonous repetitions]: “Precept upon precept, precept upon precept,

Rule upon rule, rule upon rule,

Here a little, there a little.”

That they may go and stumble backward, and be broken, ensnared, and taken captive.

¹⁴Therefore, hear the word of the LORD, you arrogant men Who rule this people who are in Jerusalem!

¹⁵Because you have said, “We have made a covenant with death,

And with Sheol (the place of the dead) we have made an agreement,

When the overwhelming scourge passes by, it will not reach us,

For we have made lies our refuge and we have concealed ourselves in deception.”

¹⁶Therefore the Lord GOD says this,

“Listen carefully, I am laying in Zion a Stone, a tested Stone, A precious Cornerstone for the [secure] foundation, firmly

placed.

He who believes [who trusts in, relies on, and adheres to that Stone] will not be disturbed *or* give way [in sudden panic]. [Ps 118:22; Matt 21:42; Acts 4:11; Rom 9:33; Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:4–6]

¹⁷“I will make justice the measuring line
And righteousness the mason’s level;
Then hail will sweep away the refuge of lies
And waters will flood over the secret [hiding] place.

¹⁸“Your covenant with death will be annulled,
And your agreement with Sheol (the place of the dead) will not stand;
When the overwhelming scourge passes through,
Then you will become its trampling ground.

¹⁹“As often as it passes through, it will seize you;
For morning after morning it will pass through, by day and by night,
And it will be sheer terror to understand what it means.”

²⁰For the bed is too short to stretch out on,
And the blanket is too narrow to wrap around oneself [and likewise all their preparations are inadequate].

²¹For the LORD will rise up as at Mount Perazim,
He will be stirred up as in the Valley of Gibeon,
To do His work, His unusual *and* incredible work,
And to accomplish His work, His extraordinary work. [2 Sam 5:20; 1 Chr 14:16]

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*I thank You, Lord, that You
have made Your counsel
wonderful and Your wisdom
great toward me.*

• adapted from Isaiah 28:29

- ²²Now do not carry on as scoffers,
Or the bands which bind you will be made stronger;
For I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts [a decree]
Of decisive destruction on all the earth.
- ²³Listen and hear my voice;
Listen carefully and hear my words.
- ²⁴Does the farmer plow all day to plant seed?
Does he *continually* dig furrows and harrow his ground
[after it is prepared]?
- ²⁵When he has leveled its surface,
Does he not sow [the seed of] dill and scatter cumin,

- And plant wheat in rows,
And barley in its [intended] place and rye within its border?
²⁶For his God instructs [him correctly] and teaches him properly.
²⁷For dill is not threshed with a sharp threshing sledge,
Nor is a cartwheel rolled over cumin;
But dill is beaten out with a staff, and cumin with a rod.
²⁸Bread *grain* is crushed fine,
Indeed, the farmer does not continue to thresh it forever.
Because the wheel of his cart and his horses *eventually* damage it,
He does not thresh it longer.
²⁹This also comes from the LORD of hosts,
Who has made His counsel wonderful and His wisdom great.

29 WOE (JUDGMENT is coming) to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David [once] camped!

Add yet another year; let the feasts run their course [but only one year more].

²Then I will harass Ariel,
And she will be a *city of* mourning and lamenting (crying out in grief)

Yet she will be like an Ariel [an altar hearth] to Me.

³I will camp against you and encircle you,
And I will hem you in with siege works,
And I will raise fortifications against you.

⁴Then you [Jerusalem] will be brought low,
You will speak from the earth,
And from the dust where you lie face down
Your muffled words *will come*.
Your voice will also be like that of a spirit from the earth [like
one produced by a medium],
And your speech will whisper *and* squeak from the dust.

⁵But the multitude of your enemies [that assault you] will
become like fine dust, And the multitude of the tyrants like
the chaff which blows away;
And it will happen in an instant, suddenly [that your enemy
is destroyed].

⁶You will be punished by the LORD of hosts with thunder and
earthquake and great noise, With whirlwind and tempest
and the flame of a consuming fire.

⁷And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel
(Jerusalem),
Even all who fight against her and her stronghold, and who
distress her,
Will be like a dream, a vision of the night.

⁸It will be as when a hungry man dreams
That he is eating,
But when he awakens, his hunger is not satisfied;
Or as when a thirsty man dreams
That he is drinking,
But when he awakens, in fact, he is faint
And his thirst is not quenched.

So will the multitude of all the nations be
Who fight against Mount Zion.

⁹Stop *and* take some time and wonder [at this prophecy],
Blind yourselves and be blinded [at its fulfillment by your
spiritual incompetence].

They are drunk, but not from wine;
They stagger, but not from strong drink.

¹⁰For the LORD has poured over you a spirit of deep sleep.
He has closed your eyes, [you who are] the prophets;
And He has covered your heads, [you who are] the seers.

¹¹The entire vision [of all these things] will be to you like
the words of a scroll that is sealed, which they give to one who
can read, saying, "Read this, please," he shall say, "I cannot,
for it is sealed."

¹²Then the book will be given to the one who cannot read,
saying, "Read this, please." And he will say, "I cannot read."

¹³Then the Lord said,

"Because this nation approaches [Me only] with their
words

And honors Me [only] with their lip service,
But they remove their hearts far from Me,

And their reverence for Me is a tradition that is learned *by*
rote [without any regard for its meaning], ¹⁴Therefore,

listen carefully, I will again do marvelous *and* amazing
things with this people, wonderful and astonishing
things; And the wisdom of their wise men will perish,

And the understanding of their discerning men will be

hidden.”

¹⁵Woe (judgment is coming) to those who [try to] deeply hide
their plans from the LORD, Whose deeds are *done* in a
dark place,

And who say, “Who sees us?” or “Who knows us?”

¹⁶You turn *things* upside down [with your perversity]!
Shall the potter be considered equal with the clay,
That the thing that is made would say to its maker, “He did
not make me”;

Or the thing that is formed say to him who formed it, “He
has no understanding”?

¹⁷Is it not yet a very little while
Until Lebanon will be turned into a fertile field,
And the fertile field regarded as a forest?

¹⁸On that day the deaf will hear the words of a book,
And out of *their* gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind
will see [the words of the book].

¹⁹The afflicted also will increase their joy in the LORD,
And the needy of mankind will rejoice *and* celebrate in the
Holy One of Israel.

²⁰For the tyrant will come to an end and the scorner will be
finished,

Indeed all who are intent on doing evil will be cut off—

²¹Those who cause a person to be condemned with a [false]
word,

And lay a trap for him who upholds justice at the [city] gate,
And defraud the one in the right with meaningless

arguments.

²²Therefore, the LORD, who redeemed Abraham [from paganism] says this, concerning the house of Jacob (Israel): “Jacob will not be ashamed, nor will his face turn pale [with disappointment because of his children’s degenerate behavior]; ²³For when he sees his children, the work of My hands, in his midst,
They will sanctify My Name;
They will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob
And will stand in awe *and* reverent fear of the God of Israel.
²⁴“Those who err in mind will know the truth,
And those who criticize *and* murmur discontentedly will
accept instruction.

30 “WOE (JUDGMENT is coming) to the rebellious children,” declares the LORD, “Who carry out a plan, but not Mine,
And make an alliance [by pouring out a libation], but not of My Spirit,
In order to add sin to sin;
²Who proceed down to Egypt
Without consulting Me,
To take refuge in the stronghold of Pharaoh
And to take shelter in the shadow of Egypt!
³“Therefore the safety *and* protection of Pharaoh will be your shame
And the refuge in the shadow of Egypt, your humiliation

and disgrace.

⁴“For his princes are at Zoan

And his ambassadors arrive at Hanes [in Egypt].

⁵“All will be ashamed because of a people (the Egyptians)
who cannot benefit them,

Who are not a help or benefit, but a shame and also a
disgrace.”

⁶A [mournful, inspired] oracle (a burden to be carried)
concerning the beasts of the Negev (the South): Through a
land of trouble and anguish,

From where *come* lioness and lion, viper and [fiery] flying
serpent,

They carry their riches on the shoulders of young donkeys
And their treasures on the humps of camels,
To a people (Egyptians) who cannot benefit them.

⁷For Egypt’s help is worthless and good for nothing.

Therefore, I have called her

“Rahab Who Has Been Exterminated.”

⁸Now, go, write it on a tablet before them

And inscribe it on a scroll,

So that it may serve in the time to come

As a witness [against them] forevermore.

⁹For this is a rebellious people, lying sons,

Sons who refuse to listen to

The law *and* instruction of the LORD;

¹⁰Who say to the seers, “You must not see *visions from*
God”;

And to the prophets, “You must not prophesy to us what is right!

Speak to us pleasant things *and* smooth words,
Prophesy [deceitful] illusions [that we will enjoy].

¹¹“Get out of the [true] way, turn aside from the path [of God],
Stop bothering us with the Holy One of Israel.”

¹²Therefore, the Holy One of Israel says this,

“Because you have refused *and* rejected this word [of
Mine]

And have put your trust in oppression and guile, and have
relied on them,

¹³Therefore this wickedness [this sin, this injustice, this
wrongdoing] will be to you Like a crack [in a wall] about
to fall,

A bulge in a high wall,
Whose collapse comes suddenly in an instant,

¹⁴“Whose collapse is like the smashing of a potter’s jar,
Crushed so savagely
that there cannot be found among its pieces a potsherd
[large enough]

To take [coals of] fire from a fireplace,
Or to scoop water from a cistern.”

¹⁵For the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel has said this,

“In returning [to Me] and rest you shall be saved,
In quietness and confident trust is your strength.”
But you were not willing,

¹⁶And you said, “No! We will flee on horses!”

Therefore you will flee [from your enemies]!
And [you said], “We will ride on swift horses!”
Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift.

POWERPOINT

Isaiah 30:18 is one of my favorite scriptures. God is *waiting expectantly* and *longing* to show you His goodness. This is why you can happily and confidently expect good in your life. It isn't something God is begrudgingly agreeing to do; it is something He loves to do. Jesus died so you may "have *and* enjoy life, and have it in abundance [to the full, till it overflows]" (John 10:10). Don't go through life with negative thoughts or with a bad attitude. Decide to have a good attitude, expecting good things from the Lord, because He is good!



¹⁷ A thousand *of you will flee* at the threat of one *man*;
You will flee at the threat of five,

Until you are left like a flag on the top of a mountain,
And like a signal on a hill.

¹⁸Therefore the LORD waits [expectantly] *and* longs to be
gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have
compassion on you.

For the LORD is a God of justice;

Blessed (happy, fortunate) are all those who long for Him
[since He will never fail them]. [John 14:3, 27; 2 Cor 12:9;
Heb 12:2; 1 John 3:16; Rev 3:5]

¹⁹O people in Zion, inhabitant in Jerusalem, you will weep
no longer. He will most certainly be gracious to you at the
sound of your cry for help; when He hears it, He will answer
you.

²⁰Though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and
the water of oppression, yet your Teacher will no longer hide
Himself, but your eyes will [constantly] see your Teacher.

²¹Your ears will hear a word behind you, “This is the way,
walk in it,” whenever you turn to the right or to the left.

²²And you will defile your carved images overlaid with
silver, and your cast images plated with gold. You will scatter
them like a bloodstained *cloth*, and will say to them, “Be
gone!”

²³Then He will give you rain for the seed with which you
sow the ground, and bread [grain] from the produce of the
ground, and it will be rich and plentiful. In that day your
livestock will graze in large *and* roomy pastures.

²⁴Also the oxen and the young donkeys that work the
ground will eat salted fodder, which has been winnowed with

shovel and pitchfork.

²⁵On every lofty mountain and on every high hill there will be streams of water on the day of the great slaughter (the day of the LORD), when the towers fall [and all His enemies are destroyed].

²⁶The light of the full moon will be like the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times *brighter*; like the light of seven days [concentrated in one], in the day the LORD binds up the fracture of His people and heals the wound He has inflicted [because of their sins].

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

God Waits and Longs To Bless You

Isaiah says, “Therefore the LORD waits [expectantly] *and* longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed (happy, fortunate) are all those who long for Him [since He will never fail them]” (Isa. 30:18).

God waits and longs for *us*. That promise staggers my mind. The Creator of the universe and the Giver of all life has chosen to wait for us—waits for us to respond to His love, waits for us to turn to Him for help. God wants to show us love.

Perhaps as much as anywhere else, Satan attempts to build a mental stronghold right there. When we try to contemplate God’s love for us, many of us can’t take it in. We can only think of our failures, our shortcomings, and all the other reasons God shouldn’t love and bless us. If we were to read, “God wants to punish you,” we wouldn’t have any trouble saying, “Yes, that’s what I deserve.”

How would we respond if someone said, “God wants to bless you”? We would probably answer, “I don’t deserve that,” and we would be right, we don’t “deserve” it, but God wants us to receive it and be thankful.

We want God to love us, encourage us, bless us, and give us victory, but He cannot unless we are willing to receive them by faith.

Our tendency is to think we have to do something to earn God's blessings... that we have to be good enough or faithful enough. We miss the point of God's powerful, gracious love. Our blessings from God are not the result of *our* goodness. They are the result of *God's* goodness.

We are entitled to God's blessings for only one reason: because we are His children. It's just that simple. Those of us who are parents grasp that concept with regard to our children. They don't always deserve our love, our protection, and all the good things we choose to give them, but we want them to have them simply because they are our children.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Gracious Father, help me to receive everything You want me to have, not because I deserve it, but because You are good! Amen.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

You Can Hear from God

God speaks in a still, small voice, or as “the sound of a gentle blowing” (see 1 Kin. 19:12). If you want to hear from Him, create a quiet, peaceful, strife-free atmosphere, and set apart regular time to fellowship with Him there. He may not always speak in the way you might think that He would, but don’t get discouraged—God will lead you. “Your ears will hear a word behind you, ‘This is the way, walk in it’” (Isa. 30:21).

God rarely lets us in on His entire plan at the beginning. Obey what you sense in your heart to do right now, and when He is ready, He will show you the next step. As you do, you will find your sensitivity to God’s voice increasing. He will speak to you, and you will hear from Him. God speaks in many different ways. Through prayer and the study of His Word we can learn to be sensitive to His voice.

²⁷Now look, the name of the LORD comes from far away,
Burning with His anger, and heavy with smoke;
His lips are full of indignation,
And His tongue is like a consuming fire.

²⁸His breath is like an overflowing river,
Which reaches to the neck,
To sift the nations back and forth in a sieve [of disaster],
And to put in the jaws of the peoples the bridle which leads

to ruin.

- ²⁹You will have a song as in the night when a holy feast is kept,
And joy of heart as when one marches [in procession] with a flute,
To go to the [temple on the] mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel.
- ³⁰And the LORD will make His majestic voice heard,
And show the descending of His arm [striking] in [His] fierce anger,
And in the flame of a devouring fire,
In the crashing sound *of heavy rain*, cloudburst, and hailstones.
- ³¹For at the voice of the LORD the Assyrians will be terrified,
When He strikes [them] with the rod.
- ³²And every blow of the rod of punishment,
Which the LORD will lay on them,
Will be to *the music of Israel's* tambourines and lyres;
And in battles, brandishing weapons, He will fight Assyria.
- ³³For Topheth [in Hinnom] has long been ready;
Indeed, it has been prepared for the [Assyrian] king.
He has made it deep and wide,
A pit of fire with plenty of wood;
The breath of the LORD, like a river of brimstone (blazing sulfur), kindles *and* fans it. [Jer 7:31, 32; Matt 5:22; 25:41]

31 WOE (JUDGMENT is coming) to those who go down to

Egypt for help, Who rely on horses
And trust in chariots because they are many,
And in horsemen because they are very strong,
But they do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek *and*
consult the LORD!

POWERPOINT

I have never discovered precisely what “woe” is, but I know I don’t want any of it (see Isa. 31:1). Woe is obviously a sorrowful thing; it is trouble and misery. When we seek God, we have peace and joy, so why would we choose “woe” by seeking the things of this world?



- ²Yet He is also wise and will bring disaster,
And does not retract His words,
But will arise against the house of evildoers
And against the helpers of those who do evil.
- ³Now the Egyptians are men and not God,
And their horses are flesh and not spirit;
And the LORD will stretch out His hand,
And he (Egypt) who helps will stumble,
And he (Judah) who is helped will fall,
And all of them will perish together.

⁴For so the LORD says to me,

“As the lion or the young lion growls over his prey,
And though a large group of shepherds is called out
against him

He will not be terrified at their voice nor cringe at their
noise,

So the LORD of hosts will come down to wage war on
Mount Zion and on its hill.”

⁵Like flying birds, so will the LORD of hosts protect
Jerusalem;

He will protect and save it,

He will pass over and rescue it.

⁶Return to Him from whom you have so deeply defected, O
sons of Israel.

⁷For in that day every man will reject *and* throw away his
idols of silver and his idols of gold [in disgust], which your
own hands have sinfully made for you.

⁸Then the Assyrian will fall by a sword not of man,

And a sword not of man will devour him.

And he will flee from the sword [of God],

And his young men will become forced labor.

⁹“His rock [his stronghold] will pass away because of panic,
And his princes will be terrified at the [sight of the battle]
standard,”

Declares the LORD, whose fire is in Zion and whose furnace
is in Jerusalem.

32 BEHOLD, A King will reign in righteousness, And princes will rule with justice.

²Each [one of them] will be like a hiding place from the wind
And a shelter from the storm,
Like streams of water in a dry land,
Like the shade of a huge rock in a parched *and* weary land
[to those who turn to them].

³Then the eyes of those who see will not be blinded,
And the ears of those who hear will listen attentively.

⁴The heart (mind) of those who act impulsively will discern the truth,
And the tongue of the stammerers will hurry to speak clearly.

⁵The fool (the good-for-nothing) will no longer be called noble,
Nor the rogue said to be generous.

⁶For the fool speaks nonsense,
And his heart (mind) plans wickedness:
To practice ungodliness and to speak error concerning the LORD,
To keep the craving of the hungry unsatisfied
And to deprive the thirsty of drink.

⁷As for the rogue, his weapons are evil;
He conceives wicked plans

Speak God's Word

*With God's help, my mind will
conceive noble and
magnificent things, and I will
stand by what is noble and
magnificent.*

| adapted from ISAIAH 32:8 |

To ruin the poor with lies,
Even when the plea of the needy one is just *and* right.

⁸But the noble man conceives noble *and* magnificent things;
And he stands by what is noble *and* magnificent.

⁹Rise up, you women who are carefree,
And hear my voice,
You confident *and* unsuspecting daughters!
Listen to what I am saying.

¹⁰In little more than a year
You will tremble [with anxiety], you unsuspecting *and*
complacent women;
For the vintage has ended,
And the harvest will not come.

¹¹Tremble, you women who are carefree;

Tremble with fear, you complacent ones!

Strip, undress and wear *sackcloth* on your waist [in grief],

¹²Beat your breasts [in mourning] for the beautiful fields, for
the fruitful vine,

¹³For the land of my people growing over with thorns and
briars—

Yes, [mourn] for all the houses of joy in the joyous city.

¹⁴For the palace has been abandoned, the populated city
deserted;

POWERPOINT

As believers, we are spiritual and we are also natural. The natural does not always understand the spiritual; therefore, it is necessary for our mind to be enlightened concerning what is going on in our spirit. The Holy Spirit desires to bring us this enlightenment, but the mind often misses what the Spirit is trying to reveal because it is too busy. A mind that is too busy is not God's will. The mind is normal when it is at peace and rest, quiet and confident (see Isa. 32:17).



The hill [of the city] and the watchtower have become caves
[for wild animals] forever,
A delight for wild donkeys, a pasture for flocks,

- ¹⁵Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high,
And the wilderness becomes a fertile field,
And the fertile field is valued as a forest. [Ps 104:30; Ezek 36:26, 27; 39:29; Zech 12:10]
- ¹⁶Then justice will dwell in the wilderness,
And righteousness will live in the fertile field.
- ¹⁷And the effect of righteousness will be peace,
And the result of righteousness will be quietness and
confident trust forever.
- ¹⁸Then my people will live in a peaceful surrounding,
And in secure dwellings and in undisturbed resting places.
- ¹⁹But it will hail, when the forest comes down,
And the [capital] city will fall in utter humiliation.
- ²⁰Blessed (happy, fortunate) are you who cast your seed
upon all waters [when the river overflows its banks and
irrigates the land], You who allow the ox and the donkey
to roam freely.

33 WOE (JUDGMENT is coming) to you, O destroyer, You
who were not destroyed,
And he who is treacherous, while *others* did not deal
treacherously with him.
As soon as you finish destroying, you will be destroyed;
As soon as you stop dealing treacherously, *others* will deal
treacherously with you.

²O LORD, be gracious to us; we have waited [expectantly] for

You.

Be the arm of Your servants every morning [that is, their strength and their defense],

Our salvation also in the time of trouble.

³At the sound of the tumult, the peoples flee;

At the lifting up of Yourself nations scatter.

⁴Your spoil [of Israel's foe] is gathered [by the people of Jerusalem] as the caterpillar gathers;

As locusts swarming so people swarm on it.

⁵The LORD is exalted, for He dwells on high;

He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness.

⁶And He will be the security *and* stability of your times,

A treasure of salvation, wisdom and knowledge;

The fear of the LORD is your treasure.

⁷Now look, their brave men shout outside;

The ambassadors [seeking a treaty] of peace weep bitterly.

⁸The highways are deserted, the traveler has ceased [to appear].

The enemy has broken the covenant, he has rejected the cities,

He has no regard for [any] man.

⁹The land mourns and dries out,

Lebanon is shamed and [its lush foliage] withers;

Sharon is like a desert plain,

And Bashan and [Mount] Carmel shake off *their leaves*.

¹⁰"Now I will arise," says the LORD.

"Now I will be exalted; now I will be lifted up.

¹¹“You have conceived dried grass, you will give birth to stubble;

My breath is a fire that will consume you.

¹²“The peoples will be burned to lime,

Like thorns cut down which are burned in the fire.

¹³“You who are far away, hear what I have done;

And you who are near, acknowledge My might.”

¹⁴The sinners in Zion are terrified;

Trembling has seized the godless.

[They cry] “Who among us can live with the consuming fire?

Who among us can live with everlasting burning?”

¹⁵He who walks righteously and speaks with integrity,

Who rejects gain from fraud *and* from oppression,

Who shakes his hand free from the taking of bribes,

Who stops his ears from hearing about bloodshed

And shuts his eyes to avoid looking upon evil;

¹⁶He will dwell on the heights,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Living with Integrity

Integrity as personified in Isaiah 33:15 is vitally important to our walk with God. People with integrity take responsibility for their actions. They keep their commitments instead of making excuses for not keeping them. They do what they tell people they are going to do, and, if for some reason they absolutely cannot, they contact the person, give an explanation (not an excuse), and ask to be released from the commitment. We expect God to keep His promises, and He expects us to keep ours.

Since God has given us the “wide band of truth (personal integrity, moral courage)” (Eph. 6:14), let us put it on and do battle against the enemy of deceit. Let us all choose to do right and trust God to honor our decisions.

His place of defense will be the fortress of rocks,
His bread will be given him;
His water will be permanent.

¹⁷Your eyes will see the King in His beauty;
They will see a far-distant land.

¹⁸Your mind will meditate on the terror [asking]:
“Where is he who counts?
Where is he who weighs [the tribute]?”

Where is he who counts the towers?"

¹⁹You will no longer see the fierce *and* insolent people,
A people of unintelligible speech which no one
comprehends,
Of a strange *and* stammering tongue which no one
understands.

²⁰Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts *and*
observances;
Your eyes will see Jerusalem, a undisturbed settlement,
A tent which will not be taken down;
Not one of its stakes will ever be pulled up,
Nor any of its ropes be severed.

²¹But there the mighty *and* magnificent LORD will be for us
A place of broad rivers and streams,
Where no oar-driven boat will go,
And on which no mighty *and* stately ship will pass.

²²For the LORD is our Judge,
The LORD is our Ruler,
The LORD is our King;
He will save us. [Is 2:3, 4; 11:4; 32:1; James 4:12]

²³Your ship's ropes (tackle) hang loose;
They cannot hold the base of their mast firmly,
Nor spread out the sail.
Then an abundance of spoil and plunder will be divided;
Even the lame will take the plunder.

²⁴And no inhabitant [of Zion] will say, "I am sick";

Speak God's Word

*The Lord is my Judge, my
Ruler, and my King. He will
save me.*

| adapted from ISAIAH 33:22 |

The people who dwell there will be forgiven their wickedness [their sin, their injustice, their wrongdoing].

34 COME NEAR, you nations, to hear; and listen, O peoples!

Let the earth and all that is in it hear, and the world and all that comes forth from it.

²For the LORD is angry at all the nations,
And *His* wrath is against all their armies;
He has utterly doomed them,
He has given them over to slaughter.

³So their slain will be thrown out,
And the stench of their corpses will rise,
And the mountains will flow with their blood.

⁴All the host of heaven will be dissolved,
And the skies will be rolled up like a scroll;

All their hosts [the stars and the planets] will also wither
away

As a leaf withers from the vine,

And as a *fig* withers from the fig tree. [Rev 6:13, 14]

⁵For My sword is satiated [with blood] in heaven;

Indeed, it will come down for judgment on Edom

And on the people whom I have doomed for destruction.

[Obad 8–21]

⁶The sword of the LORD is filled with blood [from sacrifices],

It drips with fat, with the blood of lambs and goats,

With the fat of the kidneys of rams.

For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah (Edom's capital city)

And a great slaughter in the land of Edom.

⁷Wild oxen will also fall with them

And the young bulls with the strong bulls;

And their land will be soaked with blood,

And their dust made greasy with fat.

⁸For the LORD has a day of vengeance,

A year of retribution for the cause of Zion.

⁹The streams [of Edom] will be turned into pitch,

And its dust into brimstone,

And its land will become burning pitch.

¹⁰The burning will not be quenched night or day;

Its smoke will go up forever.

From generation to generation it will lie in ruins;

No one will ever again pass through it. [Rev 19:3]

¹¹But the pelican and the porcupine will take possession of it;

The owl and the raven will dwell in it.

And He will stretch over it (Edom) the measuring line of desolation

And the plumb line of emptiness.

¹²Its nobles—there is no one there
Whom they may proclaim king—
And all its princes will be nothing.

¹³Thorns will come up in its fortified palaces,
Nettles and brambles in its fortified cities;
It will be a haunt for jackals,
An abode for ostriches.

¹⁴The creatures of the desert will encounter jackals
And the hairy goat will call to its kind;
Indeed, Lilith (night demon) will settle there
And find herself a place of rest.

¹⁵There the arrow snake will make her nest and lay her eggs,
And hatch them and gather *her young* under her protection;
Indeed, the birds of prey will be gathered there [to breed],
Every one with its own kind.

¹⁶Seek from the book of the LORD, and read:

Not one of these [creatures] will be missing;
None will lack its mate.
For His mouth has commanded,
And His Spirit has gathered them.

¹⁷The LORD has cast the lot for them,
And His hand has divided *and* apportioned Edom to the
wild beasts by measuring-line.
They will possess it forever;

From generation to generation they will dwell in it.

35 THE WILDERNESS and the dry land will be glad; The
Arabah (desert) will shout in exultation and blossom
Like the autumn crocus.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Encourage Someone Today

There are people who are gifted by God with a special ability to encourage others (see Rom. 12:6–8). However, if encouraging others is not what you might consider your particular gift, you are still responsible to do it. God's Word teaches that we are to encourage one another daily!

We have been entrusted with a great power. When we encourage others, it builds them up and makes them strong (see 1 Thess. 5:11). However, without that encouragement they might become weary and give up on something they need to finish (see Isa. 35:3).

God is “the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort” (2 Cor. 1:3). Since God is an encourager, we should also be encouragers. Anytime you do what God does, be assured you are doing the things that are right, that will produce joy, peace, and power for your life.

²It will blossom abundantly
And rejoice with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon will be given to it,
The majesty of [Mount] Carmel and [the plain] of Sharon.
They will see the glory of the LORD,
The majesty *and* splendor of our God.

³Encourage the exhausted, and make staggering knees firm.
[Heb 12:12]

⁴Say to those with an anxious *and* panic-stricken heart,
“Be strong, fear not!
Indeed, your God will come with vengeance [for the
ungodly];
The retribution of God will come,
But He will save you.”

⁵Then the eyes of the blind will be opened
And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.

⁶Then the lame will leap like a deer,
And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy.
For waters will break forth in the wilderness
And streams in the desert. [Matt 11:5]

⁷And the burning sand (mirage) will become a pool [of water]
And the thirsty ground springs of water;
In the haunt of jackals, where they lay resting,
Grass becomes reeds and rushes.

⁸A highway will be there, and a roadway;
And it will be called the Holy Way.
The unclean will not travel on it,
But it will be for those who walk on the way [the redeemed];
And fools will not wander *on it*.

⁹No lion will be there,
Nor will any predatory animal come up on it;
They will not be found there.
But the redeemed will walk *there*.

¹⁰ And the ransomed of the LORD will return
And come to Zion with shouts of jubilation,
And everlasting joy will be upon their heads;
They will find joy and gladness,
And sorrow and sighing will flee away.

36 NOW IN the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and conquered them. [2 Kin 18:13, 17–37; 2 Chr 32:9–19]

² And the king of Assyria sent the Rabshakeh [his military commander] from Lachish [the Judean fortress commanding the road from Egypt] to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem with a large army. And he stood by the canal of the Upper Pool on the highway to the Fuller's Field.

³ Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was in charge of the [royal] household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recording historian, came out to [meet] him.

⁴ Then the Rabshakeh said to them, "Say to Hezekiah, 'This is what the great king, the king of Assyria says, "What is [the reason for] this confidence that you have?"

⁵ "I say, 'Your plan and strength for the war are only empty words.' Now in whom do you trust *and* on whom do you rely, that you have rebelled against me? [2 Kin 18:7]

⁶ "Listen carefully, you rely on the staff of this broken reed, Egypt, which will pierce the hand of any man who leans on it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him.

⁷ "But if you say to me, 'We trust in *and* rely on the LORD

our God,' is it not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away, saying to Judah and to Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar'? [2 Kin 18:4, 5]

⁸"So now, exchange pledges with my master the king of Assyria and I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to put riders on them.

⁹"How then can you repulse [the attack of] a single commander of the least of my master's servants, and rely on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?

¹⁰"Moreover, is it without the LORD that I have now come up against this land to destroy it? The LORD said to me, 'Go up against this land and destroy it.'""

¹¹Then Eliakim and Shebna and Joah said to the Rabshakeh, "Please, speak to your servants in Aramaic, because we understand it; and do not speak to us in Judean (Hebrew) in the hearing of the people who are [stationed] on the wall."

¹²But the Rabshakeh said, "Has my master sent me to speak these words *only* to your master and to you, and not to the men sitting on the wall, *doomed* to eat their own dung and drink their own urine with you?"

¹³Then the Rabshakeh stood and called out with a loud voice in Judean (Hebrew): "Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria.

¹⁴"This is what the king says, 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to rescue you;

¹⁵nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, 'The LORD will most certainly rescue us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.'"

¹⁶‘Do not listen to Hezekiah,’ for this is what the king of Assyria says, ‘Make peace with me and come out to me, and each one of you will eat from his own vine and each from his own fig tree and each [one of you] drink from the water of his own cistern, ¹⁷until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards.

¹⁸‘*Beware* that Hezekiah does not mislead you by saying, “The LORD will rescue us.” Has any one of the gods of the nations [ever] rescued his land from the hand of the king of Assyria?

¹⁹‘Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad [in Aram]? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? And when have they rescued Samaria from my hand?

²⁰‘Who among all the gods of these lands have rescued their land from my hand, that [you should think that] the LORD would rescue Jerusalem from my hand?’”

²¹But they kept silent and did not say a word to him in reply, for King Hezekiah’s command was, “Do not answer him.”

²²Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was in charge of the household, and Shebna the scribe and Joah the son of Asaph, the recording historian, came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn [in grief], and told him the words of the Rabshakeh [the Assyrian commander].

37 AND WHEN King Hezekiah heard this, he tore his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth and went into the house of the LORD. [2 Kin 19:1–13]

²Then he sent Eliakim, who was in charge of the [royal] household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz.

³They said to him, “This is what Hezekiah says, ‘This day is a day of distress, rebuke and disgrace; for children have come to birth, and there is no strength to deliver them.

⁴‘It may be that the LORD your God will hear the words of the Rabshakeh [the commander], whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to taunt *and* defy the living God, and will avenge the words which the LORD your God has heard. Therefore, offer a prayer for the remnant [of His people] that is left.’”

⁵So the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

⁶Isaiah said to them, “You shall say the following to your master: ‘This is what the LORD says, “Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me.

⁷“Listen carefully, I will put a spirit in him so that he will hear a rumor and return to his own land. And I will make him fall by the sword in his own land.’”

⁸So the Rabshakeh returned and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah [a fortified city of Judah], for he had heard that the king had left Lachish.

⁹And Sennacherib king of Assyria, heard *them* say concerning Tirhakah king of Cush (Ethiopia), “He has come out to fight against you.” And when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, ¹⁰“You shall say to Hezekiah king of Judah, ‘Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive

you, saying, “Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.”

¹¹“Listen carefully, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, utterly destroying them. So will you be rescued?

¹²“Did the gods of the nations which my fathers destroyed rescue them—Gozan, Haran [of Mesopotamia], Rezech, and the sons of Eden who were in Telassar?

¹³“Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad [of northern Syria], the king of the city of Sepharvaim, [the king of] Hena, or [the king of] Ivvah?”

¹⁴Then Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it, and he went up to the house of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD. [2 Kin 19:14–19]

¹⁵And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD saying,

¹⁶“O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, who is enthroned *above* the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.

¹⁷“Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib that he has sent to taunt *and* defy the living God.

¹⁸“It is true, O LORD, that the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the countries and their lands, ¹⁹and have cast the gods [of those peoples] into the fire, for they were not gods but the work of men’s hands, wood and stone. Therefore they have destroyed them.

²⁰“Now, O LORD our God, save us from his hand so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know *and* fully realize that You

alone, LORD, are God.”

²¹Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent *word* to Hezekiah, saying,
“For the LORD, the God of Israel says this, ‘Because you have
prayed to Me about Sennacherib king of Assyria, [2 Kin 19:20–
37; 2 Chr 32:20, 21]

²²this is the word that the LORD has spoken against him:

“She has shown contempt for you and mocked you,
The Virgin Daughter of Zion (Jerusalem);
She has shaken her head behind you,
The Daughter of Jerusalem!

²³“Whom have you taunted and blasphemed?
And against whom have you raised your voice
And haughtily lifted up your eyes?
Against the Holy One of Israel!

²⁴“Through your servants you have taunted *and* defied the
Lord,
And you have said, ‘With my many chariots I have gone up
to the heights of the mountains,
To the remotest parts of Lebanon.
I cut down its tallest cedars and its choicest cypress trees;
And I will go to its remotest height, its most luxuriant *and*
thickest forest.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The Power of God's Word

When the Assyrian commander Rabshakeh defied “the Holy One of Israel,” it was not the army of Hezekiah that defeated this great army. It was the power of God's Word delivered through Isaiah (see Isa. 37:21–36).

Second Corinthians 10:4–5 teaches us that casting down imaginations, thoughts, reasoning, and theories not in agreement with God's Word requires us to use our spiritual weapons, not physical. When we speak the Word of God out of our mouth, it becomes a two-edged sword (see Heb. 4:12)—defeating the enemy with one edge and opening the blessings of heaven with the other. There are many other defensive weapons protecting us from attack, but the Word is offensive—it defeats the enemy.

Like any principle in God's Word, simply knowing this information doesn't change anything. Faith needs to be active. It must be released. We can release God's Word through prayer; confessing His Word out loud, and taking God-inspired action.

25‘I dug wells and drank [foreign] waters,
And with the sole of my feet I dried up
All the canals [of the Nile] of Egypt.’

26“Have you not heard [says the God of Israel]

That I did it long ago,
That I planned it in ancient times?
Now I have brought it to pass,
That you [king of Assyria] would [be My instrument to]
turn fortified cities into ruinous heaps.

27“Therefore their inhabitants had little power,
They were terrorized and shamed;
They were like the grass of the field and the green
vegetation,
Like grass on the housetops *and* like a field [of grain]
scorched before it is grown.

28“But I know your sitting down
And your going out and your coming in [every detail of
your life],
And your raging against Me.

29“Because your raging against Me
And your arrogance has come up to My ears,
I will put My hook in your nose
And My bridle in your mouth,
And I will turn you back by the way you came.

30“**This shall be the sign [of these things] to you**
[Hezekiah]: you are to eat this year what grows of itself, and in
the second year that which springs from the same, and in the
third year you are to sow and harvest, and plant vineyards and
eat their fruit.

31“**The surviving remnant of the house of Judah will again**
take root downward and bear fruit upward.

32“**For out of Jerusalem will come a remnant and from**

Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.” ’

³³“Therefore, the LORD says this concerning the king of Assyria, ‘He will not come into this city or shoot an arrow there, or come before it with shield, or raise an assault ramp against it.

³⁴‘By the way that he came, by the same way he will return, and he will not come into this city,’ declares the LORD.

³⁵‘For I will defend this city to save it, for My own sake and for the sake of My servant David.’”

³⁶And the angel of the LORD went out and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when the [surviving] men got up early the next morning, *they saw* all the dead. [2 Kin 19:35]

³⁷So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and returned and lived at Nineveh.

³⁸It came to pass as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons killed him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat [in Armenia]. And Esarhaddon his son became king in his place.

38 IN THOSE days Hezekiah [king of Judah] became sick and was at the point of death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, came to him and said, “For the LORD says this, ‘Set your house in order *and* prepare a will, for you shall die; you will not live.’” [2 Kin 20:1–11; 2 Chr 32:24–26]

²Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD,

³and said, “Please, O LORD, just remember how I have walked before You in faithfulness *and* truth, and with a whole heart [absolutely devoted to You], and have done what is good in Your sight.” And Hezekiah wept greatly.

⁴Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah, saying,

⁵“Go and say to Hezekiah, ‘For the LORD, the God of David your father says this, “I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; listen carefully, I will add fifteen years to your life.

⁶“I will rescue you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city [Jerusalem].” ’

⁷“This shall be the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that He has spoken: ⁸“Listen carefully, I will turn the shadow on the stairway [denoting the time of day] ten steps backward, *the shadow* on the stairway (sundial) of Ahaz.” And the sunlight went ten steps backward on the stairway where it had [previously] gone down.

⁹*This is the* writing of Hezekiah king of Judah after he had been sick and had recovered from his illness: ¹⁰I said, “In mid-life

I am to go through the gates of Sheol (the place of the dead),

I am to be summoned, *deprived of* the remainder of my years.”

¹¹I said, “I will not see the LORD

The LORD in the land of the living;

I will no longer see man among the inhabitants of the world.

¹²“My dwelling (body) is pulled up and removed from me like a shepherd’s tent;

I have rolled up my life as a weaver [rolls up the finished web].

He cuts me free from the warp [of the loom];

From day to night You bring me to an end.

¹³“I lay down until morning.

Like a lion, so He breaks all my bones;

From day until night You bring me to an end.

¹⁴“Like a swallow, like a crane, so I chirp;

I coo like a dove.

My eyes look wistfully upward;

O Lord, I am oppressed, take my side *and* be my security.

¹⁵“What shall I say?

For He has spoken to me, and He Himself has done it;

I will wander aimlessly all my years because of the bitterness of my soul.

¹⁶“O Lord, by *these* things men live,

And in all these is the life of my spirit;

Restore me to health and let me live!

¹⁷“Indeed, it was for my own well-being that I had such bitterness;

But You have loved back my life from the pit of nothingness (destruction),

For You have cast all my sins behind Your back.

¹⁸“For Sheol cannot praise *or* thank You,

Death cannot praise You *and* rejoice in You;

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*I am grateful, Lord, that You
have loved back my life from
the pit of destruction, and You
have cast all my sins behind
Your back.*

• adapted from Isaiah 38:17

Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your faithfulness.

¹⁹“It is the living who give praise *and* thanks to You, as I do today;

A father tells his sons about Your faithfulness.

²⁰“The LORD is ready to save me;

Therefore we will play my songs on stringed instruments
All the days of our lives at the house of the LORD.”

²¹Now Isaiah had said, “Have them take a cake of figs and rub it [as an ointment] on the inflamed spot, that he may

recover.”

²²Hezekiah also had said, “What is the sign that I will go up to the house of the LORD?”

39 AT THAT time Merodach-baladan son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent [messengers with] letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he had heard that he had been sick and had recovered. [2 Kin 20:12–19]

²Hezekiah was pleased and showed them his treasure house—the silver, the gold, the spices, the precious oil, his entire armory and everything that was found in his treasuries. There was nothing in his house nor in all his area of dominion that Hezekiah did not show them.

³Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah and asked, “What did these men say? From where have they come to you?” And Hezekiah said, “They came to me from a far country, from Babylon.”

⁴Then Isaiah said, “What have they seen in your house?” And Hezekiah answered, “They have seen everything that is in my house; there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them.”

⁵Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Hear the word of the LORD of hosts,

⁶‘Listen carefully, the days are coming when everything that is in your house and everything that your predecessors have stored up until this day will be carried to Babylon; nothing will be left,’ says the LORD.

⁷‘And some of your own sons (descendants) who will

come from you, whom you will father, will be taken away, and they will become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon.”

⁸Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, “The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good.” For he thought, “There will be peace and faithfulness [to God’s promises to us] in my days.”

40 “COMFORT, O comfort My people,” says your God.

²“Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
And call out to her, that her time of compulsory service in warfare is finished,
That her wickedness has been taken away [since her punishment is sufficient],
That she has received from the LORD’s hand
Double [punishment] for all her sins.”

³A voice of one is calling out,
“Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness [remove the obstacles];
Make straight *and* smooth in the desert a highway for our God. [Mark 1:3]

⁴“Every valley shall be raised,
And every mountain and hill be made low;
And let the rough ground become a plain,
And the rugged places a broad valley.

⁵“And the glory *and* majesty *and* splendor of the LORD will be revealed, And all humanity shall see it together;

For the mouth of the LORD has spoken it.” [Luke 3:5, 6]

⁶A voice says, “Call out [prophesy].”

Then he answered, “What shall I call out?”

[The voice answered:] All humanity is [as frail as] grass,
and all that makes it attractive [its charm, its loveliness] is
[momentary] like the flower of the field.

⁷The grass withers, the flower fades,
When the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
Most certainly [all] the people are [like] grass.

⁸The grass withers, the flower fades,
But the word of our God stands forever. [James 1:10, 11; 1
Pet 1:24, 25]

⁹O Zion, herald of good news,
Get up on a high mountain.
O Jerusalem, herald of good news,

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, I know that the grass
witheres and the flower fades,*

*but the word of my God stands
forever.*

• adapted from Isaiah 40:8

- Lift up your voice with strength,
Lift it up, do not fear;
Say to the cities of Judah,
“Here is your God!” [Acts 10:36; Rom 10:15]
- ¹⁰ Listen carefully, the Lord GOD will come with might,
And His arm will rule for Him.
Most certainly His reward is with Him,
And His restitution accompanies Him. [Rev 22:7, 12]
- ¹¹ He will protect His flock like a shepherd,
He will gather the lambs in His arm,
He will carry them in His bosom;
He will gently *and* carefully lead those nursing their young.
- ¹² Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand,
And marked off the heavens with a span [of the hand],
And calculated the dust of the earth with a measure,
And weighed the mountains in a balance
And the hills in a pair of scales?
- ¹³ Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD,
Or has taught Him as His counselor? [Rom 11:34]
- ¹⁴ With whom did He consult and *who* enlightened Him?
Who taught Him the path of justice and taught Him
knowledge
And informed Him of the way of understanding?

¹⁵In fact, the nations are like a drop from a bucket,
And are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales;
Now look, He lifts up the islands like fine dust.

¹⁶And [the forests of] Lebanon cannot supply sufficient *fuel*
to start a fire,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Take Care of Yourself

The first key to overcoming stress or any kind of mental attack is to recognize or admit we are under it. There was a period of my life when I experienced constant headaches, backaches, stomachaches, neck aches, and all the other symptoms of stress. However, I found it very difficult to admit that I was pushing too hard physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. I was doing the work I felt God wanted me to do, but quite often I was going beyond His grace, and the result was stress. I wasn't taking proper care of myself, and that always opens the door for the enemy. One of the best gifts you can give the world is a "healthy you."

Although the Lord gives power to the faint and weary, if you are worn-out from continually exceeding your physical limitations, you need physical rest (see Isa. 40:29). The Lord may mercifully give you supernatural energy in particular instances, but it is not wise to regularly push your body beyond what is healthy.

If you want God to flow and work through you, it's important to take care of your body. Your body is the vessel God uses, and if you wear it out, you don't have a spare. You only have one physical body, so take good care of it.

Nor are its wild beasts enough for a burnt offering [worthy

of the LORD].

¹⁷ All the nations are as nothing before Him,
They are regarded by Him as less than nothing and
meaningless.

¹⁸ To whom then will you liken God?
Or with what likeness will you compare Him? [Acts 17:29]

¹⁹ *As for* the cast image (idol), a metalworker casts it,
A goldsmith overlays it with gold
And a silversmith *casts its* silver chains.

²⁰ He who is too impoverished for *such* an offering [to give to
his god]
Chooses a tree that will not rot;
He seeks out for himself a skillful craftsman
To [carve and] set up an idol that will not totter.

²¹ Do you [who worship idols] not know? Have you not
heard?
Has it not been told to you from the beginning?
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth
[the omnipotence of God and the stupidity of bowing to
idols]? [Rom 1:20, 21]

²² It is He who sits above the circle of the earth,
And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;
[It is He] who stretches out the heavens like a veil
And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.

²³ It is He who reduces dignitaries to nothing,
Who makes the judges (rulers) of the earth meaningless
(useless).

²⁴ Scarcely have they been planted,
Scarcely have they been sown,
Scarcely has their stock taken root in the earth,
But He merely blows on them, and they wither,
And a strong wind carries them away like stubble.

²⁵ “To whom then will you compare Me
That I would be his equal?” says the Holy One.

²⁶ Lift up your eyes on high
And see who has created these *heavenly bodies*,
The One who brings out their host by number,
He calls them all by name;
Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of
His power,
Not one is missing.

²⁷ Why, O Jacob, do you say, and declare, O Israel,
“My way is hidden from the LORD,
And the justice due me escapes the notice of my God”?

²⁸ Do you not know? Have you not heard?
The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of
the earth
Does not become tired or grow weary;
There is no searching of His understanding.

²⁹ He gives strength to the weary,
And to him who has no might He increases power. [2 Cor
12:9]

³⁰ Even youths grow weary and tired,
And vigorous young men stumble badly,

Speak God's Word

*I wait for the Lord. As I
expect, look for, and hope in
Him, I will gain new strength
and renew my power; I will
lift my wings like eagles and
rise up close to God; I will
run and not become weary, I
will walk and not grow tired.*

| adapted from ISAIAH 40:31 |

³¹ But those who wait for the LORD [who expect, look for, and hope in Him]
Will gain new strength *and* renew their power;
They will lift up their wings [and rise up close to God] like eagles [rising toward the sun];
They will run and not become weary,
They will walk and not grow tired. [Heb 12:1–3]

41 “LISTEN TO Me in silence, you islands *and* coastlands,
And let the nations gain their strength;
Let them come near, then let them speak;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Be an Eagle Christian

When you think of an eagle soaring, you probably envision a lone bird flying majestically against a bright blue sky. This is because eagles soar alone. Something about the character, the strength, and the nature of the eagle gives it the courage to soar by itself.

If you want to be an “eagle Christian,” you may have to make decisions that separate you from the pack, enabling you to reach altitudes higher than the people around you want to go. Being an eagle means you want to please God more than you want to please people, and you make your decisions accordingly.

Spending time with God and allowing Him to renew your strength will benefit many circumstances, even such things as not losing your temper or speaking words you will later regret. Make a decision today to rise above mediocrity and soar like the eagle (see Isa. 40:31).

Let us come together for judgment [and decide the issue between us concerning the enemy from the east].

2“Who has stirred up *and* put into action one from the east [the king of Persia, Cyrus the Great]

Whom He calls in righteousness to His service *and* whom victory meets at every step?

The LORD turns nations over to him
And subdues kings.

He makes them like dust with his sword,
Like wind-driven chaff with his bow. [Ezra 1:2]

³“He (Cyrus) pursues them and passes along safely,
By a way his feet had not traveled before.

⁴“Who has performed and done this,
Calling forth [and guiding the destinies of] the generations
[of the nations] from the beginning?

‘I, the LORD—the first, and with the last [existing before
history began, the ever-present, unchanging God]—I am
He.’”

⁵The islands *and* coastlands have seen and they fear;
The ends of the earth tremble;
They have drawn near and have come.

⁶They each help his neighbor
And say to his brother [as he fashions his idols], “Be of
good courage!”

⁷So the craftsman encourages the goldsmith,
And he who smooths *metal* with the smith’s hammer
encourages him who beats the anvil,
Saying of the soldering (welding), “That is good”;
And he fastens the idol with nails,
So that it will not totter *nor* be moved.

⁸“But you, Israel, My servant,
Jacob whom I have chosen,
The offspring of Abraham My friend, [Heb 2:16; James 2:23]

- ⁹You whom I [the LORD] have taken from the ends of the
earth,
And called from its remotest parts
And said to you, ‘You are My servant,
I have chosen you and have not rejected you [even though
you are exiled].
- ¹⁰‘Do not fear [anything], for I am with you;

POWERPOINT

Isaiah 41:8 is one of several scriptures that mentions Abraham as God's friend (see Gen. 18:17; 2 Chr. 20:7; James 2:23). What an awesome way for God to describe him! You and I are God's friends, too, and we need to learn to think of ourselves in that way. Jesus said, "You are my friends if you keep on doing what I command you" (John 15:14). We're talking about a right heart attitude with which you are going to obey God no matter what it costs you. That's one of the criteria for being a friend of God. You also become His friend because you spend a lot of time with Him. As God's friend, you can expect to have firsthand knowledge about what God is doing, and as your friendship with Him develops and grows closer, your boldness in prayer will also strengthen and grow.



Do not be afraid, for I am your God.

I will strengthen you, be assured I will help you;

I will certainly take hold of you with My righteous right hand [a hand of justice, of power, of victory, of salvation].’
[Acts 18:10]

¹¹“Indeed, all those who are angry with you will be put to shame and humiliated;

Those who strive against you will be as nothing and will perish.

¹²“You shall search for those who quarrel with you, but will not find them;

They who war against you will be as nothing, as nothing at all.

¹³“For I the LORD your God keep hold of your right hand; [I am the Lord], Who says to you, ‘Do not fear, I will help you.’

¹⁴“Do not fear, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel;

Speak God's Word

*I do not fear anything, for
God is with me. I am not
afraid, for He is my God. He
will strengthen me, yes, God
will help me; yes, He will
take hold of me with His
righteous right hand, a hand
of justice, of power, of victory,
of salvation.*

| adapted from ISAIAH 41:10 |

I will help you,” declares the LORD, “and your Redeemer is
the Holy One of Israel.

15“*In fact, I have made of you a new, sharp threshing
implement with sharp edges;*

*You will thresh the mountains and crush them,
And make the hills like chaff.*

16“*You will winnow them, and the wind will carry them away,
And a high wind will scatter them;*

*But you will rejoice in the LORD,
You will glory in the Holy One of Israel.*

17“*The poor and needy are seeking water, but there is none;*

Their tongues are parched with thirst.
I, the LORD, will answer them Myself;
I, the God of Israel, will not neglect them.

¹⁸“I will open rivers on the barren heights
And springs in the midst of the valleys;
I will make the wilderness a reed-pool of water
And the dry land springs of water.

¹⁹“I will put the cedar in the wilderness,
The acacia, the myrtle and the olive tree;
I will place the juniper in the desert
Together with the box tree and the cypress,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Freedom from Fear

One of the many benefits of our spiritual inheritance as believers in Jesus Christ is freedom from fear. But even if we feel afraid, we know that we can go ahead and act on what God says, because God will be with us to protect us. He will help us, go before us to fight the battle for us or deliver us, bringing us through victoriously as we obey Him.

The message of “do not fear [anything], for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God” (Isa. 41:10) is expressed in many different ways throughout the Bible. God does not want us to fear because fear prevents us from receiving and doing all He has planned for us. God loves us and wants to bless us, and He will help us stand strong and not let fear rule our decisions.

The only acceptable attitude (and confession) that a Christian should have toward fear is this: “It is not from God, and I will not let it control my life! I will confront fear, for it is not from God.”

God has a plan for you to experience an abundant life. Receive His plan by putting your faith in Him. Make a decision today that you will no longer let a spirit of fear intimidate you and dominate your life.

Jesus is your deliverer. As you diligently seek Him, He will deliver you from all fear (see Ps. 40).

Speak God's Word

*The Lord my God keeps hold
of my right hand. He is the
Lord, Who says to me, "Do
not fear; I will help you."*

| adapted from ISAIAH 41:13 |

- ²⁰ So that they may see and know,
And consider and understand together,
That the hand of the LORD has done this,
That the Holy One of Israel has created it.
- ²¹ "Present your case [for idols made by men's hands]," says
the LORD.
"Produce your evidence [of divinity],"
Says the king of Jacob.
- ²² Let them bring forward [their evidence] and tell us what is
going to happen.
Regarding the former events, tell what they were,
That we may consider them and know their outcome;
Or announce to us the things that are going to come.
- ²³ Tell us the things that are to come afterward,
That we may know that you are gods;

Indeed, you should do *something* good or do evil, that we may be afraid and fear [you] together [as we observe the miracle].

²⁴Hear this! You [idols] are less than nothing,
And your work is worthless;
The worshiper who chooses you [as a god] is repulsive. [1 Cor 8:4]

²⁵“I have stirred up *and* put into action one from the north
[the king of Persia, Cyrus the Great], and he has come;
From the rising of the sun he will call on My Name [in prayer].
And he will trample on [the Babylonian] officials as on mortar,
Even as a potter treads clay.” [2 Chr 36:23; Ezra 1:1–3]

²⁶Who [among the idols] has declared this from the beginning, so that we could know?
Or from earlier times, so that we could say, “*He is* [unquestionably] right!”?
In fact, there was no one who declared it,
Indeed, there was no one who proclaimed it;
There was no one at all who heard you speak [for you pagan gods are speechless].

²⁷“I was first to say to Zion, ‘Listen carefully, here they are [the Jews who will be restored to their own land].’
And to Jerusalem, ‘I will provide a messenger (Isaiah) to bring the good news [that Cyrus will be stirred up *and* put into action to save them].’ [Is 40:9; 52:7]

- ²⁸“But when I look [on the pagan prophets and priests], there is no one [who could predict these events], And there is no counselor among them,
Who, if I ask, can give an answer.
- ²⁹“In fact, all of these [pagan prophets and priests] are false;
Their works are worthless,
Their cast images are [merely] wind and emptiness.

42 “BEHOLD, MY Servant, whom I uphold; My Chosen One
in whom My soul delights.

I have put My Spirit upon Him;
He will bring forth justice to the nations. [Matt 3:16, 17]

²“He will not call out or shout aloud,
Nor make His voice heard in the street.

³“A broken reed He will not break [off]
And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish [He will not harm those who are weak and suffering];
He will faithfully bring forth justice. [Matt 12:17–21]

⁴“He will not be disheartened or crushed [in spirit];

**A Prayer To
Renew Your
Mind**



*Thank You, Lord, that a
broken reed You will not
break and a dimly burning
wick You will not extinguish.
You will not harm those who
are weak and suffering.*

• adapted from Isaiah 42:3

[He will persevere] until He has established justice on the earth;

And the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law.” [Rom 8:22–25]

⁵This is what God the LORD says,

He who created the heavens and stretched them out,
Who spread out the earth and its produce,
Who gives breath to the people on it
And spirit to those who walk on it,

⁶“I am the LORD, I have called You (the Messiah) in
righteousness [for a righteous purpose], I will also take
You by the hand and keep watch over You,
And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people [Israel],
As a light to the nations (Gentiles),

⁷To open the eyes of the blind,

To bring out prisoners from the dungeon
And those who sit in darkness from the prison. [Matt 12:18–21]

⁸“I am the LORD, that is My Name;
My glory I will not give to another,
Nor My praise to carved idols.

⁹“Indeed, the former things have come to pass,
Now I declare new things;
Before they spring forth I proclaim them to you.”

¹⁰Sing to the LORD a new song,
Sing His praise from the end of the earth!
You who go down to the sea, and all that is in it,
You islands *and* coastlands, and those who inhabit them
[sing His praise]!

¹¹Let the wilderness and its cities lift up *their voices*,
The villages where Kedar lives.
Let the inhabitants of Sela shout for joy,
Let them shout joyfully from the tops of the mountains.

¹²Let them give glory to the LORD
And declare His praise in the islands *and* coastlands.

¹³The LORD will go forth like a warrior,
He will stir up *His* zeal like a man of war;
He will shout out, yes, He will raise a war cry.
He will prevail [mightily] against His enemies.

A Prayer To

Renew Your Mind



I trust You, Lord, to lead me in confusing times because You lead the blind by a way they do not know and guide them in paths they do not know. You make darkness into light before them and the rugged places into plains. These things you will do for them; You will not leave them undone.

• adapted from Isaiah 42:16

- 14“**I [the LORD] have been silent for a long time,**
I have been still and restrained Myself.
Now I will moan like a woman in labor,
I will both gasp and pant.
- 15“**I will lay waste the mountains and hills**
And wither all their vegetation;
I will turn the rivers into coastlands

And dry up the ponds.

¹⁶“I will lead the blind by a way they do not know;
I will guide them in paths that they do not know.
I will make darkness into light before them
And rugged places into plains.
These things I will do [for them],
And I will not leave them abandoned *or* undone.”

¹⁷Those who trust in carved idols will be turned back,
And utterly put to shame,
Who say to cast images,
“You are our gods.”

¹⁸Hear, you deaf!
And look, you blind, that you may see.

¹⁹Who is blind but My servant [Israel],
Or deaf like My messenger whom I send?
Who is blind like the one who is at peace *with Me* [in a
covenant relationship],
Or so blind as the servant of the LORD?

²⁰You have seen many things, but you do not observe them;
Your ears are open, but no one hears.

²¹The LORD was pleased for His righteousness' sake
To make the law great and prove to be glorious.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

You Won't Be Overwhelmed

I wasted many years of my life worrying about things that I could do nothing about. What I didn't realize was that Jesus' peace is always there, ready and waiting for us in the midst of trouble (see John 14:27; 16:33). Real enduring peace comes from going through the storms and winning the battles of life.

There once was an elderly widow at the funeral of her husband who died in a fire that totally destroyed their home. Just a week earlier, her son died of cancer, and her daughter was killed in a car accident. She had lost all her loved ones within a period of two weeks!

"How are you handling all this?" someone asked her.

The woman's eyes were moist but her voice was firm as she replied, "I felt as if I was walking across a river that kept getting deeper. I was sure I would drown. I kept crying out for God's help, and do you know what? My feet touched the riverbed, and my head was still above the water. I made it across. God was with me. His peace enabled me to keep going."

This is how God's peace works. He has promised: "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you" (Isa. 43:2). No matter how deep the water or how difficult your circumstances are, He is always there. He will not allow you to be overwhelmed,

and He will give you peace.

²²But this is a people despoiled and plundered;
All of them are trapped in holes,
Or are hidden away in prisons.
They have become a prey with no one to rescue them,
And a spoil, with no one to say, “Give them back!” [Luke
19:41–44]

²³Who among you will listen to this?
Who will listen and pay attention in the time to come?

²⁴Who gave up Jacob [the kingdom of Judah] for spoil, and
[the kingdom of] Israel to the plunderers?
Was it not the LORD, He against whom we [of Judah] have
sinned,
And in whose ways they [of Israel] were unwilling to walk,
And whose law *and* teaching they did not obey?

²⁵Therefore He poured out on Israel the heat of His anger
And the fierceness of battle;
And engulfed him in fire,
Yet he did not recognize [the lesson of repentance which
the Assyrian conquest was intended to teach];
It burned him, but he did not take it to heart.

43 BUT NOW, this is what the LORD, your Creator says, O
Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel,
“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you [from captivity];

- I have called you by name; you are Mine!
- ²“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
And through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you.
When you walk through fire, you will not be scorched,
Nor will the flame burn you.
- ³“For I am the LORD your God,
The Holy One of Israel, your Savior;
I have given Egypt [to the Babylonians] as your ransom,
Cush (ancient Ethiopia) and Seba [its province] in exchange
for you.
- ⁴“Because you are precious in My sight,
You are honored and I love you,
I will give *other* men in return for you and *other* peoples in
exchange for your life.
- ⁵“Do not fear, for I am with you;
I will bring your offspring from the east [where they are
scattered],
And gather you from the west. [Acts 18:10]
- ⁶“I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’
And to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’
Bring My sons from far way
And My daughters from the ends of the earth,
- ⁷Everyone who is called by My Name,
Whom I have created for My glory,
Whom I have formed, even whom I have made.”
- ⁸Bring out the people who are blind, even though they have
eyes,

And the deaf, even though they have ears.

⁹All the nations have gathered together

So that the peoples may be assembled.

Who among them (the idolaters) can predict this [that Judah
would return from captivity]

And proclaim to us the former events?

Let them provide their witnesses so that they may be
justified,

Or let them hear and say [in acknowledgement], “It is the
truth.” [Ps 123:3, 4]

¹⁰“You are My witnesses,” declares the LORD,

“And My servant whom I have chosen,

That you may know and believe Me

And understand that I am He.

Before Me there was no God formed,

And there will be none after Me.

¹¹“I, [only] I, am the LORD,

And there is no Savior besides Me.

¹²“I have declared [the future] and saved [the nation] and
proclaimed [that I am God],

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Enjoy Yourself

Each of us is immensely valuable in God's sight (see Isa. 43:4). Yet a root cause of much of our unhappiness is simply that we are not happy with ourselves—with the way we look, our talents, our imperfections. We may be comparing ourselves with others instead of happily being the people God intends us to be.

We all make mistakes, and although we want to be serious about the changes that need to be made in our lives, it is also good to not be so intense about every little mistake we make. The best thing you can do is lighten up and not take yourself so seriously!

You are with yourself more than you are with anyone else, so if you can learn to enjoy your own company, it will greatly improve the quality of your life. Remember that you are precious in the Lord's sight. He enjoys you and wants you to enjoy yourself!

POWERPOINT

The reality of Isaiah 43:19 can be yours by simply releasing your faith and believing by faith that no matter what has happened in your past, God is greater than your past. He will forgive your sins, turn your mistakes into miracles, and leave you amazed at the good things He will do in your life.



And there was no strange (alien) *god* among you;
Therefore you are My witnesses [among the pagans],”
declares the LORD,
“That I am God.

¹³“Even from eternity I am He,
And there is no one who can rescue from My hand;
I act, and who can revoke *or* reverse it?”

¹⁴This is what the LORD your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel says,

“For your sake I have sent [one] to Babylon,
And I will bring down all of them as fugitives,
Even the Chaldeans [who reign in Babylon], into the ships
over which they rejoiced.

¹⁵“I am the LORD, your Holy One,
The Creator of Israel, your King.”

¹⁶This is what the LORD says,
He who makes a way through the sea
And a path through the mighty waters,

¹⁷He who brings out the chariot and the horse,
The army and the mighty *warrior*;
(They will lie down together, they will not rise again;
They have been extinguished, they have been put out like a
lamp's wick):

¹⁸“Do not remember the former things,
Or ponder the things of the past.

¹⁹“Listen carefully, I am about to do a new thing,
Now it will spring forth;
Will you not be aware of it?
I will even put a road in the wilderness,
Rivers in the desert.

²⁰“The beasts of the field will honor Me,
Jackals and ostriches,
Because I have given waters in the wilderness
And rivers in the desert,
To give drink to My people, My chosen. [Is 41:17, 18; 48:21]

²¹“The people whom I formed for Myself

Will make known My praise.

22“Yet you have not called on Me [in prayer and worship], O Jacob;

But you have grown weary of Me, O Israel.

23“You have not brought Me your sheep *or* goats for your burnt offerings,

Nor honored Me with your sacrifices.

I have not burdened you with offerings,

Nor wearied you with [demands for offerings of] incense.

24“You have not bought Me sweet cane with money,

Nor have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices;

But you have burdened Me with your sins,

You have wearied Me with your wickedness.

25“I, *only* I, am He who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake,

And I will not remember your sins.

26“Remind Me [of your merits with a thorough report], let us plead *and* argue our case together; State your *position*, that you may be proved right.

27“Your first father [Jacob] sinned,

And your spokesmen [the priests and the prophets—your mediators] have transgressed against Me.

**A Prayer To
Renew Your**

Mind



*I know, Lord, that You pour
water on those who are
thirsty and send streams to
dry ground. I believe You will
pour out Your Spirit on my
offspring and Your blessing
on my descendants.*

• adapted from Isaiah 44:3

²⁸“So I will profane the officials of the sanctuary,
And I will consign Jacob to destruction and [I will subject]
Israel to defamation *and* abuse.

44 “BUT NOW listen, O Jacob, My servant, And Israel,
whom I have chosen:

²This is what the LORD who made you
And formed you from the womb, who will help you says,
‘Fear not, O Jacob My servant;
And Jeshurun (Israel, the upright one) whom I have chosen.
[Deut 32:15; 33:5, 26]

³‘For I will pour out water on him who is thirsty,

And streams on the dry ground;
I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring
And My blessing on your descendants; [Is 32:15; 35:6, 7;
Joel 2:28; John 7:37–39]

⁴And they will spring up among the grass
Like willows by the streams of water.’

⁵“One will say, ‘I am the LORD’s’;
And another will name himself after Jacob;
And another will write on his hand, ‘I am the LORD’s,’
And be called by the [honorable] name of Israel.

⁶“For the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the
LORD of hosts says this, ‘I am the First and I am the Last;
And there is no God besides Me. [Rev 1:17; 2:8; 22:13]

⁷‘Who is like Me? Let him proclaim it and declare it;
Yes, let him confront Me,
Since I established the people of antiquity.
And let them [those supposed gods] tell those people [who
foolishly follow them] the things to come
And the events that are going to take place.

⁸‘Do not tremble nor be afraid [of the violent upheavals to
come];
Have I not long ago proclaimed it to you and declared it?
And you are My witnesses.
Is there a God besides Me?
There is no *other* Rock;
I know of none.’”

⁹All who make carved idols are nothing. Their precious

objects are worthless [to them], and their own witnesses (worshippers) fail to see or know, so that they will be put to shame.

¹⁰Who has made a god or cast an idol which is profitable for nothing?

¹¹In fact, all his companions will be put to shame, for the craftsmen themselves are mere men. Let them all assemble, let them stand up, let them be terrified, let them together be put to shame.

¹²The ironsmith shapes iron *and* uses a chisel and works it over the coals. He forms the [idol's] core with hammers and works it with his strong arm. He also becomes hungry and his strength fails; he drinks no water and grows tired.

¹³The carpenter stretches out a measuring line, he marks out the shape [of the idol] with red chalk; he works it with planes and outlines it with the compass; and he makes it like the form of a man, like the beauty of man, that it may sit in a house.

¹⁴He cuts cedars for himself, and takes a cypress or an oak and lets it grow strong for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a fir, and the rain nourishes it.

¹⁵Then it becomes *fuel* for a man to burn, so he takes one of them and warms himself; he also kindles a fire to bake bread. He also makes a god [from the same wood] and worships it. He makes it into a carved idol [with his own hands] and falls down and worships it!

¹⁶He burns half of the wood in the fire; over this half he [cooks and] eats meat, he roasts meat and is satisfied. Also he warms himself and says, "Aha! I am warm, I have seen the fire."

¹⁷But from what is left of the wood he makes a god, his carved idol. He falls down before it, he worships it and prays to it and says, “Save me, for you are my god.”

¹⁸They do not know, nor do they understand, for God has muddied their eyes so that they cannot see, and their hearts (minds) *as well* so that they cannot understand.

¹⁹No one remembers, nor has knowledge and understanding [enough] to say [to himself], “I have burned half of this log in the fire, and also baked bread on its coals and have roasted meat and eaten it. Then I make the rest of it into an repulsive thing [to God]; I bow down [to worship] before a block of wood!”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Confess Your Redemption

The Bible says that those who belong to God are redeemed from sin, and that they should shout for joy and in triumph and break forth into jubilant rejoicing (see Isa. 44:22–23). You are redeemed! Jesus has paid the price for your redemption. It is yours, so it's important for you to learn to agree with it.

Start declaring out loud by faith, “I am redeemed from sin, guilt, and condemnation. I am redeemed from anger, bitterness, jealousy, and fear; and I am free to love God, myself, and other people.” Once you get these truths into your spirit, you will begin to experience them. Faith comes first and then manifestation. Faith is the evidence of things hoped for, the proof of things we do not see (see Heb. 11:1). Choose to believe what God says, and say what God says by faith.

²⁰That kind of man (the idolater) feeds on ashes [and is satisfied with ashes]! A deceived mind has led him astray, so that he cannot save himself, or ask, “Is this thing [that I am holding] in my right hand not a lie?”

²¹“Remember [the foolishness of] these things, O Jacob
And Israel, for you are My servant!
I formed you, you are My servant;
O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me.

22“*I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud
And your sins like a heavy mist.
Return to Me, for I have redeemed you.*”

23*Shout for joy, O heavens, for the LORD has done it!
Shout in triumph, you depths of the earth;
Break forth into jubilant rejoicing, you mountains,
O forest, and every tree in it!
For the LORD has redeemed Jacob,
And He shows His glory in Israel.*

24*For the LORD, your Redeemer, and He who formed you
from the womb says this, “I am the LORD, Maker of all things,
Who alone stretches out the heavens,
Who spreads out the earth by Myself,*

25*Frustrating the signs *and* confounding the omens of
boasters (false prophets),
Making fools out of fortune-tellers,
Counteracting the wise
And making their knowledge ridiculous, [1 Cor 1:20]*

26*Confirming the word of His servant
And carrying out the plan of His messengers.
It is I who says of Jerusalem, ‘She shall [again] be
inhabited!’
And of the cities of Judah, ‘They shall [again] be built.’
And I will raise up *and* restore her ruins.*

27“*It is I who says to the deep, ‘Be dried up!’
And I will make your rivers dry.*

28“*It is I who says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd (ruler),*

And he will carry out all that I desire—
Saying of Jerusalem, ‘She shall [again] be built,’
And of the temple, ‘Your foundation shall [again] be laid.’”

- 45** THIS IS what the LORD says to His anointed, to Cyrus
[king of Persia], Whose right hand I have held
To subdue nations before him,
And I will ungird the loins of kings [disarming them];
To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut:
- ²“I will go before you and level the mountains;
I will shatter the doors of bronze and cut through the bars
of iron.
- ³“I will give you the treasures of darkness [the hoarded
treasures]
And the hidden riches of secret places,
So that you may know that it is I,
The LORD, the God of Israel, who calls you (Cyrus the Great)
by your name.
- ⁴“For the sake of Jacob My servant,
And of Israel My chosen,
I have also called you by your name;
I have given you an honorable name
Though you have not known Me.
- ⁵“I am the LORD, and there is no one else;
There is no God except Me.
I will embrace *and* arm you, though you have not known
Me,

⁶That people may know from the rising to the setting of the
sun [the world over]

That there is no one except Me.

I am the LORD, and there is no other,

⁷The One forming light and creating darkness,

Causing peace and creating disaster;

I am the LORD who does all these things.

⁸“Rain down, O heavens, from above,

Let the clouds pour down righteousness [all the blessings
of God];

Let the earth open up, let salvation bear fruit,

And righteousness spring up with it;

I, the LORD, have created it.

⁹“Woe (judgment is coming) to him who quarrels with his
Maker—

A [worthless] piece of broken pottery among other broken
pieces [equally worthless]!

Shall the clay say to the potter, ‘What are you doing?’

Or does the thing say, ‘He has no hands’? [Rom 9:20]

¹⁰“Woe (judgment is coming) to him who says to a father,
‘What are you fathering?’

Or to a woman, ‘With what are you in labor?’”

¹¹For the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker says
this, “Ask Me about the things to come concerning My sons,
And give Me orders concerning the work of My hands.

¹²“I made the earth and created man upon it.

My hands, stretched out the heavens,
And I commanded all their host.

¹³“I have stirred up Cyrus *and* put him into action in
righteousness [to accomplish My purpose]
And I will make all his ways smooth;
He will build My city and let My exiles go,
Without any payment or reward,” says the LORD of hosts.

¹⁴For this is what the LORD says,

“The products of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush
(ancient Ethiopia)


And the Sabeans, men of stature,
Will come over to you and they will be yours;
They will walk behind you, in chains [of subjection to you]
they will come over,
And they will bow down before you;
They will make supplication to you, [humbly and earnestly]
saying,

‘Most certainly God is with you, and there is no other,
No other God [besides Him].’” [1 Cor 14:25]

¹⁵Truly, You are a God who hides Himself,
O God of Israel, Savior!

¹⁶They will be put to shame and also humiliated, all of them;
They who make idols will go away together in humiliation.

¹⁷Israel has been saved by the LORD
With an everlasting salvation;
You will not be put to shame or humiliated
for all eternity. [Heb 5:9]



A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*I will seek You, Lord, because
You have not said “Seek Me
in vain.” In seeking You, there
is benefit. You speak
righteousness and truth,
declaring things that are
upright.*

• adapted from Isaiah 45:19

18For the LORD, who created the heavens (He is God, who formed the earth and made it; He established it and did not create it to be a wasteland, but formed it to be inhabited) says this, “I am the LORD, and there is no one else.

19“I have not spoken in secret,
In a corner of a land of darkness;
I did not say to the descendants of Jacob,
‘Seek Me in vain [with no benefit for yourselves].’

I, the LORD, speak righteousness [the truth—trustworthy, a straightforward correlation between deeds and words],

Declaring things that are upright. [John 18:20]

20“Assemble yourselves and come;

Come together, you survivors of the nations!

POWERPOINT

I want to encourage you to follow the advice of Isaiah 45:22 whenever you feel discouraged, confused, frustrated, frightened, or any other negative emotion. When you're going through a difficult situation that you're not sure how to handle, or even where to turn, simply turn to the Lord. He is the One who can help you. He is the One who will rescue you. He is the one who refuses to let you fall. Whatever you need, turn to Him.



They are ignorant,
Who carry around their wooden idols [in religious
processions or into battle]
And keep on praying to a god that cannot save them.

- 21“Declare and present *your defense of idols*;
Indeed, let them consult together.
Who announced this [rise of Cyrus and his conquests] long
before *it happened*?
Who declared it long ago?
Was it not I, the LORD?
And there is no other God besides Me,
A [consistently and uncompromisingly] just *and* righteous
God and a Savior;
There is none except Me.
- 22“Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth;
For I am God, and there is no other.
- 23“I have sworn [an oath] by Myself,
The word is gone out of My mouth in righteousness
And shall not return,
That to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear
[allegiance]. [Rom 14:11; Phil 2:10, 11; Heb 6:13]
- 24“‘It shall be said of Me, ‘Only in the LORD are righteousness
and strength.’
To Him people will come,
And all who were angry at Him will be put to shame. [1 Cor
1:30, 31]
- 25“‘In the LORD all the offspring of Israel
Will be justified (declared free of guilt) and will glory [in
God].”

on the beasts [of burden] and on the cattle.

Your burdens [of idols] are loaded [on them],

Burdens on the weary *animals*.

²They stooped over, they have bowed down together;
They could not rescue the burden [of their own idols],
But have themselves gone into captivity.

³“Listen to Me,” [says the LORD], “O house of Jacob, And all
the remnant of the house of Israel,
You who have been carried *by Me* from your birth
And have been carried [in My arms] from the womb,

⁴Even to *your* old age I am He,
And even to *your* advanced old age I will carry you!
I have made *you*, and I will carry *you*;
Be assured I will carry *you* and I will save *you*.

⁵“To whom would you liken Me
And make Me equal and compare Me,
That we may be alike? [Is 40:18–20]

⁶“Those who lavish gold from the bag
And weigh out silver on the scales
Hire a goldsmith, and he makes it *into* a god;
They bow down, indeed they worship it.

⁷“They lift it on their shoulders [in religious processions or
into battle] and carry it;
They set it in its place and *there* it remains standing.
It cannot move from its place.
Even if one cries to it [for help], the idol cannot answer;
It cannot save him from his distress.

- 8“Remember this, and take courage;
Take it to heart, you rebellious *and* disloyal people.
- 9“Remember [carefully] the former things [which I did] from
ages past;
For I am God, and there is no one else;
I am God, and there is no one like Me,
- 10Declaring the end *and* the result from the beginning,
And from ancient times the things which have not [yet]
been done,
Saying, ‘My purpose will be established,
And I will do all that pleases Me *and* fulfills My purpose,’
- 11Calling a bird of prey from the east,
From a far country, the man (Cyrus) of My purpose.
Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass.
I have planned it, *be assured* I will do it.
- 12“Listen to Me, you stiff-necked *people*,
You who are far from righteousness (right standing with
God).

POWERPOINT

Since God knows the end from the beginning (see Isa. 46:10), why do we sometimes act as though He is in heaven, wringing His hands, saying, “When I chose you, I had no idea you would make mistakes and sin!” Rather, God has a big eraser, full forgiveness through His Son, and He uses it to keep our records clear and clean. So relax. He knew you long ago and chose you from the beginning.



- ¹³“I bring near My righteousness [in the salvation of Israel], it is not far away;
And My salvation will not delay.
And I will grant salvation in Zion,
And My glory for Israel.

47 “COME DOWN and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon;

Sit on the ground [in abject humiliation]; there is no throne
for you,

O daughter of the Chaldeans,
For you will no longer be called tender and delicate.

2“Take millstones [as a female slave does] and grind meal;
Remove your veil, strip off the skirt,
Uncover the leg, cross the rivers [at the command of your
captors].

3“Your nakedness will be uncovered,
Your shame will also be exposed;
I will take vengeance and will spare no man.”

4Our Redeemer [will do all this], the LORD of hosts is His
name,
The Holy One of Israel.

5“Sit in silence, and go into darkness,
O daughter of the Chaldeans;
For you will no longer be called
The queen of kingdoms.

6“I was angry with My people,
I profaned [Judah] My inheritance
And gave them into your hand [Babylon].
You showed them no mercy;
You made your yoke very heavy on the aged.

7“‘And you said, ‘I shall be a queen forevermore.’
You did not consider these things,

Nor did you [seriously] remember the [ultimate] outcome of such conduct.

8“Now, then, hear this, you who live a luxuriant life,
You who dwell safely *and* securely,
Who say in your heart (mind),
‘I am [the queen], and there is no one besides me.
I shall not sit as a widow,
Nor know the loss of children.’

9“But these two things shall come to you abruptly, in one day:
Loss of children and widowhood.
They will come on you in full measure
In spite of your many [claims of power through your] sorceries,
In spite of the great power of your enchantments. [Rev 18:7, 8]

10“For you [Babylon] have trusted *and* felt confident in your wickedness; you have said,
‘No one sees me.’
Your wisdom and your knowledge have led you astray,
And you have said in your heart (mind),
‘I am, and there is no one besides me.’

11“Therefore disaster will come on you;
You will not know how to make it disappear [with your magic].
And disaster will fall on you
For which you cannot atone [with all your offerings to your gods];

And destruction about which you do not know
Will come on you suddenly.

12“Persist, then, [Babylon] in your enchantments
And your many sorceries
With which you have labored from your youth;
Perhaps you will be able to profit [from them],
Perhaps you may prevail *and* cause trembling.

13“You are wearied by your many counsels.
Just let the astrologers,
The stargazers,
Those who predict by the new moons [each month]
Stand up and save you from the things that will come upon
you [Babylon].

14“In fact, they are like stubble;
Fire burns them.
They cannot save themselves from the power of the flame
[much less save the nation],
There is no blazing coal for warming
Nor fire before which to sit!

15“This is how they have become to you, those [astrologers
and sorcerers] with whom you have labored, Those who
have done business with you from your youth;
Each has wandered in his own way.
There is no one to save you.

48 “HEAR THIS, O house of Jacob, you who are called by
the name of Israel And who come from the seed of Judah,

You who swear [allegiance] by the name of the LORD
And invoke the God of Israel,
But not in truth (sincerity) nor in righteousness [with moral
and spiritual integrity].

²“For they call themselves [citizens of Jerusalem] after the
holy city
And depend on the God of Israel;
The LORD of hosts is His name.

³“I have declared the former things [which happened to
Israel] in times past;
They went forth from My mouth and I proclaimed them;
Suddenly I acted, and they came to pass.

⁴“Because I know that you are obstinate,
And your neck is an iron tendon
And your brow is bronze [both unyielding],

⁵I have declared them to you long ago;
Before they came to pass I announced them to you,
So that you could not say, ‘My idol has done them,
And my carved image and my cast image have commanded
them.’

⁶“You have heard [these things foretold]; look at all this [that
has been fulfilled].
And you, will you not declare it?
I proclaim to you [specific] new things from this time,
Even hidden things which you have not known.

⁷“They are created now [called into being by the prophetic
word] and not long ago;
And before today you have not heard of them,

So that you will not say, ‘Oh yes! I knew them.’

8“‘You have not heard, you have not known;
Even from long ago your ear has not been open.
For I [the LORD] knew that you [Israel] would act very
treacherously;

You have been called a transgressor *and* a rebel from birth.

9“‘For the sake of My Name I refrain from My wrath,
And *for* My praise I restrain Myself from you,
So that I do not cut you off.

10“‘Indeed, I have refined you, but not as silver;
I have tested *and* chosen you in the furnace of affliction.

11“‘For My own sake, for My own sake, I will do it [I refrain
and do not completely destroy you];
For how can *My Name* be defiled *and* profaned [as it would
if My chosen people were completely destroyed]?
And I will not give My glory to another [by permitting the
worshippers of idols to triumph over you].

12“‘Listen to Me, O Jacob, and Israel, whom I called;
I am He, I am the First, I am the Last. [Is 41:4]

13“‘My hand founded *and* established the earth,
And My right hand spread out the heavens;
When I call to them, they stand together [in obedience to
carry out My decrees].

14“‘Assemble, all of you, and listen!
Who among them [the idols and Chaldean astrologers] has
declared these things?
The LORD loves him (Cyrus of Persia); he will do His

pleasure *and* purpose against Babylon, And his arm *will be against* the Chaldeans [who reign in Babylon].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Wants To Lead Us

God says, "I am the LORD your God, who... leads you in the way that you should go" (Isa. 48:17). He wants to give us direction, but we need to learn to listen so we can receive it and walk in it. God leads us in many different ways. Some of the most frequent ways are through His Word, with peace, and with wisdom. God cannot lead us at all unless we are willing to do whatever He shows us to do, even if that is not what we would prefer.

Are you ready and willing to say, "Lord, if You lead me, I will follow"? If you make that commitment sincerely, you can expect God's guidance in your life. It may not always come immediately when you ask for it, but it will come. While you are waiting, just continue to thank Him that He has a plan and will reveal it to you at the right time.

¹⁵"I, even I, have spoken; indeed, I have called Cyrus;
I have brought him, and will make his way successful.

¹⁶"Come near to Me, listen to this:
From the beginning I have not spoken in secret,
From the time that it happened, I was there.
And now the Lord GOD has sent Me, and His [Holy] Spirit."

¹⁷This is what the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of

Israel says, “I am the LORD your God, who teaches you to profit (benefit),

Who leads you in the way that you should go.

¹⁸“Oh, that you had paid attention to My commandments!

Then your peace *and* prosperity would have been like a [flowing] river,

And your righteousness [the holiness and purity of the nation] like the [abundant] waves of the sea.

¹⁹“Your offspring would have been like the sand,

And your descendants [in number] like the grains of sand;

Their name would never be cut off or destroyed from My presence.” [Gen 13:16; Jer 33:22; Luke 19:42]

²⁰Get out of Babylon! Flee from the Chaldeans [who reign there]!

Declare with a voice of jubilation, proclaim this,

Send it out to the end of the earth;

Say, “The LORD has redeemed His servant Jacob.”

²¹They did not thirst when He led them through the deserts.

He made the waters flow out of the rock for them;

He split the rock and the waters flowed.

²²“There is no peace for the wicked,” says the LORD.

49 LISTEN TO Me, O islands *and* coastlands, And pay attention, you peoples from far away.

The LORD has called Me from the womb;

From the body of My mother He has named Me.

²He has made My mouth like a sharp sword,
In the shadow of His hand He has kept Me hidden;
And He has made Me a sharpened arrow,
In His quiver He has hidden Me.

³And [the LORD] said to Me, “You are My Servant, Israel,
In Whom I will show My glory.” [Gen 32:28; Deut 7:6; 26:18,
19; Eph 1:4–6]

⁴Then I said, “I have labored in vain,
I have spent My strength for nothing and vanity (pride,
uselessness);
However My justice is with the LORD,
And My reward is with My God.”

⁵And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to
be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him and that Israel
might be gathered to Him,
—For I am honored in the eyes of the LORD,
And My God is My strength—

⁶He says, “It is too trivial a thing that You should be My
Servant
To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors
of Israel;
I will also make You a light to the nations
That My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

⁷This is what the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, Israel’s Holy
One says, To the thoroughly despised One,
To the One hated by the nation
To the Servant of rulers,

“Kings will see and arise,
Princes shall also bow down,
Because of the LORD who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel
who has chosen You.”

⁸This is what the LORD says,
“In a favorable time I have answered You,
And in a day of salvation I have helped You;
And I will keep watch over You and give You for a covenant
of the people,
To restore the land [from its present state of ruin] and to
apportion *and* give as inheritances the deserted
hereditary lands, [2 Cor 6:2]

⁹Saying to those who are bound *and* captured, ‘Go forth,’
And to those who are in [spiritual] darkness, ‘Show
yourselves [come into the light of the Savior].’
They will feed along the roads [on which they travel],
And their pastures will be on all the bare heights.

¹⁰“They will not hunger or thirst,
Nor will the scorching heat or sun strike them down;
For He who has compassion on them will lead them,
And He will guide them to springs of water. [Rev 7:16, 17]

¹¹“And I will make all My mountains a roadway,
And My highways will be raised.

¹²“In fact, these will come from far away;
And, lo, these *shall come* from the north and from the west,
And these from the land of Aswan (southern Egypt).”

¹³Shout for joy, O heavens, and rejoice, O earth,

And break forth into singing, O mountains!
For the LORD has comforted His people
And will have compassion on His afflicted.

¹⁴But Zion (Jerusalem in captivity) said, “The LORD has abandoned me, And my Lord has forgotten me.”

¹⁵[The LORD answered] “Can a woman forget her nursing child

And have no compassion on the son of her womb?
Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.

¹⁶“Indeed, I have inscribed [a picture of] you on the palms *of My hands*;

Your city walls [Zion] are continually before Me.

¹⁷“Your builders hurry;
Your destroyers and devastators
Will go away from you.

¹⁸“Lift up your eyes and look around [at the returning exiles];
All these gather together and they come to you [to rebuild you].

As I live,” declares the LORD,

“You [Zion] will indeed clothe yourself with all of them as jewels and tie them on as a bride.

¹⁹“For your ruins and desolate places and your land [once the scene] of destruction—

Certainly now [in the coming years] will be too cramped for the inhabitants,

And those who *once* engulfed you will be far away.

²⁰“The children of your bereavement [those born in captivity]

will yet say in your ears,
“The place is too cramped for me”;
Make room for me that I may live *here*.

²¹“Then [Zion], you will say in your heart,
“Who has borne me these *children*,
Since I have been bereaved of my children
And am barren, an exile and a wanderer?
And who has reared these?
Indeed, I was left alone;
From where then did these *children* come?””

²²This is what the Lord GOD says,
“Listen carefully, I will lift up My hand to the [Gentile]
nations
And set up My banner to the peoples;
And they will bring your sons in the fold of their garments,
And your daughters will be carried on their shoulders.

²³“Kings will be your attendants,
And their princesses your nurses.
They will bow down to you with their faces to the earth
And lick the dust of your feet;
And you shall know [with an understanding based on
personal experience] that I am the LORD; For they shall not
be put to shame who wait *and* hope expectantly for Me.

²⁴“Can the spoils of war be taken from the mighty man,
Or the captives of a tyrant be rescued?”

²⁵Indeed, this is what the LORD says,

“Even the captives of the mighty man will be taken away,
And the tyrant’s spoils of war will be rescued;
For I will contend with your opponent,
And I will save your children.

26“I will make those who oppress you consume their own
flesh [in mutually destructive wars]
And they will become drunk with their own blood as with
sweet wine;
And all mankind will know [with a knowledge grounded in
personal experience] that I, the LORD, am your Savior And
your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”

50 THE LORD declares this; “Where is the certificate of
divorce

By which I have sent your mother away, [O Israel]?
Or to which one of My creditors did I sell you [as slaves]?
In fact, You were sold for your wickedness [your sin, your
injustice, your wrongdoing],
And for your transgressions your mother was sent away.

2“Why, when I came, was there no man [to greet Me]?
When I called, why was there no one to answer?
Is My hand really so short that it cannot redeem [My
servants]?
Or have I no power to rescue?
Listen carefully, with My rebuke I dry up the sea,
I make the rivers into a desert;
Their fish stink because there is no water

And die of thirst.

³“I clothe the heavens with the blackness [of storm clouds]
And make sackcloth [of mourning] their clothing.”

⁴The Lord GOD has given Me [His Servant] the tongue of
disciples [as One who is taught], That I may know how to
sustain the weary with a word.

He awakens *Me* morning by morning,

He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple [as One who is
taught].

⁵The Lord GOD has opened My ear,
And I have not been rebellious

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Use Your Mouth for Good

God desires that we use our mouths to bring joy, love, and good to others and to “sustain the weary with a word” (Isa. 50:4). It is not acceptable to God when we use our mouth to bring hurt and destruction. We are still acceptable to Him, but our behavior isn’t, because it will not produce the good results He desires in our lives.

Ephesians 4:29 teaches us not to grieve the Holy Spirit and gives clear instructions about using our words accordingly: “Do not let unwholesome [foul, profane, worthless, vulgar] words ever come out of your mouth, but only such speech as is good for building up others, according to the need and the occasion, so that it will be a blessing to those who hear [you speak].”

Properly chosen words can actually change lives for the better. What you say can tear down or build up, so choose words that are agreeable with God’s will.

Nor have I turned back.

⁶I turned My back to those who strike Me,
And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard;
I did not hide My face from insults and spitting. [Matt
26:67; 27:30; John 19:1]

⁷For the Lord GOD helps Me,

Therefore, I have not been ashamed *or* humiliated.
Therefore, I have made My face like flint,
And I know that I shall not be put to shame. [Luke 9:51; Is
52:13; 53:10–12]

⁸He who declares Me in the right is near;
Who will [dare to] contend with Me?
Let us stand up to each other;
Who is My adversary?
Let him approach Me. [Rom 8:33–35; 1 Tim 3:16]

⁹In fact, the Lord GOD helps Me;
Who is he who condemns Me [as guilty]?
Indeed, they will all wear out like a garment;
The moth will eat them. [Heb 1:11, 12]

¹⁰Who is among you who fears the LORD,
Who obeys the voice of His Servant,
Yet who walks in darkness and has no light?
Let him trust *and* be confident in the name of the LORD and
let him rely on his God.

¹¹Listen carefully, all you who kindle your own fire [devising
your own man-made plan of salvation],
Who surround yourselves with torches,
Walk by the light of your [self-made] fire
And among the torches that you have set ablaze.
But this you will have from My hand:
You will lie down in [a place of] torment. [Is 66:24]

51 “LISTEN TO Me, you who pursue righteousness (right

standing with God), Who seek *and* inquire of the LORD:

Look to the rock from which you were cut

And to the excavation of the quarry from which you were dug.

²“Look to Abraham your father

And to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain;

For I called him when *he was but* one,

Then I blessed him and made him many.”

³For the LORD will comfort Zion [in her captivity];

He will comfort all her ruins.

And He will make her wilderness like Eden,

And her desert like the garden of the LORD;

Joy and gladness will be found in her,

Thanksgiving and the voice of a melody.

⁴“Listen carefully to Me [says the LORD], O My people, And hear Me, O My nation;

For a [divine] law will go forth from Me,

And I will quickly *establish* My justice as a light to the peoples.

⁵“My righteousness (justice) is near, My salvation has gone forth,

And My arms will judge the peoples;

The islands *and* coastlands will wait for Me,

And they will wait with hope *and* confident expectation for My arm.

⁶“Lift up your eyes to the heavens,

Then look to the earth beneath;

For the heavens will be torn to pieces *and* vanish like smoke,

And the earth will wear out like a garment

And its inhabitants will die in like manner.

But My salvation will be forever,

And My righteousness (justice) [and faithfully fulfilled promise] will not be broken. [Matt 24:35; Heb 1:11; 2 Pet 3:10]

⁷“Listen to Me, you who know righteousness (right standing with God),

The people in whose heart is My law *and* instruction;

Do not fear the reproach *and* taunting of man,

Nor be distressed at their reviling.

⁸“For the moth will eat them like a garment,

And the worm will eat them like wool.

But My righteousness *and* justice [faithfully promised] will exist forever,

And My salvation to all generations.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Affirms You

God sees us as valuable and worthy—we know this because He sent His Son, Jesus, to die for us. Part of our inheritance as believers is to be secure—to know who we are in Christ, to have a feeling of righteousness or rightness with God.

The devil likes to remind us of what we are not, but God delights in affirming us and reminding us of who we are and what we can do through Jesus. The Lord says to us, “Listen to Me, you who know righteousness (right standing with God), ... do not fear the reproach and taunting of man, nor be distressed at their reviling” (Isa. 51:7). Even when you’re being attacked by adverse circumstances, remember that God is for you and that you are right with Him, through your faith in Jesus.

⁹Awake, awake, put on strength *and* might, O arm of the LORD; Awake as in the ancient days, as in the generations of long ago.

Was it not You who cut Rahab (Egypt) in pieces,
Who pierced the dragon [of Egypt]? [Is 30:7]

¹⁰Was it not You who dried up the [Red] Sea,
The waters of the great deep,
Who made the depths of the sea a pathway
For the redeemed to cross over?

¹¹So the redeemed of the LORD will return
And come with joyful shouting to Zion;
Everlasting joy will be on their heads.
They will obtain gladness and joy,
And sorrow and sighing will flee away. [Rev 7:17; 21:1, 4]

¹²“I, even I, am He who comforts you.
Who are you that you are afraid of man who dies
And of a son of man who is made [as destructible] as grass,

¹³That you have forgotten the LORD your Maker,
Who stretched out the heavens
And laid the foundations of the earth,
That you continually tremble with fear all day long because
of the rage of the oppressor,
As he takes aim to destroy?
And where is the rage of the oppressor?

¹⁴The [captive] exile will soon be set free, and will not die in
the dungeon, nor will his food be lacking.

¹⁵“For I am the LORD your God, who stirs up the sea so that
its waves roar—the LORD of hosts is His name.

¹⁶“I have put My words in your mouth and have covered
you with the shadow of My hand, to establish the [renewed]
heavens and lay the foundations of the [renewed] earth, and to
say to Zion (Jerusalem), ‘You are My people.’” [Is 65:17; 66:22;
Rev 21:1]

¹⁷Wake yourself up! Wake yourself up! Stand up, O
Jerusalem,
You who have drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of His

wrath,

You who have drunk the cup of staggering *and* intoxication
to the dregs [leaving only sediment].

¹⁸There is no one to guide her among all the sons she has
borne,

Nor is there anyone to take her by the hand among all the
sons she has reared.

¹⁹These two *tragedies* have befallen you;

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

You're Responsible for Your Own Joy

Would you be willing to make some changes in your approach to life and develop some new habits in order to have the kind of joy we read about in Isaiah 51:11?

One lesson I have learned is that I cannot give someone else the responsibility for my joy. First and foremost, God wants us to find our joy in Him. He won't allow us to constantly get it from any other source. Certainly, people can do things that make us happy, but people are human and may disappoint us. The next time you become upset with someone because they didn't make you happy, take responsibility for your own joy and adjust your attitude.

Another thing I have learned is that complications and stress can devastate my joy, and the only way to lessen their effect is to simplify my life. If we do only those things God has truly assigned to us, He will always give us the grace to do them peacefully and joyfully. However, if we complicate our life

by adding all the things that people expect us to do, the story changes. The simple approach reduces stress and increases joy. For example,

- ◆ If someone hurts your feelings or disappoints you, choose to forgive instead of getting angry.
- ◆ If things don't work out your way, trust that God is in control and that what He does will be better than what you had planned.
- ◆ When a problem arises, believe the best instead of the worst.
- ◆ Don't waste your energy worrying because it doesn't do any good.
- ◆ Don't buy more than you can comfortably pay for.
- ◆ Be your unique self and never compare yourself with anyone else.
- ◆ When you sin, repent, receive your forgiveness, and don't waste time feeling guilty.
- ◆ When someone doesn't like you, pray for that person.
- ◆ If your schedule is overcrowded, change it.
- ◆ If you're tired all the time, get more rest.

The simple approach to pressing problems leaves room for joy in the midst of them and enables you to solve them much more quickly.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Dear Father, forgive me for looking to others for my joy rather than to You alone. Help me to take the right steps to making sure that I am doing only what You want me to do and not all

the things other people expect from me. Amen.

Who will show sympathy for you *and* mourn with you?
The desolation and destruction [on the land and city],
famine and sword [on the inhabitants];
How shall I comfort you?

²⁰Your sons have fainted;
They lie *helpless* at the head of every street,
Like an antelope in a net,
Full [from drinking] of the wrath of the LORD,
The rebuke of your God.

²¹Therefore, now hear this, you who are afflicted,
Who are drunk, but not with wine [but overwhelmed by the
wrath of God].

²²So says your Lord, the LORD, *who is* also your God
Who pleads the cause of His people,
“Listen carefully, I have taken from your hand the cup of
staggering *and* intoxication,
The cup of My wrath;
You shall never drink it again.

²³“I will put it into the hands of your tormentors,
Who have said to you, ‘Lie down so that we may walk over
you.’
You have even made your back like the ground
And like the street for those who walk over it.”

Put on your strength, O Zion;
Put on your beautiful garments,
O Jerusalem, the holy city;
For the uncircumcised and the unclean
Will no longer come into you. [Rev 21:27]

²Shake yourself from the dust, arise,
O captive Jerusalem;
Rid yourself of the chains around your neck,
O captive Daughter of Zion.

³For the LORD says this, “You were sold for nothing and you will be redeemed, but not with money.”

⁴For the Lord GOD says this, “My people went down at the first into Egypt to live there; and [many years later Sennacherib] the Assyrian oppressed them without cause.

⁵“But now, what do I have here,” declares the LORD, “seeing that My people have been taken away without reason? Those who rule over them howl [with taunting and mockery of salvation],” declares the LORD, “and My name is continually blasphemed all day long. [Rom 2:24]

⁶“Therefore My people shall know My Name *and* what it means. Therefore in that day I am the One who is speaking, ‘Here I am.’” [Ex 3:13, 14]

⁷How beautiful *and* delightful on the mountains
Are the feet of him who brings good news,
Who announces peace,
Who brings good news of good [things],
Who announces salvation,

Who says to Zion, “Your God reigns!” [Acts 10:36; Rom 10:15; Eph 6:14–16]

⁸Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices,
Together they shout for joy;
For they will see face to face
The return of the LORD to Zion.

⁹Break forth, shout joyfully together,
You ruins of Jerusalem;
For the LORD has comforted His people,
He has redeemed Jerusalem.

¹⁰The LORD has bared His holy arm (His infinite power)
Before the eyes of all the nations [revealing Himself as the
One by Whom Israel is redeemed from captivity],
That all the ends of the earth may see
The salvation of our God. [Luke 2:29–32; 3:6]

¹¹Depart, depart, go out from there (the lands of exile),
Touch no unclean thing;
Go out of the midst of her (Babylon), purify yourselves,
You who carry the articles of the LORD [on your journey
from there]. [2 Cor 6:16, 17]

¹²For you will not go out in a hurry [as when you left Egypt],
Nor will you go in flight [fleeing, as you did from the
Egyptians];
For the LORD will go before you,
And the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

How To Handle Rejection

Jesus gave His disciples instructions on how to handle rejection. He told them to shake it off (see Matt. 10:14). Basically He was saying, "Don't let it bother you. Don't let it keep you from doing what I have called you to do."

Jesus was despised and rejected (see Isa. 53:3), yet He never seemed to let it bother Him. I am sure He felt pain just as you and I do when we experience rejection, but He did not let it prevent Him from fulfilling His purpose.

Jesus told His disciples not to be concerned about rejection because, in reality, people who rejected them were actually rejecting Jesus (see Luke 10:16). Why should you concern yourself with the opinions of people? You cannot control what they think, so leave them and their opinions in God's hands and focus on doing God's will.

13 Indeed, My Servant (the Messiah) will act wisely *and* prosper;

He will be raised and lifted up and greatly exalted.

14 Just as many were astonished *and* appalled at you, *My people,*

So His appearance was marred more than any man

And His form [marred] more than the sons of men.

¹⁵ So He will sprinkle many nations [with His blood, providing salvation],
Kings will shut their mouths because of Him;
For what they had not been told they will see,
And what they had not heard they will understand. [Rom 15:21]

53 WHO HAS believed [confidently trusted in, relied on, and adhered to] our message [of salvation]? [Is 52:7, 10]
And to whom [if not us] has the arm *and* infinite power of the LORD been revealed? [John 12:38–41; Rom 10:16]

² For He [the Servant of God] grew up before Him like a tender shoot (plant),
And like a root out of dry ground;
He has no *stately* form or *majestic* splendor
That we would look at Him,
Nor [handsome] appearance that we would be attracted to Him.

³ He was despised and rejected by men,
A Man of sorrows *and* pain and acquainted with grief;
And like One from whom men hide their faces
He was despised, and we did not appreciate His worth *or* esteem Him.

⁴ But [in fact] He has borne our griefs,
And He has carried our sorrows *and* pains;
Yet we [ignorantly] assumed that He was stricken,
Struck down by God and degraded *and* humiliated [by Him].

[Matt 8:17]

- ⁵But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our wickedness [our sin, our injustice,
our wrongdoing];
The punishment [required] for our well-being *fell* on Him,
And by His stripes (wounds) we are healed.
- ⁶All of us like sheep have gone astray,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

A Time To Keep Quiet

What do you think Isaiah 53:7 means when it says that Jesus did not open His mouth? I think it means Jesus had the wisdom to know that when He was under pressure, He could be tempted to say things He should not say. So when He came into the final agonizing days of His life on earth, He said very little.

At the end of Jesus' earthly life, He said to His disciples, "I will not speak with you much longer, for the ruler of the world (Satan) is coming. And he has no claim on Me [no power over Me nor anything that he can use against Me]" (John 14:30). I believe Jesus was saying, "Satan is really coming on strong right now, but he hasn't got anything on Me, and I am not going to open My mouth and say anything that might give him an open door. If I seem a little quiet right now, don't think too much about it. It's just that things are going to be tough for a while, and I don't want to say anything based on my emotions."

I don't think any of us who belong to God want to express the work of the enemy, but some do allow him to speak through them when they verbally express their thoughts or feelings instead of speaking God's Word. When you are under emotional pressure, sometimes the best thing to do is to keep quiet and refuse to say anything. That way, you deny the enemy the opportunity to work through you and make a bad

We have turned, each one, to his own way;
But the LORD has caused the wickedness of us all [our sin,
our injustice, our wrongdoing]
To fall on Him [instead of us]. [1 Pet 2:24, 25]

⁷He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He did not open His mouth [to complain or defend
Himself];
Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
And like a sheep that is silent before her shearers,
So He did not open His mouth.

⁸After oppression and judgment He was taken away;
And as for His generation [His contemporaries], who
[among them] concerned himself *with the fact*
That He was cut off from the land of the living [by His
death]
For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke [of
death] *was due*?

⁹His grave was assigned with the wicked,
But He was with a rich man in His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Nor was there any deceit in His mouth. [Matt 27:57–60; 1
Pet 2:22, 23]

¹⁰Yet the LORD was willing
To crush Him, causing Him to suffer;
If He would give Himself as a guilt offering [an atonement

- for sin],
He shall see *His* [spiritual] offspring,
He shall prolong *His* days,
And the will (good pleasure) of the LORD shall succeed *and*
prosper in His hand.
- ¹¹ As a result of the anguish of His soul,
He shall see it and be satisfied;
By His knowledge [of what He has accomplished] the
Righteous One,
My Servant, shall justify the many [making them righteous
—upright before God, in right standing with Him], For He
shall bear [the responsibility for] their sins.
- ¹² Therefore, I will divide *and* give Him a portion with the great
[kings and rulers],
And He shall divide the spoils with the mighty,
Because He [willingly] poured out His life to death,
And was counted among the transgressors;
Yet He Himself bore *and* took away the sin of many,
And interceded [with the Father] for the transgressors.
[Luke 22:37]

54 “SHOUT FOR joy, O barren one, she who has not given
birth; Break forth into joyful shouting and rejoice, she who has
not gone into labor [with child]!

For the [spiritual] sons of the desolate one *will be* more
numerous

Than the sons of the married woman,” says the LORD. [Gal

4:27]

²“Enlarge the site of your tent [to make room for more children];

Stretch out the curtains of your dwellings, do not spare them;

Lengthen your tent ropes

And make your pegs (stakes) firm [in the ground].

³“For you will spread out to the right and to the left;

And your descendants will take possession of nations

And will inhabit deserted cities.

⁴“Do not fear, for you will not be put to shame,

And do not feel humiliated *or* ashamed, for you will not be disgraced.

For you will forget the shame of your youth,

And you will no longer remember the disgrace of your widowhood.

⁵“For your husband is your Maker,

The LORD of hosts is His name;

POWERPOINT

If our lives are rooted and grounded in shame, the Lord has promised to remove from us the curse and power of shame and dishonor so that we remember it no more (see Isa. 54:4). You can boldly declare by faith that you are healed from the pains and wounds of your past; you have been set free to live a new life of freedom and wholeness.



And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel,
Who is called the God of the whole earth.

⁶“For the LORD has called you,
Like a wife who has been abandoned, grieved in spirit,
And like a wife [married] in her youth when she is [later]
rejected *and* scorned,”
Says your God.

⁷“For a brief moment I abandoned you,

But with great compassion *and* mercy I will gather you [to
Myself again].

8“In an outburst of wrath
I hid My face from you for a moment,
But with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on
you,”
Says the LORD your Redeemer.

9“For this is *like* the waters of Noah to Me,
As I swore [an oath] that the waters of Noah
Would not flood the earth again;
In the same way I have sworn that I will not be angry with
you
Nor will I rebuke you.

10“For the mountains may be removed and the hills may
shake,
But My lovingkindness will not be removed from you,
Nor will My covenant of peace be shaken,”
Says the LORD who has compassion on you.

Speak God's Word

*No weapon that is formed
against me will succeed; and
every tongue that rises
against me in judgment God
will condemn. This peace,
righteousness, security, and
triumph over opposition are
my heritage because I am a
servant of the Lord.*

| adapted from ISAIAH 54:17 |

- ¹¹“O you afflicted [city], storm-tossed, and not comforted,
Listen carefully, I will set your [precious] stones in mortar,
And lay your foundations with sapphires.
- ¹²“And I will make your battlements of rubies,
And your gates of [shining] beryl stones,
And all your [barrier] walls of precious stones. [Rev 21:19–21]
- ¹³“And all your [spiritual] sons will be disciples [of the LORD],
And great will be the well-being of your sons. [John 6:45]
- ¹⁴“You will be firmly established in righteousness:
You will be far from [even the thought of] oppression, for

you will not fear,
And from terror, for it will not come near you.
¹⁵“If anyone fiercely attacks you it will not be from Me.

POWERPOINT

Isaiah 54:17 is part of your inheritance as a believer. If you spend time with God, you are protected by His presence. When we spend time in God's presence, He becomes our protection, our stability, our place of refuge. He becomes the source of our help, not only when we feel the enemy has forged weapons against us, but in every situation and circumstance.



Whoever attacks you will fall because of you.

¹⁶“Listen carefully, I have created the smith who blows on the fire of coals

And who produces a weapon for its purpose;

And I have created the destroyer to inflict ruin.

¹⁷“No weapon that is formed against you will succeed;

And every tongue that rises against you in judgment you

will condemn.

This [peace, righteousness, security, and triumph over opposition] is the heritage of the servants of the LORD,
And *this is* their vindication from Me,” says the LORD.

55 “EVERYONE WHO thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy grain and eat.

Come, buy wine and milk

Without money and without cost [simply accept it as a gift from God]. [Rev 21:6, 7; 22:17]

2“Why do you spend money for that which is not bread,
And your earnings for what does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good,
And let your soul delight in abundance. [Jer 31:12–14]

3“Incline your ear [to listen] and come to Me;
Hear, so that your soul may live;
And I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
According to the faithful mercies [promised and] shown to
David. [2 Sam 7:8–16; Acts 13:34; Heb 13:20]

4“Listen carefully, I have appointed him [David, representing the Messiah] to be a witness to the nations [regarding salvation], A leader and commander to the peoples.

5“In fact, you [Israel] will call a nation that you do not know,
And a nation that does not know you will run to you,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Victory over Financial Worries

Isaiah 55:1 says that those who have no money can still buy and eat. That doesn't usually happen in the world in which we live. When we are low on money, we tend to worry. The enemy takes advantage of financial concerns and wreaks havoc in our minds with thoughts such as, How will I pay the rent or the mortgage? What if the car breaks down? How will I pay my bills? What if I get sick and have medical expenses?

I have had times in my life when I have worried, not only about our financial needs, but about many other things as well. Finally, I learned to simply do what I could and then trust God to do what I could not do.

God met our financial needs—sometimes through amazing miracles—and all my worry was for nothing. As I look back, instead of enjoying the wonderful, abundant life Jesus offered to me, I wasted my energies trying to fix things I couldn't fix. I am enjoying my life now, but I could have enjoyed it back then too. God wants us to trust His faithfulness, and doing so honors Him.

Because of the LORD your God, even the Holy One of Israel;
For He has glorified you.”

⁶Seek the LORD while He may be found;

Call on Him [for salvation] while He is near.

⁷Let the wicked leave (behind) his way
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;
And let him return to the LORD,
And He will have compassion (mercy) on him,
And to our God,
For He will abundantly pardon.

⁸“For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD.

⁹“For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways
And My thoughts *higher* than your thoughts.

¹⁰“For as the rain and snow come down from heaven,
And do not return there without watering the earth,
Making it bear and sprout,

POWERPOINT

Isaiah 55:10 uses a natural principle to teach a spiritual lesson. Just as natural seeds produce a harvest in the earth, God's Word produces a harvest in our lives. When He speaks it, or when we speak the Word as His children, the results will be based on the type of seeds we have sown. Simply put, if I talk most of the time about lack, the people who have hurt me, disappointments, and problems, those "word seeds" will produce more of the same in my life. On the other hand, if I choose to talk about provision, the goodness of God, hope, and faith, I am sowing seeds that will produce more good, positive results. If we understand and act on this principle, we can change our words and therefore change our lives.



KEYS to a Victorious Life

God's Ways Are Higher

Are you always trying to figure everything out? Many of us have fallen into that trap. Instead of casting our care upon the Lord, we go through life carrying heavy burdens we are not meant to carry.

When we try to figure everything out, we are exalting our reasoning above God's thoughts. We are placing our ways higher than His ways. When God revealed that I had to give up excessive reasoning that was contrary to the truth, it was a real challenge. I couldn't stand to not have everything figured out!

For example, several years ago God put it in our hearts to do some things in our ministry that I didn't have the slightest idea how to go about doing. But God never called me to figure out exactly how to accomplish everything He asked me to do. He called me to seek Him rather than the answer to my problems, and then to obey what He told me to do.

When we worry, we lose our peace, and when we try to figure everything out, we become confused. Confusion is the result of our mentally trying to understand things about which God has not yet given us understanding. We should be trusting in the Lord with all our heart to make a way for us according to His plan. When we trust that His thoughts are higher than our thoughts, we stop confusion before it starts (see Isa. 55:9).

God's peace is always available, and we can enjoy it if we choose to do so, but it does require total trust in the Lord.

And providing seed to the sower and bread to the eater, [2
Cor 9:10]

¹¹So will My word be which goes out of My mouth;
“It will not return to Me void (useless, without result),
Without accomplishing what I desire,
And without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it.

¹²“For you will go out [from exile] with joy
And be led forth [by the LORD Himself] with peace;
The mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of
joy before you,
And all the trees of the field will clap their hands.

¹³“Instead of the thorn bush the cypress tree will grow,
And instead of the nettle the myrtle tree will grow;
And it will be a memorial to the LORD,
For an everlasting sign [of His mercy] which will not be cut
off.”

56 THIS IS what the LORD says, “Maintain justice and do
righteousness,

For My salvation is soon to come,
And My righteousness *and* justice *is soon* to be revealed.
[Is 62:1, 11; Matt 3:2; Luke 21:31; Rom 13:11, 12]

²“Blessed (happy, fortunate) is the man who does this,
And the son of man who takes hold of it,

Who keeps the Sabbath without profaning it,
And keeps his hand from doing any evil.”

³Do not let the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD
say,
“The LORD will most certainly separate me from His people.”
And do not let the eunuch say, “Look, I am a dry tree.”

⁴This is what the LORD says,
“To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths
And choose what pleases Me,
And hold firmly to My covenant,

⁵To them I will give in My house and within My walls a
memorial,
And a name better than that of sons and daughters;
I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut
off.

⁶“Also the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, To
minister to Him, and to love the name of the LORD,
To be His servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath
without profaning it
And holds fast to My covenant [by conscientious
obedience];

⁷All these I will bring to My holy mountain
And make them joyful in My house of prayer.
Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on
My altar;
For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the
peoples.”

⁸The Lord GOD, who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares:
“I will gather yet *others* to them (Israel), to those [already]
gathered.”

⁹All you beasts of the field,
All you beasts (hostile nations) in the forest,
Come to eat.

¹⁰Israel’s watchmen are blind,
They are all without knowledge.
They are all mute dogs, they cannot bark;
Panting, lying down, they love to slumber.

¹¹And the dogs are greedy; they never have enough.
They are shepherds who have no understanding;
They have all turned to their own way,
Each one to his unlawful gain, without exception.

¹²“Come,” [they say,] “let us get wine, and let us fill ourselves
with strong drink;
And tomorrow will be like today, very great indeed.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God's Word Does Not Return Void

We fail to receive answers to our prayers when they are based on something other than the Word of God. The prophet Isaiah says, "My word... will not return to Me void (useless, without result)" (Isa. 55:11). God says His Word will always accomplish the purpose for which He has sent it. Learn the Word. Speak the Word. Pray the Word. We need to let God know that our intent is always to be standing on the foundation of the Word in prayer, and He will guide us into all truth.

When the enemy tries to lie to us, we can quote the Scriptures to him just as Jesus did in the wilderness (see Matt. 4). The Bible says the Word is "sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb. 4:12). It divides soul and spirit and judges the very thoughts and purposes of our hearts.

As we grow in God, we will learn to pray spirit-led prayers—prayers that are filled with God's Word and are in accordance with His will.

57 THE RIGHTEOUS man perishes [at the hand of evil], and no one takes it to heart; Faithful *and* devout men are taken away, while no one understands

That the righteous person is taken away [to be spared] from

disaster *and* evil.

²He enters into peace [through death];
They rest in their beds (graves),
Each one who walked uprightly [following God's will, living
with integrity].

³“But come here, you sons of a sorceress [raised in
deception and superstition],
Offspring of an adulterer and a prostitute.

⁴“Of whom do you make fun?
Against whom do you open wide your mouth
And stick out your tongue?
Are you not children of rebellion (sin),
Offspring of deceit,

⁵Who inflame yourselves [with lust in pagan rites] among
the oaks (terebinth trees),
Under every green *and* leafy tree,
Who slaughter the children [in sacrifice] in the ravines
Under the clefts of the rocks?

⁶“Among the smooth *stones* of the ravine
Is your portion, they (the idols) are your lot;
Even to them you have poured out a drink offering,
You have offered a grain offering.
Should I be quiet concerning these things [leaving them
unpunished—bearing them with patience]?

⁷“Upon a high and lofty mountain
You have [openly and shamelessly] made your [idolatrous
and adulterous] bed;
Even there you went up to offer sacrifice [to idols, in

spiritual unfaithfulness to Me].

8“Behind the door and the doorpost
You have set up your [pagan] symbol;
Indeed, far removed from Me, you have uncovered yourself,
And have gone up and made your bed wide.
And you have made a [new] agreement for yourself with the
adulterers,
You have loved their bed,
You have looked [with passion] on their manhood. [Deut
6:5, 6, 9; 11:18, 20]

9“You have gone to the king [of a pagan land] with oil
And increased your perfumes;
You have sent your messengers a great distance
And made *them* go down to Sheol (the realm of the dead).

10“You were wearied by the length of your road,
Yet you did not say, ‘It is no use.’
You found renewed strength,
Therefore you did not grow weak.

11“About whom were you worried and fearful
That you lied and did not remember Me,
Nor give Me a thought?
Was I not silent even for a long time
And [as a result] you do not fear Me?

12“I will declare your [hypocritical] righteousness and your
deeds,
But they will not benefit you.

13“When you cry out [for help], let your [ridiculous]

collection *of idols* save you.
But the wind will carry them all away,
A [mere] breath will take them.
But he who takes refuge in Me will possess the land [Judea]
And will inherit My holy mountain.” [Ps 37:9, 11; 69:35, 36;
Is 49:8; Matt 5:5; Heb 12:22]

14 And it will be said,

POWERPOINT

God is the exalted One Who dwells on the high and holy place. I find it amazing that He also dwells with those who have a contrite and humble spirit (see Isa. 57:15). Let us seek to always humble ourselves under God's mighty hand and maintain a heart attitude that is quick to repent of any sin.



WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Fasting Your Words

Isaiah 58 has had a profound effect on my life. When we speak of fasting, we are usually talking about abstaining from food for a certain period of time. But there are other things we may be able to deny ourselves. For example, I have a lot more trouble with what comes out of my mouth than with what goes into it because I am very disciplined in my eating. That's why in addition to fasting food at certain times, I have also been trying to learn to "fast" my words.

To me, fasting my words means that when God's Word instructs me not to speak in certain ways, I will do my best to refrain from doing so. If I fail, I will immediately repent, ask God for forgiveness, and seek to do better in the future. It also means that when I am about to say something and the Holy Spirit whispers, "Don't say that," I stop immediately and rethink what I should say, if anything at all.

Sometimes I am so busy talking that I simply do not hear the Holy Spirit's promptings. At other times, I do hear them, but I so much want to say what I intend to say that I keep on

talking. God's chastisement for me in this area is becoming stronger, and I am glad of it, because it is obvious to me that I need Him to keep showing me how serious the power of my words is.

I know that none of us can tame the tongue in our human strength (see James 3:8). When we commit to fast our words, we need to lean heavily on the Lord's help and never give up. Are you willing to make the effort to obey what God's Word says about your words and to stop talking or to reconsider your words when the Holy Spirit prompts you to do so? Saying you will fast your words is much easier than actually doing it, but if it is your desire, God will see your heart and help you.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord, I sincerely want to speak words that are pleasing to you and to say only what You would have me say, and I can only do that by Your grace. I ask You to help me to be sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit concerning my speech. In Jesus' name. Amen.

“Build up, build up, clear the way.

Remove the stumbling block out of the way [of the spiritual return] of My people.”

¹⁵For the high and exalted One

He who inhabits eternity, Whose name is Holy says this,

“I dwell on the high and holy place,

But *also* with the contrite and humble in spirit

In order to revive the spirit of the humble

And to revive the heart of the contrite [overcome with sorrow for sin]. [Matt 5:3]

¹⁶“For I will not contend forever,

Nor will I always be angry;

For [if I did stay angry] the spirit [of man] would grow weak before Me,

And the breath *of those whom* I have created.

¹⁷“Because of the wickedness of his unjust gain I was angry and struck him;

I hid *My face* and was angry,

And he went on turning away *and* backsliding, in the way of his [own willful] heart.

¹⁸“I have seen his [willful] ways, but I will heal him;

I will lead him [also] and will restore comfort to him and to those who mourn for him, [Is 61:1, 2; 66:10]

¹⁹As I create the praise of his lips,

Peace, peace, to him who is far away [both Jew and Gentile] and to him who is near!”

Says the LORD;

“And I will heal him [making his lips blossom anew with thankful praise].” [Acts 2:39; Eph 2:13–17, 18; Heb 13:15]

²⁰But the wicked are like the tossing sea,
For it cannot be quiet,
And its waters toss up mire and mud.

²¹“There is no peace,” says my God, “for the wicked.”

58 “CRY ALOUD, do not hold back; Lift up your voice like a trumpet,
And declare to My people their transgression
And to the house of Jacob their sins.

POWERPOINT

Isaiah 58:9 does not require a deep theological discussion to understand its meaning. It says what it means, and it means what it says. If I want my prayers to be answered quickly, I need to treat people well, never judge them critically, and learn how to speak properly by eliminating every form of sinful or unjust speech. I have had to pray often asking God to help me to obey this scripture, and I encourage you to do the same.



2“Yet they seek Me day by day and delight [superficially] to know My ways,
As [if they were in reality] a nation that has done righteousness
And has not abandoned (turned away from) the ordinance of their God.

They ask of Me righteous judgments,
They delight in the nearness of God.

³‘Why have we fasted,’ *they say*, ‘and You do not see it?
Why have we humbled ourselves and You do not notice?’
Hear this [O Israel], on the day of your fast [when you
should be grieving for your sins] you find *something you*
desire [to do], And you force your hired servants to work
[instead of stopping all work, as the law teaches]. [Lev
16:29]

⁴“The facts are that you fast *only* for strife and brawling and
to strike with the fist of wickedness.
You do not fast as *you do* today to make your voice heard
on high.

⁵“Is a fast such as this what I have chosen, a day for a man
to humble himself [with sorrow in his soul]?
Is it *only* to bow down his head like a reed
And to make sackcloth and ashes as a bed [pretending to
have a repentant heart]?

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Interrupt Yourself If Necessary

More than once the Bible warns about speaking “idle” or careless words (see Isa. 58:13; Matt. 12:36). An idle word is a useless word that does nothing. If it does anything at all, it usually hurts somebody. To a large degree, the life we are living now is the result of thoughts we’ve meditated on and words we’ve spoken in the past.

If you realize you’re thinking about something that is not fruitful, the best way to interrupt a thought pattern is to speak what you want to think about. For example, if I find myself thinking, People don’t treat me right, and I am not happy about it, I can interrupt that thought pattern by saying or thinking, The people in my life are not perfect, but I am not either, and I am blessed in many ways. Choose wise, positive thoughts and words!

Do you call this a fast and a day pleasing to the LORD?

⁶“[Rather] is this not the fast which I choose,
To undo the bonds of wickedness,
To tear to pieces the ropes of the yoke,
To let the oppressed go free
And break apart every [enslaving] yoke? [Acts 8:23]

⁷“Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry
And bring the homeless poor into the house;

When you see the naked, that you cover him,
And not to hide yourself from [the needs of] your own flesh
and blood?

8“Then your light will break out like the dawn,
And your healing (restoration, new life) will quickly spring
forth;
Your righteousness will go before you [leading you to
peace and prosperity],
The glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. [Ex 14:19, 20;
Is 52:12]

9“Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;
You will cry for help, and He will say, ‘Here I am.’
If you take away from your midst the yoke [of oppression],
The finger pointed in scorn [toward the oppressed or the
godly], and [every form of] wicked (sinful, unjust) speech,
[Ex 3:14]

10 And if you offer yourself to [assist] the hungry
And satisfy the need of the afflicted,
Then your light will rise in darkness
And your gloom *will become* like midday.

11“And the LORD will continually guide you,
And satisfy your soul in scorched *and* dry places,
And give strength to your bones;
And you will be like a watered garden,
And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.

12“And your people will rebuild the ancient ruins;
You will raise up *and* restore the age-old foundations [of
buildings that have been laid waste];

You will be called Repairer of the Breach,
Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

- ¹³“If you turn back your foot from [unnecessary travel on] the Sabbath,
From doing your own pleasure on My holy day,
And call the Sabbath a [spiritual] delight, and the holy day of the LORD honorable, And honor it, not going your own way
Or engaging in your own pleasure
Or speaking your own [idle] words,
¹⁴Then you will take pleasure in the LORD,
And I will make you ride on the high places of the earth,
And I will feed you with the [promised] heritage of Jacob your father;
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” [Gen 27:28, 29; 28:13–15]

59 BEHOLD, THE LORD’S hand is not so short That it cannot save,

Nor His ear so impaired
That it cannot hear.

²But your wickedness has separated you from your God,
And your sins have hidden *His* face from you so that He does not hear.

³For your hands are defiled with blood
And your fingers with wickedness [with sin, with injustice, with wrongdoing];

Your lips have spoken lies,
Your tongue mutters wickedness.

⁴No one sues righteously [but for the sake of doing injury to others—to take some undue advantage], and no one pleads [his case] in truth; [but rather] They trust in empty *arguments* and speak lies;
They conceive trouble and bring forth injustice.

⁵They hatch vipers' eggs and weave the spider's webs;
He who eats of their eggs dies,
And *from an egg* which is crushed a viper breaks out.

⁶Their webs will not serve as clothing,
Nor will they cover themselves with what they make;
Their works are works of wickedness [of sin, of injustice, of wrongdoing],
And the act of violence is in their hands.

⁷Their feet run to evil,
And they rush to shed innocent blood.
Their thoughts are thoughts of wickedness [of sin, of injustice, of wrongdoing];
Devastation and destruction are in their highways.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Is Anything Hidden?

If you have been praying for a miracle or for God to bring something into your life that you have not yet received, ask yourself if there is something in your life that has “hidden His face from you so that He does not hear” (Isa. 59:2). Is there someone you need to forgive (see Mark 11:25)? Don’t try to justify your anger and unforgiveness. Don’t complain about your circumstances or what people have done to you; instead, trust God to be your Vindicator.

When you pray, say to God: “God, I don’t want to have any unforgiveness or anger in my heart toward anyone. If I do, please reveal it to me so I can pray for them instead of being angry.” Let’s have the goal of being able to say daily, “I’m not mad at anyone. I’m not angry; I’m not bitter; I’m not offended; I am going to believe the best.” Don’t waste your life being angry; instead, be difficult to offend and quick to forgive.

⁸They do not know the way of peace,
And there is no justice in their tracks.
They have made them into crooked paths;
Whoever walks on them does not know peace. [Rom 3:15–
18]

⁹Therefore justice is far from us,
And righteousness does not overtake us.

We [expectantly] hope for light, but only see darkness;
We hope for gleam of light, *but* we walk in darkness *and*
gloom.

¹⁰We grope for a wall like the blind,
We grope like those who have no eyes.
We stumble at midday as in the twilight;
Among those who are healthy *we are* like dead men.

¹¹We all groan *and* growl like bears,
And coo sadly like doves;
We hope for justice, but there is none,
For salvation, but it is far from us.

¹²For our transgressions are multiplied before You [O LORD],
And our sins testify against us;
For our transgressions are with us,
And we know *and* recognize our wickedness [our sin, our
injustice, our wrongdoing]:

¹³Rebelling against and denying the LORD,
Turning away from [following] our God,
Speaking oppression and revolt,
Conceiving and muttering from the heart lying words.

¹⁴Justice is pushed back,
And righteous behavior stands far away;
For truth has fallen in the city square,
And integrity cannot enter.

¹⁵Yes, truth is missing;
And he who turns away from evil makes himself a prey.
Now the LORD saw it,

And it displeased Him that there was no justice.

¹⁶He saw that there was no man,
And was amazed that there was no one to intercede [on
behalf of truth and right];
Therefore His own arm brought salvation to Him,
And His own righteousness sustained Him. [Is 53:11; Col
2:9; 1 John 2:1, 2]

¹⁷For He [the LORD] put on righteousness like a coat of armor,
And salvation like a helmet on His head;
He put on garments of vengeance for clothing
And covered Himself with zeal [and great love for His
people] as a cloak. [Eph 6:14, 17; 1 Thess 5:8]

¹⁸As their deeds deserve, so He will repay:
Wrath to His adversaries, retribution to His enemies;
To the islands *and* coastlands He will repay.

¹⁹So they will fear the name of the LORD from the west
And His glory from the rising of the sun.
For He will come in like a narrow, rushing stream
Which the breath of the LORD drives [overwhelming the
enemy]. [Matt 8:11; Luke 13:29]

²⁰“A Redeemer (Messiah) will come to Zion,
And to those in Jacob (Israel) who turn from transgression
(sin),” declares the LORD.

²¹“As for Me, this is My covenant with them,” says the
LORD: “My Spirit which is upon you [writing the law of God on
the heart], and My words which I have put in your mouth shall
not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouths of your [true,
spiritual] children, nor from the mouth of your children’s

children,” says the LORD, “from now and forever.” [Jer 31:33; Rom 11:26, 27; Gal 3:29; Heb 12:22–24]

60 “ARISE [from spiritual depression to a new life], shine [be radiant with the glory *and* brilliance of the LORD]; for your light has come, And the glory *and* brilliance of the LORD has risen upon you. [Zech 8:23]

²“For in fact, darkness will cover the earth
And deep darkness *will cover* the peoples;
But the LORD will rise upon you [Jerusalem]
And His glory *and* brilliance will be seen on you. [Is 60:19–22; Mal 4:2; Rev 21:2, 3]

³“Nations will come to your light,
And kings to the brightness of your rising. [Is 2:2, 3; Jer 3:17]

Speak God's Word

I arise from spiritual depression to a new life and shine. I am radiant with the glory and brilliance of the Lord; for my light has come, and the glory and brilliance of the Lord has risen upon me.

| adapted from ISAIAH 60:1 |

- 4“Lift up your eyes around you and see;
They all gather together, they come to you.
Your sons will come from far away,
And your daughters will be looked after at *their* side.
- 5“Then you will see and be radiant,
And your heart will tremble [with joy] and rejoice
Because the abundant wealth of the seas will be brought to
you,
The wealth of the nations will come to you. [Ps 119:32]
- 6“A multitude of camels [from the eastern trading tribes] will
cover you [Jerusalem],
The young camels of Midian and Ephah;

All those from Sheba [who once came to trade] will come
Bringing gold and frankincense
And proclaiming the praises of the LORD. [Matt 2:11]

7“All the flocks of Kedar will be gathered to you [as the
eastern pastoral tribes join the trading tribes], The rams of
Nebaioth will serve you;
They will go up with acceptance [as sacrifices] on My altar,
And I will glorify the house of My honor *and* splendor.

8“Who are these who fly like a cloud
And like doves to their windows?

9“*The islands and coastlands* will confidently wait for Me;
And the ships of Tarshish *will come* first,
To bring your sons from far away,
Their silver and gold with them,
For the name of the LORD your God,
For the Holy One of Israel because He has glorified you.

10“Foreigners will build up your walls,
And their kings will serve you;
For in My [righteous] wrath I struck you,
But in My favor *and* grace I have had compassion on you.

11“Your gates will be open continually;
They shall not be shut day or night,
So that people may bring to you the wealth of the nations—
With their kings led in procession. [Rev 21:24–27]

12“*For the nation or the kingdom which will not serve you*
[Jerusalem] shall perish,
And the nations [that refuse to serve] shall be utterly

ruined.

- 13“The glory of Lebanon will come to you,
The cypress, the juniper, and the cedar together,
To beautify the place of My sanctuary;
And I will honor *and* make the place of My feet glorious.
- 14“The sons of those who oppressed you will come bowing
down to you [in submission],
And all those who despised you *and* treated you
disrespectfully will bow down at the soles of your feet,
And they will call you the City of the LORD,
The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. [Rev 3:9]
- 15“Whereas you [Jerusalem] have been abandoned and hated
With no one passing through,
I will make you an object of pride forever,
A joy from generation to generation.
- 16“*You will suck the milk of the [Gentile] nations
And suck the breast (abundance) of kings;
Then you will recognize *and* know that I, the LORD, am your
Savior
And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.*
- 17“Instead of bronze I will bring gold,
And instead of iron I will bring silver,
And instead of wood, bronze,
And instead of stones, iron.
And [instead of the tyranny of the present] I will appoint
peace as your officers,
And righteousness your rulers.

- 18“Violence will not be heard again in your land,
Nor devastation or destruction within your borders;
But you will call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise
[to God].
- 19““The sun will no longer be your light by day,
Nor shall the bright glow of the moon give light to you,
But the LORD will be an everlasting light for you;
And your God will be your glory *and* splendor. [Jer 9:23, 24;
Rev 21:23]
- 20“Your sun will no longer set,
Nor will your moon wane;
For the LORD will be your everlasting light,
And the days of your mourning will be over.
- 21“Then all your people will be [uncompromisingly and
consistently] righteous;
They will possess the land forever,
The branch of My planting,
The work of My hands,
That I may be glorified.
- 22““The smallest one will become a thousand (a clan),
And the least one a mighty nation.
I, the LORD, will quicken it in its [appointed] time.”

61 THE SPIRIT of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the
LORD has anointed *and* commissioned me
To bring good news to the humble *and* afflicted;
He has sent me to bind up [the wounds of] the

- brokenhearted,
To proclaim release [from confinement and condemnation]
to the [physical and spiritual] captives
And freedom to prisoners, [Rom 10:15]
- ²To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD,
And the day of vengeance *and* retribution of our God,
To comfort all who mourn, [Matt 11:2–6; Luke 4:18, 19; 7:22]
- ³To grant to those who mourn in Zion *the following*:

Speak God's Word

*The Spirit of the Lord God is
upon me, because the Lord
has anointed and
commissioned me to bring the
good news to the humble and
afflicted; He has sent me to
bind up the wounds of the
brokenhearted, to proclaim
release to the physical and
spiritual captives and
freedom to prisoners.*

| *adapted from* ISAIAH 61:1 |

To give them a turban instead of dust [on their heads, a sign
of mourning],

The oil of joy instead of mourning,

The garment [expressive] of praise instead of a disheartened
spirit.

So they will be called the trees of righteousness [strong and
magnificent, distinguished for integrity, justice, and right
standing with God], The planting of the LORD, that He
may be glorified.

⁴Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins,
They will raise up *and* restore the former desolations;
And they will renew the ruined cities,
The desolations (deserted settlements) of many
generations.

⁵Strangers will stand and feed your flocks,
And foreigners will be your farmers and your vinedressers.

⁶But you shall be called the priests of the LORD;
People will speak of you as the ministers of our God.
You will eat the wealth of nations,
And you will boast of their riches. [Ex 19:6; 1 Pet 2:5; Rev
1:6; 5:10; 20:6]

⁷Instead of your [former] shame *you will have* a double
portion;
And *instead of* humiliation your people will shout for joy
over their portion.
Therefore in their land they will possess double [what they
had forfeited];
Everlasting joy will be theirs.

⁸For I, the LORD, love justice;
I hate robbery with a burnt offering.
And I will faithfully reward them,

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Exchange Joy for Mourning

When you face unexpected challenges, disappointments, or frustrations, you can set your mind in advance to not let those situations steal your joy. Being unhappy does nothing except make you miserable, so don't waste your time with it. You can choose not to allow the situations of each day determine the kind of life you're going to live. You can choose to smile even in the midst of challenging circumstances and refuse to let frustrations—big or small—keep you from enjoying your life. Jesus said that we would have tribulation in this world, but that we should cheer up because He has overcome the world (see John 16:33).

Finding the best in any situation and keeping a positive outlook is only possible because of the promises found in God's Word. Romans 8:28 reads, "And we know [with great confidence] that God [who is deeply concerned about us] causes all things to work together [as a plan] for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to His plan *and* purpose." Notice that the verse does not say God

works *some* things together for your good; it says *all* things. Every situation, every trial, every frustration—God is going to work it *all* out for your good, as you love and trust Him.

God can even take the most difficult things you've been through and use them for your good. Isaiah 61:3 says He will give us “the oil of joy instead of mourning, the garment [expressive] of praise instead of a disheartened spirit.” Some translations of the Bible, such as the King James Version, also say He will give us “beauty for ashes.” God did not cause the pain you have suffered or the trials you have endured. But He can heal your wounds and use what you've been through to accomplish something beautiful in your life and through you into the lives of others.

Personally, I have found that believing God will work good out of any dilemma I experience really helps me get through it with a positive, hopeful attitude. The fact that He exchanges joy for mourning and beauty for ashes is a wonderful truth that I have seen proven time after time. Whatever you may be going through right now, begin to think and say, “God will work this out for my good. I may have mourning and ashes right now, but God will soon turn them into joy and beauty!”

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God of joy, no matter what I go through or how difficult it may be, help me to always remember that you exchange the oil of joy for mourning and beauty for ashes. In You, I always have the confident expectation of better days. In Jesus' name. Amen.

And make an everlasting covenant with them.

- ⁹Then their offspring will be known among the nations,
And their descendants among the peoples.
All who see them [in their prosperity] will recognize *and*
acknowledge them
That they are the people whom the LORD has blessed.

- ¹⁰I will rejoice greatly in the LORD,
My soul will exult in my God;
For He has clothed me with garments of salvation,
He has covered me with a robe of righteousness,
As a bridegroom puts on a turban,
And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
- ¹¹For as the earth brings forth its sprouts,
And as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
So the Lord GOD will [most certainly] cause righteousness
and justice and praise To spring up before all the nations
[through the power of His word].

62 FOR ZION'S sake I (Isaiah) will not be silent, And for
Jerusalem's sake I will not keep quiet,
Until her righteousness *and* vindication go forth as
brightness,
And her salvation goes forth like a burning torch.

- ²The nations will see your righteousness *and* vindication
[by God],

And all kings [will see] your glory;
And you will be called by a new name
Which the mouth of the LORD will designate. [Rev 2:17]

³You will also be [considered] a crown of glory *and* splendor
in the hand of the LORD, And a royal diadem [exceedingly
beautiful] in the hand of your God.

⁴It will no longer be said of you [Judah], “Azubah
(Abandoned),”

Nor will it any longer be said of your land, “Shemamah
(Desolate)”;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Remind God of His Promises

Reminding God of His promises requires confidence in our relationship with Him. Imagine a child coming to his father and saying, "Dad, you promised you would play ball with me tonight." That is a beautiful example of a child who is confident in his father's love. But it can be a bit more difficult to believe we can go to Father God in the same way, reminding Him of His promises to us.

You could pray something like this, "Father, You have promised to give me favor, so I am expecting favor today. You have promised that I can do all things through Your strength, so I am expecting that You will strengthen me for my tasks today. You are my wisdom, so I expect to make wise decisions today."

According to the Word, you have the right, through Christ, to go boldly to the throne of grace in Jesus' name with your requests. You see, God actually wants you to remind Him "day or night" in your prayers of His promises as you wait for Him to fulfill His plan for your life (see Isa. 62:6).

But you will be called, "Hephzibah (My Delight is in Her),"
And your land, "Married";
For the LORD delights in you,
And to Him your land will be married [owned and protected

by the LORD].

⁵For as a young man marries a virgin [O Jerusalem],
So your sons will marry you;
And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,
So your God will rejoice over you.

⁶On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed *and* stationed
watchmen (prophets), Who will never keep silent day or
night;

You who profess the LORD, take no rest for yourselves,

⁷And give Him no rest [from your prayers] until He
establishes Jerusalem

And makes her a praise on the earth.

⁸The LORD has sworn [an oath] by His right hand and by His
mighty arm, “I will never again give your grain as food for
your enemies,

Nor will [the invading] foreigners drink your new wine for
which you have labored.”

⁹But they who have harvested it will eat it and praise the
LORD,

And they who have gathered it will drink it [at the feasts
celebrated] in the courtyards of My sanctuary.

¹⁰Go through, go through the gates,
Clear the way for the people;

Build up, build up the highway,

Remove the stones, lift up a banner over the peoples.

¹¹Listen carefully, the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the
earth,

Say to the Daughter of Zion, “Look now, your salvation is coming [in the LORD]; Indeed, His reward is with Him, and His restitution accompanies Him.” [Is 40:10]

¹²And they will call them “The Holy People,
The Redeemed of the LORD”;
And you will be called “Sought Out, A City Not Deserted.”

63 WHO IS this who comes from Edom, With crimson-stained garments from Bozrah [in Edom],

This One (the Messiah) who is majestic in His apparel,
Marching in the greatness of His might?

“It is I, [the One] who speaks in righteousness [proclaiming vindication], mighty to save.”

²Why is Your apparel red,
And Your garments like the one who treads in the wine press?

³“I have trodden the wine trough alone,
And of the peoples there was no one with Me.
I also trod them in My anger
And trampled them in My wrath;
And their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments,
And I stained all My clothes.

⁴“For the day of vengeance [against ungodliness] was in My heart,
And My year of redemption [of those who put their trust in Me—the year of My redeemed] has come.

⁵“I looked, but there was no one to help,

And I was amazed *and* appalled that there was no one to uphold [truth and right].

So My own arm brought salvation to Me,

And My wrath sustained Me.

⁶“I trampled the peoples in My anger

And made them drunk with [the cup of] My wrath,

And I spilled their lifeblood on the earth.”

⁷I will tell of the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD,

Speak God's Word

I will tell of the lovingkindnesses of the Lord and the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, according to all the Lord has done for me. I will speak of His great goodness, compassion, and abundance.

| adapted from ISAIAH 63:7 |

According to all that the LORD has done for us,
And His great goodness toward the house of Israel,
Which He has shown them according to His compassion
And according to the abundance of His lovingkindnesses.

⁸For He said, “Be assured, they are My people,
Sons who will not be faithless.”
So He became their Savior [in all their distresses].

⁹In all their distress He was distressed,
And the angel of His presence saved them,
In His love and in His compassion He redeemed them;
And He lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.
[Ex 23:20–23; 33:14, 15; Deut 1:31; 32:10–12]

¹⁰But they rebelled
And grieved His Holy Spirit;
Therefore He changed into their enemy,
And He fought against them.

¹¹Then His people remembered the days of old, of Moses [and they said],
Where is He who brought our fathers up out of the [Red]
Sea, with the shepherds of His flock [Moses and Aaron]?

- Where is He who put His Holy Spirit in their midst,
¹²Who caused His glorious arm *and* infinite power to go at
the right hand of Moses,
Dividing the waters before them to make for Himself an
everlasting name,
- ¹³Who led them through the depths [of the Red Sea],
Like a horse in the wilderness, [so that] they did not
stumble?
- ¹⁴Like the cattle that go down into the valley [to find better
pasture and rest],
The Spirit of the LORD gave them rest.
So You led Your people [O LORD]
To make for Yourself a beautiful *and* glorious name
[preparing the way for the acknowledgment of Your name
by all nations].
- ¹⁵Look down from heaven and see from Your lofty dwelling
place, holy and glorious.
Where are Your zeal and Your mighty acts [Your miracles
which you did for Your people]?
The stirring of Your heart and Your compassion are
restrained *and* withheld from me.
- ¹⁶For [most certainly] You are our Father, even though
Abraham [our ancestor] does not know us
And Israel does not acknowledge us.
You, O LORD, are [still] our Father,
Our Redeemer from everlasting is Your name.
- ¹⁷O LORD, why do You cause us to stray from Your ways

And harden our heart from fearing You [with reverence and awe]?

Return for Your servants' sake, the tribes of Your heritage.

¹⁸Your holy people possessed Your sanctuary for [only] a little while;

Our adversaries have trampled it down.

¹⁹We have become *like* those over whom You have never ruled,

Like those who were not called by Your name.

64 OH, THAT You would tear open the heavens and come down, That the mountains might quake at Your presence—

²As [sure as] fire kindles the brushwood, as fire causes water to boil—

To make Your name known to Your adversaries,
That the nations may tremble at Your presence!

³When You did awesome *and* amazing things which we did not expect,

You came down [at Sinai]; the mountains quaked at Your presence.

⁴For from days of old no one has heard, nor has ear perceived,

Nor has the eye seen a God besides You,

Who works *and* acts in behalf of the one who [gladly] waits for Him.

⁵You meet him who rejoices in doing that which is morally right,

Who remembers You in Your ways.
Indeed, You were angry, for we sinned;
We have long continued in our sins [prolonging Your
anger].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Learn To Bless Yourself

“He who blesses himself on the earth will bless himself by the God of truth and faithfulness” (Isa. 65:16). This verse contains a life principle you can carry into every area in which you desire victory: Nobody’s words have as much authority in your life as your own. Learn to bless yourself by speaking only words that contain God’s power and will for your life.

Words are containers for power. Proverbs 18:21 says, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it and indulge it will eat its fruit and bear the consequences of their words.” And with power comes responsibility. God has given you words, and He expects you to be accountable for the power carried in them.

What you say does matter to you and to your well-being. When you speak about your situation, say what you believe Jesus would say, and you will open the door for the miracle-working power of God.

And shall we be saved [under such circumstances]?

⁶For we all have become like one who is [ceremonially]
unclean [like a leper],

And all our deeds of righteousness are like filthy rags;
We all wither *and* decay like a leaf,

And our wickedness [our sin, our injustice, our wrongdoing], like the wind, takes us away [carrying us far from God's favor, toward destruction]. [Lev 13:45, 46]

⁷There is no one who calls on Your name,
Who awakens *and* causes himself to take hold of You;
For You have hidden Your face from us
And have handed us over to the [consuming and destructive] power of our wickedness [our sin, our injustice, our wrongdoing]. [Rom 1:21–24]

⁸Yet, O LORD, You are our Father;
We are the clay, and You our Potter,
And we all are the work of Your hand.

⁹Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD,
Do not remember our wickedness [our sin, our injustice, our wrongdoing] forever.
Now look, consider, for we are all Your people.

¹⁰Your holy cities have become a wilderness,
Zion has become a wilderness,
Jerusalem a desolation.

¹¹Our holy and beautiful house [the temple built by Solomon],
Where our fathers praised You,
Has been burned by fire;
And all our precious objects are in ruins.

¹²Considering these [tragedies], will You restrain Yourself, O LORD [and not help us]?
Will You keep silent and humiliate *and* oppress us beyond measure?

65 “I LET Myself be sought by those who did not ask *for* Me;

I let Myself be found by those who did not seek Me.

I said, ‘Here am I, here am I,’

To the nation [Israel] which did not call on My Name. [Ex 3:14; Is 58:9]

²“I have spread out My hands all the day long to a rebellious *and* stubborn people,

Who walk in the way that is not good, [following] after their own thoughts *and* intentions, ³The people who continually provoke Me to My face,

Sacrificing [to idols] in gardens and making offerings with incense on bricks [instead of at the designated altar];

⁴Who sit among the graves [trying to conjure up evil spirits] and spend the night in the secret places [where spirits are thought to dwell]; Who eat swine’s flesh, And their pots *hold* the broth of unclean meat;

⁵Who say, ‘Keep to yourself, do not come near me, For I am too holy for you [and you might defile me]!’ These [people] are smoke in My nostrils, A fire that burns all the day.

⁶“Indeed, it is written before Me, I will not keep silent, but I will repay; I will even repay it [directly] into their arms,

⁷Both your own wickedness and the wickedness of your fathers,” says the LORD.

“Since they *too* have made offerings with incense on the

mountains

And scorned *and* taunted Me on the hills,
I therefore will measure [punishment for] their former work
[directly] into their arms.”

⁸This is what the LORD says,

“As the new wine is found in the cluster,
And one says, ‘Do not destroy it, for there is a blessing *and*
benefit in it,’

So I will do for the sake of My servants
In order not to destroy all of them.

⁹“I will bring forth descendants from Jacob,
And an heir of My mountains from Judah;
Even My chosen ones shall inherit it,
And My servants will live there.

¹⁰“And [the plain of] Sharon will be a place for flocks to graze,
And the Valley of Achor a resting place for herds,
For My people who seek Me [who long for Me and require
My presence in their lives].

¹¹“But you who abandon (turn away from) the LORD,
Who forget *and* ignore My holy mountain (Zion),
Who set a table for Gad [the Babylonian god of fortune],
And who fill a jug of mixed wine for Meni [the god of fate],

¹²I will destine you for the sword, [says the LORD],
And all of you will bow down to the slaughter,
Because when I called, you did not answer;
When I spoke, you did not listen *or* obey.
But you did [what was] evil in My sight

And chose that in which I did not delight.”

¹³Therefore, the Lord GOD says this,

“Listen carefully, My servants will eat, but you will be hungry;

Indeed, My servants will drink, but you will be thirsty;

Indeed, My servants will rejoice, but you will be put to shame.

¹⁴“Indeed, My servants will shout for joy from a happy heart,
But you will cry out with a heavy heart,
And you shall wail *and* howl from a broken spirit.

¹⁵“And you will leave your name behind to My chosen ones
[who will use it] as a curse,
And the Lord GOD will put you to death,
But He will call His servants by another name [a much
greater name, just as the name Israel was greater than the
name Jacob]. [Gen 32:28; Jer 29:22]

¹⁶“Because he who blesses himself on the earth
Will bless himself by the God of truth *and* faithfulness;
And he who swears [an oath] on the earth
Will swear by the God of truth *and* faithfulness;
Because the former troubles are forgotten,
And because they are hidden from My sight. [2 Cor 1:20;
Rev 3:14]

¹⁷“Behold, I am creating new heavens and a new earth;
And the former things [of life] will not be remembered or
come to mind. [Is 66:22; 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1]

- 18“But be glad and rejoice forever over what I create;
Behold, I am creating Jerusalem to be a *source of* rejoicing
And her people a joy.
- 19“I will also rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in My people;
And there will no longer be heard in her
The voice of weeping and the sound of crying.
- 20“No longer shall there be in it an infant *who lives only a few*
days,
Or an old man who does not finish his days;
For the youth who dies at the age of a hundred,
And the one who does not reach the age of a hundred
Will be *thought of as* accursed.
- 21“They will build houses and live *in them*;
They will plant vineyards and eat the fruit.
- 22“They will not build and another occupy;
They will not plant and another eat [the fruit].
For as the lifetime of a tree, *so will be* the days of My
people,
And My chosen [people] will fully enjoy [and long make
use of] the work of their hands.
- 23“They will not labor in vain,
Or bear *children* for disaster;
For they are the descendants of those blessed by the LORD,
And their offspring with them.
- 24““It shall also come to pass that before they call, I will
answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear. [Is
30:19; 58:9; Matt 6:8]

²⁵“The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox [there will no longer be predator and prey]; and dust will be the serpent’s food. They will do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain (Zion),” says the LORD.

66 THIS IS what the LORD says, “Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool.

Where, then, is a house that you could build for Me?
And where will My resting place be? [Acts 17:24]

²“For all these things My hand has made,
So all these things came into being [by and for Me],”
declares the LORD.

“But to this one I will look [graciously],
To him who is humble and contrite in spirit, and who
[reverently] trembles at My word *and* honors My
commands. [John 4:24]

³“He who kills an ox [for pagan sacrifice] is [as guilty] as one
who kills a man; He who sacrifices a lamb, as one who
breaks a dog’s neck;
He who offers a grain offering, *as one who offers* swine’s
blood;
He who offers incense, as one who blesses an idol.
Such people have chosen their own ways,
And their soul delights in their repulsive acts;

⁴So I will choose their punishments,
And will bring the things they dread upon them
Because I called, but no one answered;

I spoke, but they did not listen *or* obey.
But they did evil in My sight
And chose that in which I did not delight.”

⁵Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble [with awe-filled
reverence] at His word: “Your brothers who hate you, who
exclude you for My Name’s sake,
Have said, ‘Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your
joy.’
But they will be put to shame.

⁶“The sound of an uproar from the city! A voice from the
temple!
The voice of the LORD, providing retribution to His enemies.

⁷“Before she (Zion) was in labor, she gave birth;
Before her labor pain came, she gave birth to a boy.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Regards the Humble

Humility is one of the most difficult virtues to maintain in our lives. It seems that our flesh is packed full of pride in every area. We want to do things our own way and then take the credit for any success we attain. Thankfully, once we are born again and receive a new nature (see 2 Cor: 5:17), with God's help, we can learn to tremble at His Word and have a reverential fear of Him, which helps us to remember that we are nothing without Him (see John 15:5). Jesus was humble, and we are told to imitate Him and have the same attitude that He had (see Phil. 2:5).

A good way to start each day is by saying, "Father; I need Your help today in everything I do because I can do nothing without You. I give You the praise for all the good that happens to me and through me. Amen."

8“Who has heard of such a thing? Who has seen such things?

Can a land be born in one day?

Or can a nation be brought forth in a moment?

As soon as Zion was in labor, she also brought forth her sons.

9“Shall I bring to the moment of birth and not give delivery?” says the LORD.

“Or shall I who gives delivery shut *the womb*?” says your God.

¹⁰“Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her, all you who love her;

Rejoice greatly with her, all you who mourn over her,

¹¹That you may nurse and be satisfied with her comforting breasts,

That you may drink deeply and be delighted with her bountiful bosom.”

¹²For the LORD says this, “Behold, I extend peace to her (Jerusalem) like a river, And the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream;

And you will be nursed, you will be carried on *her* hip and [playfully] rocked on *her* knees.

¹³“As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; And you will be comforted in Jerusalem.”

¹⁴When you see this, your heart will rejoice; Your bones will flourish like new grass.

And the [powerful] hand of the LORD will be revealed to His servants,

But His indignation will be toward His enemies.

¹⁵For indeed, the LORD will come in fire And His chariots will be like the stormy wind, To render His anger with rage, And His rebuke with flames of fire.

¹⁶For the LORD will execute judgment by fire And by His sword on all mankind, And those slain by the LORD will be many.

17“Those who [vainly attempt to] sanctify and cleanse themselves *to go* to the gardens [to sacrifice to idols],
Following after one in the center,
Who eat swine’s flesh, detestable things and mice,
Will come to an end together,” says the LORD.

18“For I know their works and their thoughts. *The time* is coming to gather all nations and languages, and they will come and see My glory.

19“I will set up a [miraculous] sign among them, and from them I will send survivors to the nations: Tarshish, Pul (Put), Lud, Meshech, Tubal and Javan, to the distant islands *and* coastlands that have not heard of My fame nor seen My glory. And they will declare *and* proclaim My glory among the nations.

20“Then they shall bring all your countrymen (children of Israel) from all the nations as a grain offering to the LORD—on horses, in chariots, in litters, on mules and on camels—to My holy mountain Jerusalem,” says the LORD, “just as the sons of Israel bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD.

21“I will also take some of them as priests and Levites,” says the LORD.

22“For just as the new heavens and the new earth
Which I make will remain *and* endure before Me,” declares the LORD,

“So your offspring and your name will remain *and* endure.

23“And it shall be that from New Moon to New Moon
And from Sabbath to Sabbath,

All mankind will come to bow down *and* worship before
Me,” says the LORD.

²⁴“Then they will go forth and look
Upon the dead bodies of the [rebellious] men
Who have transgressed against Me;
For their worm (maggot) will not die,
And their fire will not go out;
And they will be an abhorrence to all mankind.”

Jeremiah

Author: | Jeremiah
Date: | 626 BC–586
BC

Jeremiah is a wonderful example of someone who knew what God wanted him to do and who stayed faithful to it for his entire life. God called him as a prophet before he was born (see Jeremiah 1:6–7). At first, he allowed negative thoughts to cause him to doubt his ability to serve God in this way, but eventually he did accept God's call on his life. During his ministry, Jeremiah experienced times of success and favor under the reign of the good king Josiah, and he endured seasons of persecution when dealing with ungodly kings. Regardless of how the leaders treated him, Jeremiah always stood firm in God's purpose for his life.

As you pursue God's plan for your life, you may encounter some people who encourage you and others who discourage you. Either way, keep your mind set on what God has given you to do and be faithful to that.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM JEREMIAH:

Trusting in the flesh makes people like dry shrubs in the desert, while trusting in the Lord makes them like healthy trees planted by the waters (see Jeremiah 17:5–8).

God has plans for you—plans for peace in your life and not for disaster, plans to give you a future and a hope (see Jeremiah 29:11).

There is nothing too difficult or too wonderful for God (see Jeremiah 32:17).

When you call to the Lord, He will answer you. He will show you things you did not know (see Jeremiah 33:3).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM JEREMIAH:

Then I said, “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am [only] a young man.” But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am [only] a young man,’ because everywhere I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak.” | Jeremiah 1:6–7

Then you will call on Me and you will come and pray to Me, and I will hear [your voice] and I will listen to you. | Jeremiah 29:12

The LORD appeared to me (Israel) from ages past, saying, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you and continued My faithfulness to you.” | Jeremiah 31:3

THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

1 THE WORDS of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, [one] of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, ²to whom the word of the LORD came during the thirteenth year (627 B.C.) of the reign of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.

³It came [to Jeremiah] also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, [continuing] until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, [and continuing] until the exile of [the people of] Jerusalem in the fifth month (July-August, 586 B.C.). [2 Kin 25:8–11]

⁴Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

⁵“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you [and approved of you as My chosen instrument], And before you were born I consecrated you [to Myself as My own]; I have appointed you as a prophet to the nations.” [Ex 33:12; Is 49:1, 5; Rom 8:29]

⁶Then I said, “Ah, Lord GOD!

Behold, I do not know how to speak,

For I am [only] a young man.” [Ex 4:10; 6:12, 30; 1 Kin 3:7]

⁷But the LORD said to me,
“Do not say, ‘I am [only] a young man,’
Because everywhere I send you, you shall go,
And whatever I command you, you shall speak.

⁸“Do not be afraid of them [or their hostile faces],

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*I am thankful, Lord, that
before You formed me in the
womb You knew me and
approved of me as Your
chosen instrument. And before
I was born, You consecrated
me to Yourself, as Your own.*

• adapted from Jeremiah 1:5

For I am with you [always] to protect you *and* deliver you,”
says the LORD.

⁹Then the LORD stretched out His hand and touched my

mouth, and the LORD said to me, “Behold (hear Me), I have put My words in your mouth.

¹⁰“See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms,
To uproot and break down,
To destroy and to overthrow,
To build and to plant.”

¹¹The word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Jeremiah, what do you see?” And I said, “I see the branch of an almond tree.”

¹²Then the LORD said to me, “You have seen well, for I am [actively] watching over My word to fulfill it.”

¹³The word of the LORD came to me a second time, saying, “What do you see?” And I said, “I see a boiling pot, tilting away from the north [its mouth about to pour out on the south, on Judea].”

¹⁴Then the LORD said to me, “Out of the north the evil [which the prophets foretold as the result of national sin] will reveal itself *and* spill out on all the people of the land.

¹⁵“For, behold, I will call all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north,” says the LORD; “and they will come and each one will set his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all its surrounding walls, and against all the cities of Judah [as My judicial act, the consequence of Judah’s deliberate disobedience].

¹⁶“I will speak My judgments against them for all the wickedness of those who have abandoned (rejected) Me, offered sacrifices *or* burned incense to other gods, and worshiped the [idolatrous] works of their own hands.

¹⁷“But you [Jeremiah], gird up your loins [in preparation]! Get up and tell them all which I command you. Do not be distraught *and* break down at the sight of their [hostile] faces, or I will bewilder you before them *and* allow you to be overcome.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Some Things Should Not Be Said

When Jeremiah told the Lord he was too young to be a prophet, the Lord told him not to speak those words (see Jer. 1:7). This specific example teaches us the general lesson that we need to discipline our mouths when it comes to speaking negativity, especially negativity concerning ourselves. God wants us to believe we can do anything He leads us to do.

We can do nothing without the Lord (see John 15:5), but we can do all things through Him (see Phil. 4:13). It is amazing what God can accomplish through ordinary people who will put their trust in Him instead of in themselves.

Is God leading you to step out into something that seems too big for you? If so, keep your eyes on Him and His abilities, not on yourself and your inabilities. God will teach you as you step out in faith. His guidance is often only one step at a time. When we take one step after another and don't give up, we will eventually arrive where God wants us to be.

¹⁸“Now behold, I have made you today like a fortified city and like an iron pillar and like bronze walls against the whole land—against the [successive] kings of Judah, against its leaders, against its priests, and against the people of the land [giving you divine strength which no hostile power can overcome]. [Is 50:7; 54:17; Jer 6:27; 15:20; Luke 21:15; Acts

6:10]

¹⁹“They will fight against you, but they will not [ultimately] prevail over you, for I am with you [always] to protect you *and* deliver you,” says the LORD.

2 NOW THE word of the LORD came to me saying, ²“Go and proclaim in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD,

“I remember [earnestly] the lovingkindness *and* devotion of your youth,

Your time of betrothal [like that of a bride during the early years in Egypt and again at Sinai],

When you followed Me in the wilderness,

Through a land not sown.

³“Israel was holy [something set apart from ordinary purposes, consecrated] to the LORD, The first fruits of His harvest [in which no outsider was allowed to share].

All who ate of it [injuring Israel] became guilty;

Evil came on them,” says the LORD.”

⁴Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel.

⁵Thus says the LORD,

“What injustice *or* unrighteousness did your fathers find in Me,

That they have wandered far from Me

And [habitually] walked after emptiness *and* futility and became empty?

6“They did not say, ‘Where is the LORD
Who brought us up from the land of Egypt,
Who led us through the wilderness,
Through a land of deserts and of pits,
Through a land of drought and of the deep darkness [of the
shadow of death],
Through a land that no man passed through
And where no man lived?’

7“I brought you into a plentiful land
To eat its fruit and [enjoy] its good things.
But you came and defiled My land
And you made My inheritance repulsive.

8“[Even] the priests did not say, ‘Where is the LORD?’
And those who deal with the law [given to Moses] did not
know Me.
The rulers *and* shepherds also transgressed against Me,
And the prophets prophesied by [the authority and in the
name of] Baal
And walked after [idolatrous] things that did not benefit
[them].

9“Therefore I will still contend (struggle) with you [by
bringing judgment on you],” says the LORD, “And I will
contend with your children’s children.”

10“For cross over to the coasts of Kittim (Cyprus) [to the
west] and see,
Send also to Kedar (Arabia) [to the east] and carefully
observe *and* consider

And see whether there has been such [a thing] as this!

¹¹“Has a nation [ever] changed gods

Even though they were not gods [but merely man-made objects]?

But My people have exchanged their Glory (the true God)

For that [man-made idol] which does not benefit [them].

¹²“Be appalled, O heavens, at this;

Be shocked *and* shudder with horror [at the behavior of the people],” says the LORD.

¹³“For My people have committed two evils:

They have abandoned (rejected) Me,

The fountain of living water,

And they have carved out their own cisterns,

Broken cisterns

That cannot hold water.

¹⁴“Is Israel a servant? Is he a slave by birth?

Why has he become a captive *and* a prey?

¹⁵“The young lions have roared at him,

POWERPOINT

Don't be deceived into thinking that anything other than God can satisfy you fully and completely. Chasing after the wrong thing will always leave you disappointed, and disappointment opens the door to depression. Far too often when people become depressed, they are in need of something positive—encouragement, hope, affirmation, love, acceptance, confidence, or something else uplifting. Seeking it in the wrong place only adds to their problems. It's like carving their own cistern when they have access to "the fountain of living water" (Jer. 2:13). God alone can water a dry and thirsty soul, and He is always willing to do so.



They have made their voices heard *and* roared loudly.
And they have made his land a waste;
His cities have been destroyed and are burned ruins,
without inhabitant.

16“Moreover, the men of Memphis and Tahpanhes [as
powerful enemies]
Have shaved the crown of your head [to degrade you].

17“Have you not brought this on yourself
By abandoning (rejecting) the LORD your God
When He led you in the way?

18“Now what are you doing by going to Egypt [in search of
an ally],
To drink the [muddy] waters of the Nile?
Or what are you doing by going to Assyria [in search of an
ally],
To drink the [muddy] waters of the Euphrates?

19“Your own wickedness will discipline you,
And your desertion of the faith will punish you.
Know therefore that it is an evil and bitter thing
For you to abandon (reject) the LORD your God,
And for you to be indifferent to Me *and* dismiss the
[reverent] fear of Me,” says the Lord GOD of hosts.

20“For long ago you broke your yoke [in deliberate
disobedience]
And tore off your bonds [of the law that I gave you];
You said, ‘I will not serve *and* obey You!’

For on every high hill
And under every green tree
You have lain down [in idolatrous worship] like a
[compliant] prostitute.

21“Yet I had planted you [O house of Israel as] a choice vine,
A completely faithful seed.
How then have you turned against Me
Into degenerate shoots of a foreign *and* wild vine [alien to
Me]?

22“For though you wash yourself with lye
And use much soap,
The stain of your guilt is [still] before Me [and you are
soiled and dirty],” says the Lord GOD.

23“How can you say, ‘I am not defiled,
I have not gone after [man-made gods like] the Baals’?
Look at your way in the valley;
Know [without any doubt] what you have done!
You are a swift *and* restless young [female] camel [in the
heat of her passion] running here and there, 24Or [you
have the untamed and reckless nature of] a wild donkey
accustomed to the wilderness, That sniffs the wind in her
passion [for the scent of a mate].

In her mating season who can restrain her?
No males seeking her need to weary themselves;
In her month they will find her [looking for them].

25“[Cease your mad running after idols to]
Keep your feet from becoming bare
And your throat from becoming dry;

But you said, 'It is hopeless!
For I have loved strangers *and* foreign gods,
And I will walk after them.'

26"As the thief is shamed when he is caught,
So the house of Israel is shamed—
They, their kings, their leaders,
Their priests, and their prophets—

27Who say to a tree, 'You are my father,'
And to a stone, 'You gave me birth.'
For they have turned their backs to Me,
And not their faces;
But in the time of their trouble they will say,
'Arise [O LORD] and save us.'

28"But where are your gods
Which you made for yourself?
Let them get up, if they can save you
In the time of your trouble!
For [as many as] the number of your cities
Are your gods, O Judah. [Why do not your many man-made
idols run to help you?]

29"Why do you complain *and* contend with Me?
You have all rebelled (transgressed) against Me," says the
LORD.

30"In vain I have punished your people [with the
consequences of their disobedience];
They received no insight from correction [and refused to
change].

Your [own] sword has devoured your prophets
Like a destroying lion.

³¹“O generation [that you are], consider *and* regard carefully
the word of the LORD.

Have I been a wilderness to Israel [like a land without food],
A land of thick *and* deep darkness [like a path without
light]?

Why do My people say, ‘We [have broken loose and we]
are *free to roam* [at will];

We will no longer come to You’?

³²“Can a virgin forget [to wear] her ornaments,
Or a bride her attire [that identifies her as a married woman]?
Yet My people have forgotten Me
Days without number.

³³“How well you prepare your path
To seek *and* obtain [adulterous] love!
Even the most wicked of women
Have learned [indecent] ways from you.

³⁴“Also on your skirts is found
The lifeblood of the innocent poor;
You did not find them breaking in [a house].
But in spite of all these things [your disobedience, your
love of idolatry, your lack of compassion]—

³⁵Yet you keep saying, ‘I am innocent;
Surely His anger has turned away from me.’
Behold (listen very carefully), I will bring you to judgment
and will plead my case against you Because you say, ‘I
have not sinned.’

³⁶“Why do you go around *and* wander so much
Changing your way?

Also, you will be shamed by Egypt
As you were shamed by Assyria.

³⁷“From Egypt also you will come away [as captives]
With your hands on your head;
For the LORD has rejected those in whom you trust
(confide),
And you will not be successful with them.”

3 THAT IS to say, “If a man divorces his wife And she goes
[away] from him

And becomes another man’s [wife],
Will he return to her again? [Of course not!]
Will not that land [where such a thing happened] be
completely desecrated?
But you [rebelled against Me and you] are a prostitute with
many lovers;
Yet you turn to Me.” says the LORD.

²“Lift up your eyes to the barren heights and see;
Where have you not been violated?
You sat by the road waiting [eagerly] for them [those man-
made gods]
Like an Arab [tribesman who waits to attack] in the desert,
And you have desecrated the land
With your [vile] prostitution and your wickedness
(disobedience to God).

³“Therefore the showers have been withheld,
And there has been no spring rain.
Yet you have the forehead (appearance) of a prostitute;
You refuse to be ashamed.

⁴“Will you not just now call out to Me,
‘My Father, you were the guide *and* companion of my
youth?

⁵‘Will He be angry forever?
Will He be indignant to the end?’
Behold, you have spoken,
And you have done all the evil things [you could],
And you have had your way *and* have carried out your
wickedness.’”

⁶Moreover, the LORD said to me in the days of Josiah the king [of Judah], “Have you seen what that faithless Israel has done—how she went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and there she was a prostitute?

⁷“I thought, ‘After she has done all these things she will return to Me’; but she did not return, and her treacherous (faithless) sister Judah saw it.

⁸“And I saw [that even though Judah knew] that for all the acts of adultery (idolatry) of faithless Israel, I [the LORD] had sent her away and given her a certificate of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah was not afraid; but she went and was a prostitute also [following after idols].

⁹“Because of the thoughtlessness of Israel’s prostitution [her immorality mattered little to her], she desecrated the land and committed adultery with [idols of] stones and trees.

¹⁰“Yet in spite of all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to Me with her whole heart, but rather in [blatant] deception [she merely pretended obedience to King Josiah’s reforms],” declares the LORD. [2 Chr 34:33; Hos 7:13, 14]

¹¹And the LORD said to me, “Faithless Israel has proved herself less guilty than treacherous Judah [a land of renegades].

¹²“Go and proclaim these words toward the north [where the ten tribes have been taken as captives] and say,

‘Return, faithless Israel,’ says the LORD;

‘I will not look on you in anger.

For I am gracious *and* merciful,’ says the LORD;

‘I will not be angry forever.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Thank God for His Mercy

God is gracious and merciful (see Jer. 3:12)! His mercy is great, and it is new every day. His mercy is so much greater than the anger of God that we sometimes read about in Scripture. I have said, God can and does get angry, but He is not an angry God. His wrath is against sin, but He extends mercy to sinners.

Our finite minds cannot grasp God's mercy; we can only receive it with our hearts. In our minds, we often want everything to be fair and just, but mercy is not fair. It goes beyond anything we can understand. There is no way to explain why a just and sinless God would decide not to punish those who deserve it, but instead give grace, favor, blessing, forgiveness, and love—which all come from His mercy.

God will give us the faith to believe in mercy even though we cannot grasp it with our minds. We may not understand why God shows mercy, but we can be thankful that He does and we can receive it daily.

- ¹³Only understand fully *and* acknowledge your wickedness
and guilt,
That you have rebelled (transgressed) against the LORD
your God

And have scattered your favors among strangers under every green tree,

And you have not obeyed My voice,’ says the LORD.

¹⁴“Return, O faithless children [of the twelve tribes],’ says the LORD, ‘For I am a master *and* husband to you, And I will take you [not as a nation, but individually]—one from a city and two from a [tribal] family— And I will bring you to Zion.’ [Luke 15:20–22]

¹⁵“Then [in the final time] I will give you [spiritual] shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and [true] understanding.

¹⁶“It will be in those days when you have [repented and] multiplied and increased in the land,” says the LORD, “they will no longer say, ‘The ark of the covenant of the LORD.’ It will not come to mind, nor will they [seriously] remember it, nor will they miss it, nor will it be made again [for instead of the ark, which symbolized My presence, I will be present]. [Is 65:17; Rev 21:3, 22, 23]

¹⁷“At that time they will call Jerusalem ‘The Throne of the LORD,’ and all the nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem, for the name (renown) of the LORD; and they will not walk anymore after the stubbornness of their [own] evil heart.

¹⁸“In those days the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel, and they will come together from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers as an inheritance.

¹⁹“Then I said,

‘How [gloriously and honorably] I would set you among My children

And give you a pleasant land—a wonderful heritage,
The most beautiful inheritance of the nations!’

And I said, ‘You shall call Me, My Father

And not turn away from following Me.’

²⁰“Surely, as a wife treacherously (unfaithfully) leaves her
husband,

So you have dealt treacherously with Me,

O house of Israel,” says the LORD.

²¹A voice is heard on the barren heights,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Breaking Free from Shame

Anyone who has ever felt a deep sense of shame can relate to the people in Jeremiah 3:25, who said, “Let us lie down in our shame, and let our dishonor and humiliation cover us.” These people were ashamed because of their sin against the Lord, but there are many other reasons people feel ashamed. Some reasons have nothing to do with what people have done personally, but with something someone else has done to them.

Because my father sexually abused me, I felt shame, which I internalized. At some point I made an unhealthy transition in my thinking. I was no longer ashamed of what he had done to me; instead, I took the blame on myself and felt there must be something wrong with me if my own father wanted to do things I knew were very wrong and unnatural to me. For years my life was literally poisoned with shame.

Thousands of people struggle mightily in relationships and in many other areas simply because they feel an excessive sense of shame or guilt. They often have no peace unless they feel everyone’s approval of them at all times. They look to others to give them what only God can give, which is a sense of self-worth. They need a constant “fix” of compliments and nods of approval. They place impossible demands and blame on others because nobody can make them feel good about themselves.

The shame of the past is painful and hard to look at. But hiding from the truth does not change the fact that it exists and will continue to cause problems until it is dealt with. To do so, it is necessary to press past the pain of guilt and shame you may feel.

Jesus took your place and paid the debt you owed. He has opened the door of the prison of guilt and shame; you can walk out and be free from bondage.

The weeping and pleading of the children of Israel,
Because they have lost their way,
They have [deliberately] forgotten the LORD their God.

²²“Return, O faithless sons,” [says the LORD],

“I will heal your unfaithfulness.”

[They answer] “Behold, we come to You,

For You are the LORD our God.

²³“Truly, [the hope of salvation from] the hill [where idols are worshiped] is a deception,

A tumult *and* noisy multitude on the mountains;

Truly in the LORD our God

Is the salvation of Israel.

²⁴“But the shameful act [of idolatry] has consumed the labor of our fathers since our youth—their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters.

²⁵“Let us lie down in our shame, and let our dishonor *and* humiliation cover us; for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers; from our youth even to this day we have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God.”

4 “IF YOU will return, O Israel,” says the LORD, “If you will return to Me,

And if you will put away your detestable things *and* remove
your man-made gods from My sight,

And not stray *or* waver,

²And if you swear [your oaths], ‘As the LORD lives,’

In truth, in justice, and in righteousness,

Then the nations will bless themselves in Him,

And in Him they will glory.”

³For this is what the LORD says to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem, “Plow your uncultivated ground [for a season],

And do not sow among thorns.

⁴“Circumcise (dedicate, sanctify) yourselves to the LORD

And remove the foreskin [sins] of your heart,

Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem,

Or else My wrath will go forth like fire [consuming all that
gets in its way]

And burn and there will be no one to quench it,

Because of the evil of your acts.”

⁵Declare in Judah and proclaim in Jerusalem, and say,

“Blow the trumpet in the land;

Cry aloud and say,

‘Assemble yourselves, and let us go

Into the fortified cities.’

⁶“Raise a banner toward Zion [to mark the way for those
seeking safety inside Jerusalem’s walls]!

Seek refuge, do not stand [immobile],
For I am bringing evil from the north (the army of Babylon),
And great destruction.

⁷“A lion has left his lair,
And a destroyer of nations is on his way.
He has gone out from his place
To desolate your land;
Your cities will be in ruins
Without an inhabitant.

⁸“For this reason, put on sackcloth [for mourning],
Lament (mourn with expressions of grief for the dead) and
wail,
For the fierce anger of the LORD
Has not turned back from us.”

⁹“It shall come about in that day,” says the LORD, “that the heart *and* courage of the king will fail (be paralyzed), and also the heart of the princes; the priests will be appalled and the prophets will be astounded *and* horrified.”

¹⁰Then I said, “Alas, Lord GOD! Surely You have completely deceived *and* misled this people and Jerusalem, [for the prophets represented You as] saying [to Your people], ‘You will have peace,’ but [in fact] a sword reaches to their throat.”

¹¹In that time it will be said to this people and to Jerusalem, “A scorching wind from the barren heights in the wilderness [comes at My command] against the daughter of My people—not [a wind] to winnow and not to cleanse [from chaff, as when threshing, but]

¹²a wind too strong *and* full for this comes at My word.

Now I will also speak judgment against My people.”

13“Behold, the enemy comes up like clouds,
His chariots like the whirlwind;
His horses are swifter than eagles.
Woe (judgment is coming) to us, for we are ruined!”

14O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness,
That you may be saved.
How long will your wicked *and* immoral thoughts
Lodge within you?

15For a voice declares from Dan [far in the north],
And proclaims evil from Mount Ephraim.

16“Warn the [neighboring] nations now [that our enemy is coming]!
Announce to Jerusalem,
‘Besiegers are coming from a far country,
And they lift their voices *and* shout against the cities of
Judah.

17‘Like watchmen of a field they are against her on all sides,
Because she has rebelled against Me,’ says the LORD.

18“Your ways and your deeds
Have brought these things on you.
This is your tragedy *and* doom; how bitter,
How it has touched your heart!”

19My soul, my soul! I writhe in anguish *and* pain! Oh, the
walls of my heart!
My heart is pounding *and* throbbing within me;

I cannot be silent,
For you have heard, O my soul,
The sound of the trumpet,
The alarm of war.

²⁰News of one [terrible] disaster comes close after another,
For the whole land is devastated;
Suddenly my tents are spoiled *and* destroyed,
My [tent] curtains [ruined] in a moment.

²¹How long [O LORD] must I see the banner [marking the way
for flight]
And hear the sound of the trumpet [urging the people to
run for safety]?

²²“For My people are stupid *and* foolish,” [says the LORD to
Jeremiah]; “They do not know Me;
They are foolish children
And have no understanding.
They are shrewd [enough] to do evil,
But they do not know [how] to do good.”

²³I looked at the earth [in my vision], and behold, it was [as at
the time of creation] formless and void; And to the
heavens, and they had no light.

²⁴I looked at the mountains, and behold, they were trembling,
And all the hills moved back and forth.

²⁵I looked, and behold, there was no man,
And all the birds of the air had fled.

²⁶I looked, and behold, the fertile land was a wilderness,
And all its cities were pulled down

Before the [presence of the] LORD, before His fierce anger.

²⁷Therefore says the LORD,

“The whole land shall be a desolation,

Yet I will not cause total destruction. [Jer 5:10, 18; 30:11; 46:28]

²⁸“For this reason the earth shall mourn

And the heavens above shall become dark,

Because I have spoken, I have decided,

And I will not change my mind (relent), nor will I turn back from it.”

²⁹Every city runs away at the sound of the horsemen and archers.

They go into the thickets and climb among the rocks;

Every city is deserted,

And no man lives in them.

³⁰And you, O desolate one, what will you do?

Though you clothe yourself in scarlet,

Though you adorn *yourself* with ornaments of gold,

Though you enlarge your eyes with paint,

You make yourself beautiful in vain.

Your lovers (allies) despise you;

They seek your life.

³¹For I heard a cry like a woman in labor,

The anguish as of one giving birth to her first child,

The cry of the Daughter of Zion (Jerusalem), who gasps for breath,

Who stretches out her hands, saying,

“Woe is me [my judgment comes]! I faint [in fear] before the murderers.”

5 “ROAM BACK and forth through the streets of Jerusalem,

And look now and take note.

And look in her open squares

To see if you can find a man [as Abraham sought in Sodom],

One who is just, who [has integrity and moral courage and]
seeks truth (faithfulness);

Then I will pardon Jerusalem—[for the sake of one
uncompromisingly righteous person]. [Gen 18:22–32]

²“And though they say, ‘As the LORD lives,’

Surely they swear [their oaths] falsely.”

³O LORD, do not Your eyes look for truth?

You [have seen their faithless heart and] have stricken them,

But they did not weaken;

You have consumed them,

But they refused to take correction *or* instruction.

They have made their faces harder than rock;

They have refused to repent *and* return to You.

⁴Then I said, “[Surely] these are only the poor (uneducated);

They are [sinfully] foolish *and* have no [spiritual]
understanding,

For they do not know the way of the LORD

Or the ordinance of their God [and the requirements of His
just and righteous law].

⁵“I will go to the great [men]

And speak to them,
For they [must] know the way of the LORD,
The ordinance of their God.”

But [I found the reverse to be true, that] they too had all
alike broken the yoke [of God’s law]
And had burst the bonds [of obedience to Him].

⁶Therefore a lion from the forest will kill them,
A wolf of the deserts will destroy them,
A leopard is watching their cities.
Everyone who goes out of them shall be torn in pieces,
Because their transgressions are many,
Their desertions of faith are countless.

⁷“Why should I [overlook these offenses and] forgive you?
Your children have abandoned (rejected) Me
And sworn [their oaths] by those who are not gods.
When I had fed them until they were full [and bound them
to Me by a promise],
They committed [spiritual] adultery,
Assembling in troops at the houses of prostitutes (idols).

⁸“They were like well-fed, lusty stallions,
Each one neighing after his neighbor’s wife.

⁹“Shall I not punish them [for these things]?” says the LORD;
“Shall I not avenge Myself
On a nation such as this?”

¹⁰“Go up through the rows of Jerusalem’s vineyards and
destroy [them],
But do not completely destroy *everything*.

POWERPOINT

God was calling Jeremiah to a higher level where his words would be powerful, like fire (see Jer. 5:14). He is also calling you and me to experience a higher level of His power and blessing, to be more aggressive against the kingdom of darkness. Anytime we have an opportunity to enter a level of greater power, it always requires a greater accountability on our part. I like to say, "When we come up higher, our fleshly ways have to go down lower." Ask God to help you follow His guidance at all times, even if doing so means you will need to sacrifice something.



Strip away her branches *and* the tendrils [of her vines],

For they are not the LORD's.

¹¹“For the house of Israel and the house of Judah
Have dealt very treacherously (faithlessly) with Me,”
declares the LORD.

¹²They have lied about *and* denied the LORD
By saying, “It is not He [who speaks through His
prophets];
Misfortune *and* evil shall not come on us,
Nor will we see war or famine.

¹³“The prophets are like the wind [their prophecy will not
come to pass],
And the word [of God] is not in them.
In this manner it will be done to them [as they prophesied,
not to us].”

¹⁴Therefore, thus says the LORD God of hosts, “Because you
[people] have spoken this word,
Behold, I am making My words a fire in your mouth
[Jeremiah]
And this people wood, and My words will consume them.

¹⁵“Behold, I am bringing a nation against you from far away, O
house of Israel,” says the LORD.
“It is a mighty *and* enduring nation,
It is an ancient nation,
A nation whose language you do not know,
Whose words you do not comprehend.

¹⁶“Their quiver is [filled with the dead] like an open grave;
They are all mighty men [heroes of their nation].

17“They will consume your harvest and [eat up] your bread;
They will consume your sons and your daughters;
They will consume your flocks and your herds;
They will consume your vines and your fig trees.
With the sword they will break down *and* demolish your
fortified cities in which you trust.

18“But even in those days,” says the LORD, “I will not
totally destroy you.

19“‘It will come about when your people say, ‘Why has the
LORD our God done all these things to us?’ then you shall
answer them, ‘As you have abandoned (rejected) Me,’ [says
the LORD,] ‘and have served strange *and* foreign gods in your
land, so you will serve strangers in a land that is not yours.’

20“Declare this in the house of Jacob
And proclaim it in Judah, saying:

21“Now hear this, O foolish people without heart,
Who have eyes but do not see,
Who have ears but do not hear. [Is 6:9, 10; Matt 13:10–15;
Mark 8:17, 18]

22“Do you not fear Me?” says the LORD.
“Do you not tremble [in awe] in My presence?
For I have placed the sand as a boundary for the sea,
An eternal decree *and* a perpetual barrier beyond which it
cannot pass.
Though the waves [of the sea] toss *and* break, yet they
cannot prevail [against the sand ordained to hold them
back];

Speak God's Word

*I will fear and worship the Lord my God with profound awe
and reverence.*

| adapted from JEREMIAH 5:24 |

Though the waves *and* the billows roar, yet they cannot
cross over [the barrier].

[Is not such a God to be feared?]

23^cBut this people has a stubborn heart and a rebellious will
[that draws them away from Me]; They have turned away
and have gone [into idolatry].

24^cThey do not say in their heart,
“Let us now fear *and* worship the LORD our God [with
profound awe and reverence], Who gives rain in its
season,

Both the autumn and the spring rain,
Who keeps for us
The appointed weeks of the harvest.”

25^cYour wickedness has turned these [blessings] away,
And your sins have withheld good [harvests] from you.

26^cFor wicked men are found among My people,
They watch like fowlers who lie in wait;
They set a trap,
They catch men.

27^cAs a cage is full of birds,
So are their houses full of deceit *and* treachery;
Therefore they have become influential and rich.

- 28“They are fat and they are sleek (prosperous),
They ^{*}excel in acts of wickedness;
They do not plead the cause,
The cause of the orphan, so that they [the wicked] may
prosper,
And they do not defend the rights of the poor.
- 29“Shall I not punish them [for these things]?” says the LORD.
“Shall I not avenge Myself
On such a nation as this?”
- 30“An appalling and horrible thing [bringing desolation and
destruction]
Has come to pass in the land:
- 31The prophets prophesy falsely,
And the priests rule on their own authority;
And My people love [to have] it so!
But what will you do when the end comes?

6 “RUN FOR safety, you children of Benjamin, Out of the
midst of Jerusalem!
And blow a trumpet in Tekoa [in Judah]
And raise a signal-fire in Beth-haccherem [near Jerusalem];
For evil is looking down [with eager anticipation] from the
north,
And great destruction.

2““I will destroy the Daughter of Zion (Jerusalem), the lovely
and delicate one [so like a luxurious pasture].

³“Shepherds with their flocks will come against her;
They will pitch their tents all around her;
They will pasture, each one in his place [eating up all her
rich grasses].

⁴“[They shout], ‘Prepare for war against her;
Arise, let us [take her by surprise and] attack her at noon.
But alas, the daylight pales,
The evening shadows grow long.

⁵‘Arise, let us [awaken to] attack her at night
And destroy her [fortified] palaces!’”

⁶For the LORD of hosts has said,

“Cut down her trees
And build a siege [mound] against Jerusalem.
This is the city which must be punished;
There is nothing but oppression inside her [walls].

⁷“As a fountain springs up *and* pours out its fresh waters,
So she [continually] pours out her fresh wickedness.
Violence and destruction are heard inside her [walls];
Sickness and wounds are always before Me.

⁸“Be wise *and* be warned, O Jerusalem,
Or I will be alienated from you,
And make you a desolation,
An uninhabited land.”

⁹Thus says the LORD of hosts,
“They will thoroughly gather like [fruit on] a vine what is
left of Israel;
Pass your hand [over the vine] again *and* again [Babylon,

tool of destruction] like a grape gatherer, Over the
branches [stripping the tendrils off the vine].”

- ¹⁰To whom shall I (Jeremiah) speak and give warning
That they may hear?
Behold, their ears are closed [absolutely deaf to God]
And they cannot listen.
Behold, the word of the LORD has become a reprimand *and*
an object of scorn to them; They have no delight in it.
[Acts 7:1]
- ¹¹But I am full of the wrath (judgment) of the LORD;
I am tired of restraining it.
“[I will] pour it out on the children in the street
And on the young men gathered together;
For both the husband and wife shall be taken,
The aged and the very old [though full of days they are not
exempt from judgment].
- ¹²“Their houses shall be turned over to others,
Their fields and their wives together;
For I will stretch out My hand
Against the inhabitants of the land,” says the LORD.
- ¹³“For from the least of them even to the greatest of them,
Everyone is greedy for [unfair] gain;
And from the prophet even to the priest
Everyone deals deceitfully.
- ¹⁴“They have treated superficially the [bloody] broken wound
of My people,
Saying, ‘Peace, peace,’
When there is no peace.

15.“Were they ashamed because they had committed
disgusting *and* vile things?
No, they were not at all ashamed;
They did not even know how to blush [at their idolatry].

Speak God's Word

*I will stand and look and ask
for the ancient paths, where
the good way is—and walk
in it. And I will find rest for
my soul.*

| adapted from JEREMIAH 6:16 |

Therefore they will fall among those who fall;
At the time that I punish them
They will be overthrown,” says the LORD.

- ¹⁶Thus says the LORD,
“Stand by the roads and look; ask for the ancient paths,
Where the good way is; then walk in it,
And you will find rest for your souls.
But they said, ‘We will not walk in it!’ [Matt 11:29]
- ¹⁷“I have set watchmen (prophets) over you,
Saying, ‘Listen *and* pay attention to the [warning] sound of
the trumpet!’
But they said, ‘We will not listen.’
- ¹⁸“Therefore hear, O [Gentile] nations,
And see, O congregation, what [vengeful act] is to be done
to them.

19“Hear, O earth: behold, I am bringing disaster on this people,
The fruit of their schemes,
Because they have not listened *and* paid attention to My
words,
And as for My law, they have rejected it also.

20“For what purpose does frankincense come to Me from
Sheba
And the sweet cane from a distant land?
Your burnt offerings are not acceptable
And your sacrifices are not sweet *and* pleasing to Me.”

21Therefore, thus says the LORD,
“Behold, I am laying stumbling blocks before this people.
The fathers and the sons together
Will stumble against them;
The neighbor and his friend will perish.”

22Thus says the LORD,
“Behold, a people is coming from the north country,
And a great nation shall be stirred up *and* put into action
from the remote parts of the earth.

23“They seize bow and spear;
They are cruel *and* inhuman and have no mercy.
Their voice sounds like the roaring sea;
They ride [in formation] on horses,
Arrayed as a man for battle
Against you, O Daughter of Zion (Jerusalem)!”

24We have heard the report of it;
Our hands become limp *and* helpless.

Anguish has gripped us,
Pain like that of a woman in childbirth.

²⁵Do not go out into the field
Nor walk on the road,
For the enemy is armed with the sword;
Terror is on every side.

²⁶O daughter of my people [says Jeremiah],
Clothe yourself in sackcloth and wallow in ashes;
Mourn [aloud] as for an only son,
A most bitter cry [of sorrow and regret],
For suddenly the destroyer will come upon us [on both
prophet and people].

²⁷“I [the LORD] have set you as an assayer [O Jeremiah] and
as a tester [of the ore] of My people, That you may know
and analyze their acts.”

²⁸They are all the worst [kind] of [stiff-necked, godless]
rebels,
Going around spreading slander.
They are [not gold and silver ore, but] bronze and iron;
They are all corrupt.

²⁹The bellows blow fiercely,
The lead is consumed by the fire;
In vain they continue refining,
But the wicked are not separated *and* removed.

³⁰They call them rejected silver [only dross, without value],
Because the LORD has rejected them.

1 THE WORD that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,
2“Stand in the gate of the LORD’s house and proclaim there this word and say, ‘Hear the word of the LORD, all you of Judah who enter by these gates to worship the LORD.’”

3Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Change your ways and your behavior, and I will let you live in this place.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Maintaining Your Integrity

There was a time not too long ago when a person's word was his honor; to not keep one's word was unthinkable. When people made a business deal, a twenty-page contract covering every minute detail imaginable was not necessary. They simply came to an agreement and shook hands.

In Jeremiah's time, personal integrity and integrity at every level had been swept aside (see Jer. 7). In Jeremiah 7:4, even the prophets were lying and speaking deception.

Having integrity requires you to be honest and to do the right thing in every situation. You cannot always make others do what is right, but you are responsible to God and to yourself to do right. A person of integrity never says, "Everyone else does it (lies, cheats, steals, etc.), so what's the problem?" Even if nobody in the whole world kept their word, you should still keep yours, simply because it is the right thing to do.

⁴"Do not trust in the deceptive *and* lying words [of the false prophets who claim that Jerusalem will be protected by God because of the temple], saying, 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.'

⁵"For if you thoroughly change your ways and your behavior, if you thoroughly *and* honestly practice justice between a man and his neighbor, ⁶if you do not oppress the

transient *and* the foreigner, the orphan, or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood [by oppression and by unjust judicial murders] in Jerusalem, nor follow after other gods to your own ruin, ⁷then I will let you live in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers [to live in] forever and ever.

⁸“Behold, you are trusting in deceptive *and* useless words that bring no benefit.

⁹“Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear [oaths] falsely, offer sacrifices *or* burn incense to Baal, and follow after other gods that you have not known, ¹⁰and [then dare to] come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My Name, and say, ‘We are protected *and* set free [by this act of religious ritual]!’—only to go on with this wickedness *and* these disgusting and loathsome things?

¹¹“Has this house, which is called by My Name, become a den of robbers in your eyes [a place of retreat for you between acts of violence]? Behold, I Myself have seen it,” says the LORD.

¹²“But go now to My place which was in Shiloh [in Ephraim], where I first set My Name, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel. [1 Sam 4:10–18]

¹³“And now, because you have done all these things,” says the LORD, “and I spoke [persistently] to you, even rising up early and speaking, but you did not listen, and I called you but you did not answer, ¹⁴therefore, I will do to this house (the temple) which is called by My Name, in which you trust, and to the place which I gave you and your fathers, just as I did to Shiloh.

¹⁵“I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brothers (relatives through Jacob), all the descendants of Ephraim.

¹⁶“Therefore, do not pray for this people [of Judah] or lift up a cry or entreaty for them or make intercession to Me, for I do not hear you.

¹⁷“Do you not see what they are doing in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?

¹⁸“The children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead the dough to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods that they may offend *and* provoke Me to anger.

¹⁹“Do they offend *and* provoke Me to anger?” says the LORD. “Is it not themselves [they offend], to their own shame?”

²⁰Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, My anger and My wrath will be poured out on this place, on man and beast, on the trees of the field and the fruit of the ground; and it will burn and [the fire will] not be quenched.”

²¹Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices and eat the meat.

²²“For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices.

²³“But this thing I did command them: ‘Listen to *and* obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people; and you will walk in all the way which I command you, so that it may be well with you.’

²⁴“But they did not obey Me or bend their ear [to hear Me],

but followed the counsels and the stubbornness of their [own] evil heart (mind), and [they turned and] went backward instead of forward.

25“Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have [persistently] sent you all My servants the prophets, sending them daily, early [and late].

26“Yet they did not listen to Me *and* obey Me or bend their ear [to hear Me], but stiffened their neck; they did more evil *and* behaved worse than their fathers.

27“*You shall speak all these words to them, but they will not listen to you; and you shall [also] call to them, but they will not answer you.*

28“*You shall say to them, ‘This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the LORD their God or accept correction *and* warning; truth *and* faithfulness have perished and have completely vanished from their mouths.*

29“Cut off your hair [your crown, O Jerusalem] and throw it away,

And take up a mournful cry on the barren heights,
For the LORD has rejected and abandoned
The generation of His wrath.’

30“*For the children of Judah have done evil in My sight,” says the LORD; “they have set their disgusting *and* shamefully vile things in the house which is called by My Name, to defile it.*

31“*They have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the Valley of Ben-hinnom (son of Hinnom), to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire [to honor Molech, the fire god]—which I did not command, nor did it come into My heart*

(mind). [Lev 18:21; Josh 15:8; 2 Kin 16:2, 3; 21:1, 6; Is 30:33]

³²“Therefore, behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when it will no longer be called Topheth or the Valley of Ben-hinnom, but the Valley of the Slaughter, for [in bloody warfare] they will bury [the dead] in Topheth until there is no more room. [Jer 19:6]

³³“And the dead bodies of this people will be food for the birds of the air and for the beasts of the earth and no one will frighten them away.

³⁴“Then I will cause the voices of joy and gladness, and the voices of the bridegroom and the bride to vanish from the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem; for the land will become a ruin—a wasteland.

8 “AT THAT time,” says the LORD, “they [the Babylonian army] will bring out from their graves the bones of the kings of Judah, the bones of its princes, the bones of the priests, the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

²“They will [carelessly scatter and] spread them out before the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven, which the dead have loved and which they have served, and which they have walked after and which they have sought, and which they have worshiped. They will not be gathered or be buried; they will be like dung on the face of the earth.

³“And death will be chosen rather than life by all the remnant of those who remain of this evil family (nation), who remain in all the places to which I have driven them,” says the

LORD of hosts.

4“Moreover [Jeremiah], you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD,

“Do men fall and not rise up again?

Does one turn away [from God] and not repent *and* return [to Him]?

5“Why then has this people of Jerusalem
Turned away with a perpetual turning away [from Me]?
They hold tightly to deceit (idolatry);
They refuse to repent *and* return [to God].

6“I have listened and heard,
But they have spoken what is not right;
No man repented of his wickedness,
Saying, ‘What have I done?’
Everyone turns to his [individual] course,
As the horse rushes like a torrent into battle.

7“Even the stork in the sky
Knows her seasons [of migration],
And the turtledove, the swallow and the crane
Observe the time of their return.
But My people do not know
The law of the LORD.

8“How can you say, ‘We are wise,
And the law of the LORD is with us [and we are learned in its
language and teachings]’?
Behold, [the truth is that] the lying pen of the scribes
Has made the law into a lie [a mere code of ceremonial

observances]. [Mark 7:13]

9“‘The wise men are shamed,
They are dismayed and caught.
Behold, they have [manipulated and] rejected the [truth in
the] word of the LORD, And what kind of wisdom *and*
insight do they have?

10“‘Therefore I will give their wives to others
And their fields to new owners;
Because from the least even to the greatest
Everyone is greedy for [unjust] gain;
From the prophet even to the priest
Everyone practices deceit *and* deals in corruption.

11“‘For they have treated the brokenness of the daughter of
My people superficially,
Saying, ‘Peace, peace,’
When there is no peace.

12“‘Were they ashamed because of the extremely disgusting
and shamefully vile things they had done?
They were not at all ashamed,
And they did not know how to blush.
Therefore, they shall fall among those who fall;
At the time of their punishment they shall be overthrown,”
Says the LORD. [Jer 6:12–15]

13“‘I will gather *and* snatch them away [utterly consuming
them],” says the LORD.
“There will be no grapes on the vine,
Nor figs on the fig tree,

And even the leaf will wither;
And the things that I have given them will pass away [by
the hand of those whom I have appointed].”” [Matt
21:18, 19]

¹⁴Why are we sitting still [the people wonder]?
Assemble yourselves, and let us enter the fortified cities
And let us die there,
For the LORD our God has decreed our ruin
And given us bitter *and* poisonous water to drink,
Because we have sinned against the LORD.

¹⁵We waited for peace *and* salvation, but no good came,
And for a time of healing, but behold, terror!

¹⁶The snorting of [Nebuchadnezzar's] horses is heard from
Dan [on Palestine's northern border].
At the sound of the neighing of his strong stallions

POWERPOINT

The people of Judah were no longer enjoying the presence of God in their lives because their actions were not pleasing to Him. Jeremiah's heart was broken over the condition of the people's lives. They had provoked the Lord to anger with their idols and carved images, yet they could not understand why God wasn't rushing to their rescue in their times of need. They were blinded to their sin! We must not allow our own thoughts to deceive us, but we should ask God to show us truth at all times.



The whole land quakes;
For they come and devour the land and all that is in it,
The city and those who live in it.

17“For behold, I am sending serpents among you,
Vipers which cannot be charmed,
And they will bite you,” says the LORD.

18Oh, that I (Jeremiah) could find comfort from my sorrow [for
my grief is beyond healing], My heart is sick *and* faint
within me!

19Behold, [hear the sound of] the cry of the daughter of my
people from the distant land [of Babylon]: “Is not the
LORD in Zion? Is not her King within her?”
[But the LORD answers] “Why have they provoked Me to
anger with their carved images and with foreign idols?”

20“‘The harvest is past, the summer has ended *and* the
gathering of fruit is over,
But we are not saved,” [comes the voice of the people
again].

21For the brokenness of the daughter of my people I
(Jeremiah) am broken;
I mourn, anxiety has gripped me.

22Is there no balm in Gilead?
Is there no physician there?
Why then has not the [spiritual] health of the daughter of
my people been restored?

9 OH THAT my head were waters And my eyes a fountain of
tears,
That I might weep day and night

For the slain of the daughter of my people!

²Oh that I had in the wilderness

A lodging place (a mere shelter) for wayfaring men,

That I might leave my people

And go away from them!

For they are all adulterers [worshiping idols instead of the
LORD],

[They are] an assembly of treacherous men [of weak
character, men without integrity].

³“They bend their tongue like their bow;

[Their] lies and not truth prevail *and* grow strong in the
land;

For they proceed from evil to evil,

And they do not know *and* understand *and* acknowledge
Me,” says the LORD.

⁴“Let everyone beware of his neighbor

And do not trust any brother.

For every brother is a supplanter [like Jacob, a deceiver,
ready to grab his brother’s heel],

And every neighbor goes around as a slanderer. [Gen 25:26]

⁵“Everyone deceives *and* mocks his neighbor

And does not speak the truth.

They have taught their tongue to speak lies;

They exhaust themselves with sin *and* cruelty.

⁶“Your dwelling is in the midst of deceit [oppression upon
oppression and deceit upon deceit]; Through deceit they
refuse to know (understand) Me,” says the LORD.

⁷Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts,

“Behold, I will refine them [through suffering] and test
them;

For how else should I deal with the daughter of My people?

⁸“Their tongue is a murderous arrow;

It speaks deceit;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Godly Hearts Produce Godly Words

Jeremiah warned about one who “with his mouth... speaks peace to his neighbor, but in his heart he lays traps and waits in ambush for him” (Jer. 9:8). Along the same lines, Jesus warned the Pharisees: “How can you speak good things when you are evil? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart” (Matt. 12:34). Proverbs 16:23 says, “The heart of the wise instructs his mouth [in wisdom],” also showing us that our words come from and are true expressions of our hearts.

To speak godly words, our hearts need to be right with God. When our hearts are right, we will choose right thoughts, and that will produce right words. When a thought comes into your mind that you know will not bear good fruit or is not pleasing to God, cast it out as though you are hurling it far from your mind. Refuse to take it in and meditate on it, but rather replace it with something that will produce joy and peace in your life.

With his mouth one speaks peace to his neighbor,
But in his heart he lays traps *and* waits in ambush for him.

⁹“Shall I not punish them for these things?” says the LORD.

“Shall I not avenge Myself

On such a nation as this?

¹⁰“I will take up a weeping and wailing for the mountains,

And a [funeral] dirge for the pastures of the wilderness,
Because they are burned up *and* desolated so that no one
passes through [them];
Nor can anyone hear the lowing of cattle.
Both the birds of the air and the beasts have fled; they are
gone.

¹¹“I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins,
A haunt *and* dwelling place of jackals;
And I will make the cities of Judah a desolation, without
inhabitant.”

¹²Who is the wise man who may understand this [without
any doubt]? To whom has the mouth of the LORD spoken, so
that he may declare it? Why is the land ruined, laid waste like a
wilderness, so that no one passes through?

¹³The LORD said, “Because they have turned away from
My law which I set before them, and have not listened to *and*
obeyed My voice nor walked in accordance with it, ¹⁴but have
walked stubbornly after their [own] heart and after the Baals, as
their fathers taught them,”

¹⁵therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel,
“behold, I will feed them, this people, with wormwood and give
them bitter *and* poisonous water to drink.

¹⁶“I will [also] scatter them among nations that neither they
nor their fathers have known, and I will send the sword after
them until I have annihilated them.”

¹⁷Thus says the LORD of hosts,
“Consider and call for the mourning women to come;
Send for the wailing women to come.

¹⁸“Let them hurry and take up a wailing for us,
That our eyes may shed tears
And our eyelids flow with water.

¹⁹“For a sound of wailing is heard [coming] from Zion:
‘How we are ruined!
We are greatly perplexed *and* utterly shamed,
Because we have left the land,
Because they have torn down our dwellings.’”

²⁰Now hear the word of the LORD, O you women,
And let your ear hear the word of His mouth;
Teach your daughters a song of mourning,
And each one [teach] her neighbor a dirge.

²¹For death has come up through our windows;
It has entered our palaces,
Cutting off the children from the streets
And the young men from the town squares.

²²Speak, “Thus says the LORD,
‘The dead bodies of men will fall like dung on the open field,
And like sheaves [of grain] behind the reaper,
And no one will gather them.’” [Jer 8:2]

²³Thus says the LORD, “Let not the one who is wise *and*
skillful boast in his insight; let not the one who is mighty *and*
powerful boast in his strength; let not the one who is rich
boast in his [temporal satisfactions and earthly] abundance;

²⁴but let the one who boasts boast in this, that he understands
and knows Me [and acknowledges Me and honors Me as God
and recognizes without any doubt], that I am the LORD who

practices lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on the earth, for in these things I delight,” says the LORD. [1 Cor 1:31; 2 Cor 10:17]

²⁵“Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “when I will punish all who are circumcised [physically] and yet uncircumcised [spiritually]—[Rom 2:25–29]

²⁶Egypt and Judah, and Edom and the sons of Ammon, and Moab and all those who live in the desert who clip off the hair on their temples; for all these nations are uncircumcised (sinful, impure), and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart.”

10 HEAR THE word which the LORD speaks to you, O house of Israel.

²Thus says the LORD,

“Do not learn the way of the [pagan] nations,

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*There is none like You, O
Lord; You are great, and great*

*is Your mighty and powerful
name.*

• adapted from Jeremiah 10:6

And do not be terrified *and* distressed by the signs of the
heavens

Although the pagans are terrified by them;

³For the customs *and* decrees of the peoples are [mere]
delusion [exercises in futility]; It is only wood which one
cuts from the forest [to make a god],

The work of the hands of the craftsman with the axe *or*
cutting tool.

⁴“They adorn the idol with silver and with gold;
They fasten it with hammers and nails
So that it will not fall apart.

⁵“They are like scarecrows in a cucumber field;
They cannot speak;
They have to be carried,
Because they cannot walk!
Do not be afraid of them,
For they can do no harm *or* evil,
Nor can they do any good.”

⁶There is none like You, O LORD;
You are great, and great is Your mighty *and* powerful name.

⁷Who would not fear You, O King of the nations?
For it is appropriate *and* it is Your due!
For among all the wise men of the nations

And in all their kingdoms,
There is none like You.

⁸But they are altogether irrational *and* stupid and foolish
In their discipline of delusion—their idol is [only] wood [it
is ridiculous, empty and worthless]!

⁹Silver *that has been* beaten [into plates] is brought from
Tarshish,
And gold from Uphaz,
The work of the craftsman and of the hand of the goldsmith;
Violet and purple are their clothing;
They are all the work of skilled men.

¹⁰But the LORD is the true God *and* the God who is Truth; He
is the living God and the everlasting King.
The earth quakes *and* shudders at His wrath,
And the nations are not able to endure His indignation.

¹¹In this manner you shall say to them, “The gods that did
not make the heavens and the earth will perish from the earth
and from under the heavens.”

¹²God made the earth by His power;
He established the world by His wisdom
And by His understanding *and* skill He has stretched out
the heavens.

¹³When He utters His voice, *there is* a tumult of waters in the
heavens,
And He causes the clouds *and* the mist to ascend from the
end of the earth;
He makes lightning for the rain,

And brings out the wind from His treasures *and* from His storehouses.

¹⁴Every man has become [like a brute] irrational *and* stupid, without knowledge [of God]; Every goldsmith is shamed by his carved idols;

For his molten images are frauds *and* lies,
And there is no breath in them.

¹⁵They are worthless *and* devoid of promise, a work of delusion *and* mockery; In their time of [trial and] punishment they will perish [without hope].

¹⁶The Portion of Jacob [the true God on whom Israel has a claim] is not like these;
For He is the Designer *and* Maker of all things,
And Israel is the tribe of His inheritance [and He will not fail them]—

The LORD of hosts is His name.

¹⁷Gather up your bundle [of goods] from the ground,
You who live under siege.

¹⁸For thus says the LORD;

“Behold, I am slinging out at this time the people of this land,

And will cause them [great] distress,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Live for God's Will

As God's prophet, Jeremiah suffered greatly for faithfully speaking God's words to His people. Speaking for the nation's brokenness, he said, "Surely this sickness and suffering and grief are mine, and I must bear it" (Jer. 10:19).

The apostle Peter said, "Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh [and died for us], arm yourselves [like warriors] with the same purpose [being willing to suffer for doing what is right and pleasing God], because whoever has suffered in the flesh [being like-minded with Christ] is done with [intentional] sin [having stopped pleasing the world]" (1 Pet. 4:1). Suffering in the flesh means your flesh is not going to like everything you have to deal with, but if you set your mind and stand firm, you will no longer walk in the flesh or easily give in to temptation. Instead you will live for what God wills, as Jeremiah did. When we live for God's will, all our circumstances may not be great, but our peace will be—and that is one of the most important things in our lives.

That they may find it [to be as I have said].”

19“Woe to me because of my [spiritual] brokenness!” [says Jeremiah, speaking for the nation.]

“My wound is incurable.”

But I said, “Surely this sickness *and* suffering *and* grief are

- mine,
And I must bear it.”
- ²⁰My tent is destroyed,
And all my [tent] cords are broken;
My children have been taken from me [as captives] and are
no more.
There is no one to stretch out my tent again
And to set up my [tent] curtains.
- ²¹For the shepherds [of the people] have become [like brutes,]
irrational *and* stupid, And have not searched for the
LORD *or* asked about Him *or* realized their need for Him;
Therefore they have not been wise *and* have not
prospered,
And all their flocks are scattered.
- ²²The sound of a report! Behold, [the invader] comes—
A great commotion from the country of the north
(Babylonia)—
To make the cities of Judah
A desolation, a haunt *and* dwelling place of jackals.
- ²³O LORD, I know that the path of [life of] a man is not in
himself;

POWERPOINT

According to Jeremiah 10:23, people even at their very best do not have the ability to run their own lives. God alone knows what is best for us, and we should always submit to His will. We need God's wisdom, guidance, strength, and power to lead us in the right path of life. Acknowledge God in all your ways each day and He will direct your path (see Prov. 3:6).



It is not within [the limited ability of] man [even one at his best] to choose *and* direct his steps [in life]. [Ps 37:23; Prov 20:24]

²⁴O LORD, correct me [along with Your people], but with mercy *and* in just measure— Not in Your anger, or You will crush me *and* bring me to nothing.

²⁵Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know *nor* recognize You

And on the families that do not call Your name.

For they have devoured Jacob;

They have devoured him and consumed him

And made his land a desolate waste.

11 THE WORD that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, ²“Hear the words of this [solemn] covenant, and speak to the men of

Judah and to the people of Jerusalem.

³“Say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, “Cursed is the man who does not heed the words of this covenant ⁴which I commanded your fathers at the time that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, ‘Listen to My voice and do according to all that I command you. So you shall be My people, and I will be your God,’

⁵that I may complete the oath which I swore to your fathers, to give them a land [of plenty] flowing with milk and honey, as it is this day.’”” Then I answered, “Amen (so be it), O LORD.”

⁶And the LORD said to me, “Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem: ‘Hear the words of this [solemn] covenant and do them.

⁷‘For I solemnly warned your fathers at the time that I brought them up from the land of Egypt, even to this day, warning them persistently, saying, “Obey My voice.”

⁸‘Yet they did not obey or incline their ear [to listen to Me], but everyone walked in the stubborn way of his [own] evil heart. Therefore I brought on them all [the suffering threatened in] the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but they did not.’”

⁹Then the LORD said to me, “A conspiracy has been found among the men of Judah and among the people of Jerusalem.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Tests and Examinations

Jeremiah 11:20 says that the Lord, “who judges righteously,... tests the feelings and the heart (mind).” In chapter 12, Jeremiah specifically asks God to examine the attitude of his heart toward Him (see v. 3). These two verses remind me of Deuteronomy 8:2, when God told the Israelites He was testing their hearts “to know what was in your heart (mind)” and whether or not they would keep His commandments. In Psalm 139:23, David says, “Search me [thoroughly], O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.”

The fact that God tests, examines, and searches hearts and minds is mentioned several times in the Bible. He still tests His people today. In fact, when God wants to use people in a special way, they often go through difficulties and trials before they are released into the fullness of their callings. God does this not only so He can see they are ready for the next thing He has for them, but so they also will know they are prepared to move on. A victory in our lives always strengthens us for the next challenge.

The next time you encounter a test or trial, instead of focusing on how difficult it, focus on keeping your mind and heart right; and simply be determined, with God's help, to pass your test, so your reward may come.

¹⁰“They have returned to the wickedness of their ancestors who refused to hear My words; they have followed other gods [in order] to serve them. The house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken My [solemn] covenant which I made with their fathers.”

¹¹Therefore thus says the LORD, “Behold I am bringing disaster *and* suffering on them which they will not be able to escape; though they cry to Me, I will not listen to them.

¹²“Then the cities of Judah and the people of Jerusalem will go and cry to the [man-made] gods to whom they burn incense, but they cannot save them in the time of their disaster.

¹³“For [as many as] the number of your cities are your gods, O Judah; and [as many as] the number of the streets of Jerusalem are the altars you have set up to the shameful thing, altars to burn incense to Baal.

¹⁴“Therefore do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them, for I shall not listen when they cry to Me in the time of their disaster.

¹⁵“What right has My beloved [to be] in My house
When she has done many vile things *and* acted
treacherously [over and over again]?

Can vows *and* the meat of your sacrifices remove your
wickedness from you *and* cancel the consequences of
your sin, So that you can [escape your judgment and]
rejoice?”

¹⁶The LORD [acknowledged you once as worthy and] called
your name, “A green olive tree, fair *and* beautiful in fruit
and form”;

But with the roar of a great tempest
He has set fire to it,
And its branches are worthless. [Ps 52:8; Jer 21:14]

¹⁷For the LORD of hosts, who planted you, has pronounced evil *and* horror against you because of the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have done to provoke Me [to anger] by offering sacrifices *and* burning incense to Baal.

¹⁸Then the LORD gave me knowledge [of their plot], and I knew it; So You [O LORD] revealed their deeds to me.

¹⁹But I was like a gentle *and* tame lamb brought to the slaughter;

And I did not know that they had devised plots *and* schemes against me, saying,

“Let us destroy the tree with its fruit;

Let us cut him off from the land of the living,

That his name be remembered no longer.”

²⁰But, O LORD of hosts, who judges righteously,

Who tests the feelings and the heart (mind),

Let me see Your vengeance on them,

For to You I have committed my cause.

²¹Therefore thus says the LORD regarding the men of Anathoth, who seek your life, saying, “Do not prophesy in the name of the LORD, so that you will not die by our hand.”

²²Therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts, “Behold, I am about to punish them. Their young men will die by the sword, their sons and their daughters will die by famine; ²³and there

will be no remnant [of the conspirators] left, for I will bring disaster *and* horror on the men of Anathoth in the year of their punishment.”

12 YOU, O LORD are [uncompromisingly] righteous *and* consistently just when I plead my case with You; Yet let me discuss issues of justice with You:

Why has the way of the wicked prospered?

Why are those who deal in treachery (deceit) at ease *and* thriving?

²You have planted them, they have also taken root;

They grow, they have even produced fruit.

You are honored by their [hypocritical] lips

POWERPOINT

Knowing that God is righteous and just (see Jer. 12:1), Jeremiah asked God to examine his heart attitude and thoughts (see Jer. 12:3). Thinking about what you're thinking about is very valuable because Satan can usually deceive people into thinking that the source of their misery or trouble is something other than what it really is. He wants them to think they are unhappy due to what is going on around them (their circumstances), when the misery is actually due to what is going on in their own thoughts and attitudes.



But [You are] far from their heart *and* mind.

³But You, O LORD, know me [and understand my devotion to

You]; You see me;
And You examine *the attitude of* my heart toward You.
Drag out the faithless like sheep for the slaughter [O LORD]
And set them apart for the day of slaughter.

⁴How long must the land mourn
And the grass of the countryside wither?
Because of the wickedness *and* hypocrisy of those who live
in it,
The beasts and the birds are consumed *and* are swept away
[by the drought],
Because men [mocking me] have said, “He will not [live long
enough to] see [what happens at] our final end.”

⁵[The LORD rebukes Jeremiah for his impatience, saying] “If
you have raced with men on foot and they have tired you
out, Then how can you compete with horses?
If you fall down in a land of peace [where you feel secure],
Then how will you do [among the lions] in the [flooded]
thicket beside the Jordan?

⁶“For even your [tribal] brothers and the household of your
father,
Even they have dealt treacherously (unfaithfully) with you;
Indeed they are [like a pack of hounds] howling after you.
Do not believe them, although they may say kind words
and promise you good things.”

⁷“I have abandoned My house,
I have given up My [precious] inheritance (Judah);
I have given the [dearly] beloved of My life

Into the hands of her enemies.

8“My inheritance has become to Me

Like a lion in the forest;

She has raised her voice *and* roared against Me;

So I have come to [treat her as if I] hate her.

9“Is My inheritance like a speckled bird of prey to Me [unlike the others]?

Are the birds of prey (enemies) surrounding her on every side?

Go, gather all the [wild] beasts of the field;

Bring them to devour [her]!

10“Many shepherds (invaders) have destroyed My vineyard (Judah),

They have trampled My field underfoot;

They have made My pleasant field

A desolate wilderness.

11“They have made it a wasteland,

Desolate, it mourns before Me;

The whole land has been made a wasteland,

Because no man takes it to heart.

12“Destroyers have come

On all the caravan roads in the desert,

For the sword of the LORD (Babylon) is devouring

From one end of the land even to the other;

No one has peace *or* a way of escape.

13“They have planted wheat but have reaped thorns;

They have exhausted themselves but without profit.

So be ashamed of your harvest

Because of the fierce *and* raging anger of the LORD.”

¹⁴Thus says the LORD regarding all My evil neighbors (Gentile nations) who strike at the inheritance which I have granted to My people Israel, “Behold, I will uproot them from their land and I will uproot the house of Judah from among them.

¹⁵“And it shall come about that after I have uprooted them, I will return *and* have compassion on them; and I will bring them back again, each one to his inheritance and each one to his land.

¹⁶“And if these [neighboring nations] will diligently learn the ways of My people, to swear by My Name, saying, ‘As the LORD lives’—even as they taught My people to swear by Baal, then they will be built up among My people.

¹⁷“But if [any nation] will not listen *and* obey, I will [completely] uproot and destroy that nation, says the LORD.”

13 THUS THE LORD said to me, “Go and buy yourself a linen waistband and put it on your loins, but do not put it in water.”

²So I bought the waistband according to the word of the LORD and put it on my loins.

³Then the word of the LORD came to me a second time, saying,

⁴“Get up and take the waistband that you have bought, which is [wrapped] around your loins, and go to the [river] Euphrates and hide it there in a crevice of the rock.”

⁵So I went and hid it by the Euphrates, as the LORD had

commanded me.

⁶And after many days the LORD said to me, “Get up, go to the Euphrates and get the waistband which I commanded you to hide there.”

⁷Then I went to the Euphrates and dug, and I took the waistband from the place where I had hidden it. And behold, the waistband was decayed *and* ruined; it was completely worthless.

⁸Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

⁹“Thus says the LORD, ‘In this same way I shall destroy the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem.

¹⁰‘These wicked *and* malevolent people, who refuse to listen to My words, who walk in the stubborn way of their heart and have followed other gods [which are nothing—just man-made carvings] to serve them and to worship them, let them be just like this waistband which is completely worthless.

¹¹‘For as the waistband clings to the body of a man, so I caused the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah to cling to Me,’ says the LORD, ‘that they might be for Me a people, a name, a praise, and a glory; but they did not listen *and* obey.’

¹²“Therefore you are to speak this word to them, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, “Every jar should be filled with wine.” ’ The people will say to you, ‘Do we not already know that every jar should be filled with wine?’

¹³“Then say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Behold, I am about to fill with drunkenness all the people of this land, even the kings who sit on David’s throne, the priests, the prophets and all the people of Jerusalem.

¹⁴“I will smash them one against another, both the fathers and the sons together,” says the LORD. “I shall destroy them [nothing will restrain Me]; I will not show pity nor be sorry nor have compassion.””

¹⁵Listen and pay close attention, do not be haughty *and* overconfident, For the LORD has spoken [says Jeremiah].

¹⁶Give glory to the LORD your God,
Before He brings darkness
And before your feet stumble
On the dark *and* shadowy mountains,
And while you are longing for light
He turns it into the shadow of death,
And makes it into thick darkness.

¹⁷But if you will not listen *and* obey,
My soul will weep in secret for your pride;
My eyes will weep bitterly
And flow with tears,
Because the LORD's flock has been taken captive.

¹⁸Say to the king and the queen mother,
“Humble yourselves *and* take a lowly seat,
For your beautiful crown [the crown of your glory]
Has come down from your head.”

¹⁹The cities of the South (the Negev) have been closed up,
And there is no one to open them;
All Judah has been carried into exile,
Completely carried away into exile.

²⁰“Lift up your eyes and see

Those coming from the north.
Where is the flock that was given to you [to shepherd],
Your beautiful flock?

21“What will you say [O Jerusalem] when the LORD appoints
[foreign nations to rule] over you— Those former friends
and allies whom you have encouraged [to be your
companions]—

Will not pain seize you
Like [that of] a woman in childbirth?

22“And if you [wonder and] say in your heart,
‘Why have these things happened to me?’
It is because of the greatness *and* nature of your sin
That your skirts have been pulled away [subjecting you to
public disgrace]
And [like a barefoot slave] your heels have been wounded.

23“Can the Ethiopian change his skin
Or the leopard his spots?
Then you also can do good
Who are accustomed to evil *and* even trained to do it.

24“Therefore I will scatter you like drifting straw
[Driven away] by the desert wind.

25“This is your destiny, the portion [of judgment] measured to
you
From Me,” says the LORD,
“Because you have forgotten Me
And trusted in [pagan] lies [the counterfeit gods, and the
pretense of alliance].”

26“So I Myself will throw your skirts up over your face,

That your shame may be exposed [publicly].
27“*I have seen your vile and detestable acts,
Even your adulteries and your lustful neighings [after
idols],
And the lewdness of your prostitution
On the hills in the fields.
Woe (judgment is coming) to you, O Jerusalem!
How long will you remain unclean [by ignoring My
precepts]?”*

14 THE WORD of the LORD that came to Jeremiah

concerning the drought: 2“*Judah mourns
And her gates languish;
Her people sit on the ground in mourning clothes
And the cry of Jerusalem has gone up.*
3“*Their nobles have sent their servants for water;
They have come to the cisterns and found no water.
They have returned with empty vessels;
They have been shamed and humiliated,
And they cover their heads.*
4“*The ground is cracked
Because there has been no rain on the land;
The farmers are distressed,
And they have covered their heads [in shame].*
5“*The doe in the field has given birth only to abandon her
young
Because there is no grass.*

⁶“And the wild donkeys stand on the barren heights;
They pant for air like jackals,
Their eyesight fails
Because there is no grass.

⁷“O LORD, though our many sins testify against us” [prays
Jeremiah], “Act now [for us and] for Your name’s sake [so
that the faithless may witness Your faithfulness]!
For our backslidings are countless;
We have sinned against You.

⁸“O Hope of Israel,
Her Savior in time of distress *and* trouble,
Why should You be like a sojourner (temporary resident) in
the land

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*O Lord, though my sins may
testify against me, act now for
Your name’s sake so that the
faithless may witness Your
faithfulness!*

Or like a traveler who turns aside *and* spreads his tent to linger [only] for a night?

⁹“Why should You be [hesitant and inactive] like a man astounded *and* perplexed,
Like a mighty man unable to save?
Yet You, O LORD, are among us,
And we are called by Your name;
Do not leave us!”

¹⁰Thus says the LORD to this people [Judah], “In the manner *and* to the degree [already pointed out] they have loved to wander; they have not restrained their feet. Therefore the LORD does not accept them; He will now remember [in detail] their wickedness and punish them for their sins.”

¹¹So the LORD said to me, “Do not pray for good things for this people.

¹²“Though they fast, I will not hear their cry; and though they offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them [because they are done as obligations, and not as acts of loving obedience]. Instead I will consume them by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence.”

¹³But I said, “Alas, Lord GOD! Behold, the [false] prophets are telling them, ‘You will not see the sword nor will you have famine, but I [the LORD] will give you lasting peace in this place.’”

¹⁴Then the LORD said to me, “The [counterfeit] prophets

are prophesying lies in My Name. I have neither sent them nor authorized them nor spoken to them. They are prophesying to you made-up visions [pretending to call forth responses from handmade gods], a worthless divination and the deceit of their own mind.

¹⁵“Therefore, thus says the LORD concerning the [false] prophets who are prophesying in My Name, although I did not send them—yet they keep saying, ‘Sword and famine shall not be in this land’: by sword and famine those prophets shall meet their end *and* be consumed.

¹⁶“And the people to whom they are prophesying will be thrown out into the streets of Jerusalem, victims of famine and sword; and they will have no one to bury them—neither them, nor their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters. For I will pour out their [own] wickedness on them [and not only on the imposters posing as prophets, for the people could not have been deceived without their own consent].

¹⁷“Therefore [Jeremiah] you will say this word to them,
‘Let my eyes flow with tears night and day,
And let them never cease;
For the virgin daughter of my people has been crushed with
a great blow,
With a very serious *and* severely infected wound.

¹⁸‘If I go out into the field,
Then I gaze on those slaughtered with the sword!
And if I enter the city,
Then I gaze on [those tormented with] the diseases of
famine!
For both prophet and priest [who should have guided the

people]

Go about [bewildered and exiled] in a land (Babylon) that they do not know *or* understand.’”

¹⁹ Have You [O LORD] completely rejected Judah?

Do You loathe Zion?

Why have You stricken us so that there is no healing for us?

We looked for peace *and* completeness, but nothing good came;

And [we hoped] for a time of healing, but behold, terror!

²⁰ We know *and* acknowledge, O LORD,

Our wickedness and the iniquity of our fathers; for we have sinned against You.

²¹ Do not treat us with contempt *and* condemn us, for Your own name’s sake;

Do not disgrace Your glorious throne;

Remember [with consideration] and do not break Your [solemn] covenant with us.

²² Are there any among the idols of the nations who can send rain?

Or can the heavens [of their own will] give showers?

Is it not You, O LORD our God?

Therefore we will wait *and* hope [confidently] in You,

For You are the one who has made all these things [the heavens and the rain].

15 THEN THE LORD said to me, “Even though Moses and

Samuel were to stand before Me [interceding for them], My heart would still not be [turned with favor] toward this people [Judah]. Send them away from My presence *and* out of My sight and let them go!

²“And it shall be that when they say to you, ‘Where should we go?’ then tell them, ‘Thus says the LORD: “Those [destined] for death, to death;

Those for the sword, to the sword;

Those for famine, to famine;

Those for captivity, to captivity.” ’

³“I will appoint four kinds of destroyers over them,” says the LORD, “the sword to slay, the dogs to tear *and* drag away, and the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth to devour and to destroy.

⁴“I will make them an object of horror to all nations of the earth because of Manasseh [the despicable] son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, for the [evil and detestable] things which he did in Jerusalem. [2 Kin 21:1–18]

⁵“For who will have pity on you, O Jerusalem,
Or who will mourn for you,
Or who will turn aside to ask about your welfare?

⁶“You have abandoned (rejected) Me,” says the LORD.

“You keep going backward.

Therefore I shall stretch out My hand against you and
destroy you;

I am tired of delaying [your punishment]!

⁷“I will winnow (sort, separate) them with a winnowing fork
At the gates of the land;

I will deprive them of children, I will destroy My people;
They did not repent *and* turn from their [evil] ways.

8“ I will make their widows more numerous before Me
Than the sand of the seas;
I will bring against them, against the mother of the young
men,
A destroyer at noonday;
I will suddenly cause anguish and terror
To fall on her.

9“ She who has borne seven [sons] languishes;
She has breathed out her soul.
Her sun has set while it was still day;
She has been shamed and humiliated.
So I will hand over [the rest of] the survivors to the sword
Before their enemies,” says the LORD.

10 Woe to me, my mother, that you have given birth to me
To be a man of strife and a man of contention to all the
earth!

I have not loaned, nor have men lent money to me,
Yet everyone curses me. [Jer 1:18, 19]

11 The LORD said, “Surely [it will go well for Judah’s obedient
remnant for] I will set you free for good *purposes*;
Surely [Jeremiah] I will [intercede for you with the enemy
and I will] cause the enemy to plead with you [for help]
In a time of disaster and a time of distress. [Jer 21:1, 2; 37:3;
42:2; Rom 8:28]

12“ Can anyone crush iron,

The iron from the north, or bronze?

¹³“Your [nation’s] riches and your treasures

I will give as plunder without price [to the Babylonians],

Because of all your sins

And within all your territories.

¹⁴“Then I will make your enemies bring [you along with] your possessions

Into a land which you do not know [for there you will serve your conquerors];

For a fire has been kindled in My anger,

Which will burn upon you.”

¹⁵O LORD, You know *and* understand; Remember me

[thoughtfully], take notice of me,

take vengeance for me on my persecutors.

Do not, in view of Your patience, take me away;

Know that for Your sake I endure [continual] rebuke *and* dishonor.

¹⁶Your words were found and I ate them,

And Your words became a joy to me and the delight of my heart;

For I have been called by Your name,

O LORD God of hosts.

¹⁷I did not sit with the group of those who celebrate,

Nor did I rejoice;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God's Word in Your Heart

Most Christians recognize the importance of reading the Bible, but some do not understand the importance of abiding or remaining in Jesus and in His words, being vitally united to Him and having His message living in their hearts (John 15:7). They miss out on what the prophet Jeremiah said, "Your words were found and I ate them, and Your words became a joy to me and the delight of my heart" (Jer. 15:16).

When we diligently study the Word and keep Scripture verses in our hearts, we have instant access to them whenever we need them, and Jesus has promised that in prayer we can ask in His name for whatever we need and receive it (see John 14:13). Abiding in the Word and allowing the Word to abide in us makes us true disciples of Jesus (see John 8:31). Abiding gives us more power in our prayer lives, which releases God's blessings in our lives and gives us power over the enemy.

POWERPOINT

Jeremiah 15:19 tells us that Jeremiah had an attitude of despair and self-pity, and God called it to his attention. I can relate because I wasted many years of my life feeling sorry for myself. My automatic response to any disappointment was self-pity. Whenever certain things happened that I did not like, Satan would immediately fill my mind with wrong thoughts, and I would simply think about whatever came into my head. There are still times when I don't get my way, but if I start to feel bad about it, I can always pray, "Oh God, help me to resist this attitude of self-pity and realize how blessed I am." Let us take time several times each day to express our thankfulness to God for all His goodness in our lives.



I sat alone because Your [powerful] hand was *upon me*,
For You had filled me with indignation [at their sin].

¹⁸Why has my pain been perpetual
And my wound incurable, refusing to be healed?
Will you indeed be to me like a deceptive *brook*
With water that is unreliable?

¹⁹Therefore, thus says the LORD [to Jeremiah], “If you repent
[and give up this mistaken attitude of despair and self-
pity], then I will restore you [to a state of inner peace]
So that you may stand before Me [as My obedient
representative];
And if you separate the precious from the worthless
[examining yourself and cleansing your heart from
unwarranted doubt concerning My faithfulness], You will
become My spokesman.
Let the people turn to you [and learn to value My values]—
But you, you must not turn to them [with regard for their
idolatry and wickedness].

²⁰“And I will make you to this people
A fortified wall of bronze;
They will fight against you,
But they will not prevail over you,
For I am with you [always] to save you

And protect you,” says the LORD.

²¹“So I will rescue you out of the hand of the wicked,
And I will redeem you from the [grasping] palm of the
terrible *and* ruthless [tyrant].”

16 THE WORD of the LORD also came to me, saying, ²“You shall not take a wife or have sons and daughters in this place (Jerusalem).”

³For thus says the LORD concerning the sons and daughters who are born in this place, and concerning the mothers who give birth to them, and the fathers who father them in this land: ⁴“They will die of deadly diseases. They will not be mourned or buried; they will be like dung on the surface of the ground and come to an end by sword and famine, and their dead bodies will be food for the birds of the air and for the beasts of the earth.”

⁵For thus says the LORD, “Do not enter a house of mourning, nor go to lament (express grief) or bemoan [the dead], for I have taken My peace away from this people,” says the LORD, “even My lovingkindness and compassion.

⁶“Both great men and small will die in this land; they will not be buried, nor will they be lamented (mourned over with expressions of grief in death), nor will anyone cut himself or shave his head for them [in mourning].

⁷“*People* will not offer food to the mourners, to comfort anyone [as they grieve] for the dead, nor give them a cup of consolation to drink for anyone’s father or mother.

⁸“And you [Jeremiah] shall not go into a house of feasting

to sit with them to eat and drink.”

⁹For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel,
“Behold, I will remove from this place, before your very eyes
and in your time, the sound of joy and the shout of gladness,
the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Step Out and Find Out

Jeremiah preached for decades to the people of Israel, and not once did he see any real change in the minds of his stubborn, idolatrous people. Jeremiah 15 is a reflection of a man who is alone, rejected, depressed, and believes that his efforts are useless. Yet even as his faith wavers, God speaks to Jeremiah to change his attitude and be restored to stand as His spokesman (see Jer. 15:19).

When people have a dream or goal for their lives, and it becomes obvious that they need to change directions, it can either be depressing or exciting. Many years ago, I tried to be my pastor's secretary. When I was told the position just wasn't right for me, I was devastated, but had I kept the job, I wouldn't be doing what I am doing today. When things don't work out the way you planned, you don't have to become discouraged and depressed; rather, believe that God has something better for you and get excited to see what it is. Don't be married to your own plan. People plan their own way in their minds, but God directs their steps (see Prov. 16:9).

Though I used to get discouraged when my plans didn't work, I eventually realized all that matters is that what I am doing is God's plan for me. Sometimes our personal expectations disappoint us, so we should always pray, "Your will be done, oh God, and not mine."

One way we find God's perfect will for us is to step out and find what works and what does not work. If something doesn't work out, don't waste months in depression; just scratch it off your list of possibilities and go on to the next thing. The choice is yours!

Sometimes I think about finding God's perfect will as I would think about trying to find the perfect new outfit. I go shopping and try on different things. I see how they fit and how they look on me. I don't get depressed if the first few don't work. I enjoy the shopping trip, and eventually I find the outfit that is just right for me. You can look at the dreams you have for your life in a similar way. Keep dreaming and setting goals until you find the perfect fit for you!

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord God, when my plans don't work out, I often become discouraged and my faith wavers. Help me to let go of my own plans and let You direct my steps, and help me to remember that all that matters in life is that I am doing Your will. In Jesus' name. Amen.

10“Now when you tell these people all these words and they ask you, ‘Why has the LORD decreed all this great tragedy against us? And what is our iniquity, what is the sin which we have committed against the LORD our God?’

11“Then you are to say to them, ‘It is because your fathers have abandoned (rejected) Me,’ says the LORD, ‘and have walked after other gods and have served them and bowed down to the handmade idols and have abandoned (rejected) Me and have not kept My law, ¹²and because you have done worse [things] than your fathers. Just look, every one of you walks in the stubbornness of his own evil heart, so that you do not listen [obediently] to Me.

13“Therefore I will hurl you out of this land [of Judah] into the land [of the Babylonians] which neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you will serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no compassion.’

14“Therefore behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “when it will no longer be said, ‘As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt,’

15but, ‘As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of the north and from all the countries to which He had driven them.’ And I will bring them back to their land which I gave to their fathers.

16“Behold (listen carefully), I will send for many fishermen,” says the LORD, “and they will fish for them; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them from every mountain and from every hill and out of the clefts of

the rocks.

¹⁷“For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their wickedness concealed from My eyes.

¹⁸“I will first doubly repay *and* punish them for their wickedness and their sin [before I return them to their land], because they have profaned My land; they have filled My inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable idols and with their abominations.”

¹⁹[Then said Jeremiah] “O LORD, my Strength and my Stronghold, And my Refuge in the day of distress *and* need,

The nations will come to You

From the ends of the earth and say,

‘Our fathers have inherited nothing but lies *and* illusion, [Worthless] things in which there is no benefit!’

²⁰“Can a man make gods for himself?

Such [things] are not gods!

²¹“Therefore,” [says the LORD] “behold, I will make them know— This time I will make them know

My power and My might;

And they will know *and* recognize [without any doubt] that My Name is the LORD.”

17 THE SIN of Judah is written down with an iron stylus;
With a diamond point it is engraved upon the tablet of their heart

And on the horns of their altars.

²As they remember their children,
So they *remember* [in detail] their [pagan] altars and their
Asherim

Beside green trees on the high hills.

³O [Jerusalem] My mountain in the countryside,
I will give [to the Babylonians, as the cost of your sin] your
wealth and all your treasures as plunder, And throughout
your territory, your high places of sin.

⁴And you will, through your own fault, let go of your [grip
on your] inheritance

That I gave you;

And I will make you serve your enemies

In a land which you do not know;

For you have kindled a fire in My anger

Which will burn forever.

⁵Thus says the LORD,

“Cursed is the man who trusts in *and* relies on mankind,

Making [weak, faulty human] flesh his strength,

And whose mind *and* heart turn away from the LORD.

⁶“For he will be like a shrub in the [parched] desert;

And shall not see prosperity when it comes,

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Lean on the Lord

Anytime we face difficulties or obstacles in our lives, we have a choice. We can decide whether we want to draw our strength from ourselves or from the Lord. The Bible refers to two sources of strength that we can rely on—“[weak, faulty human] flesh” (Jer. 17:5), which represents human effort, and the Lord and His strength and power (see Ps. 89:13, 21). Leaning on the flesh is rooted in our earthly nature and based on human ideas and efforts; leaning on the Lord is rooted in the Spirit of the Lord and based on God’s plan and power. These two sources of strength are in direct contrast to each other and will lead to vastly different results in our lives. Jeremiah 17:5–6 describes a person who leans on the flesh, while Jeremiah 17:7–8 characterizes someone who leans on the Lord.

Many people lean on the flesh, straining and striving through every day, unhappy for reasons they cannot seem to identify or understand. Often, the cause is simply that they are trying to operate according to their own strength instead of trusting in the strength of the Lord. When we depend on the flesh and try to accomplish things through our own efforts—coming up with our own ideas and using our natural energy to make them work—we end up frustrated and confused. When we lean on the Lord—seeking what He would have us to do,

depending on His grace to help us see it all the way through, and putting all our faith and trust in Him—we end up satisfied and filled with joy over what He has done for us.

In Philippians 3:3, Paul writes strong words about not putting our confidence in the flesh: “For we... worship in the Spirit of God and glory *and* take pride *and* exult in Jesus Christ and put no confidence [in what we have or what we are] in the flesh.”

Everyone looks for a source of strength in something. You and I are either going to lean on the flesh or lean on the Lord. The flesh will always fail us, but the Lord will always be with us and see us through any situation to victory.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord, I know I have a choice between the arm of the flesh and the arm of the Lord. Help me to put my faith and trust in You, leaning on Your strong arm in every situation. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Speak God's Word

I am blessed with spiritual security because I believe and trust in the Lord and my confident expectation is in Him. I will be nourished like a tree planted by the waters, that spreads out its roots by the river; and will not fear the heat when it comes; but my leaves will be green and moist. And I will not be anxious and concerned in a year of drought nor stop bearing fruit.

| adapted from JEREMIAH 17:7–

8 |

But shall live in the rocky places of the wilderness,
In an uninhabited salt land.

⁷“Blessed [with spiritual security] is the man who believes
and trusts in and relies on the LORD

And whose hope and confident expectation is the LORD.

⁸“For he will be [nourished] like a tree planted by the waters,

That spreads out its roots by the river;
And will not fear the heat when it comes;
But its leaves will be green *and* moist.
And it will not be anxious *and* concerned in a year of
drought
Nor stop bearing fruit.

⁹“The heart is deceitful above all things
And it is extremely sick;
Who can understand it fully *and* know its secret motives?
[Matt 13:15–17; Mark 7:21–23; Eph 4:20–24]

¹⁰“I, the LORD, search *and* examine the mind,
I test the heart,
To give to each man according to his ways,
According to the results of his deeds.

¹¹“Like the partridge that hatches eggs which she has not laid,
So is he who makes a fortune in ways that are unjust.
It will be lost to him before his days are over,
And in the end he will be [nothing but] a fool.”

¹²A glorious throne, set on high from the beginning,
Is the place of our sanctuary (the temple).

¹³O LORD, the hope of Israel,
All who abandon You will be shamed.
Those who turn away on earth will be written down,
Because they have abandoned the LORD, the fountain of
living waters.

¹⁴Heal me, O LORD, and I will be healed;
Save me and I will be saved,

For You are my praise.

¹⁵Behold, they keep saying to me,
“Where is the word of the LORD [that is, the disaster that
you prophesied]?
Let it come now!”

¹⁶But as for me, I have not tried to escape from being a
shepherd [walking] after You,
Nor have I longed for the woeful day [of judgment];
You know that, whatever I said
Was [spoken] in Your presence *and* was from You.

¹⁷Do not be a terror to me;
You are my refuge *and* my hope in the day of disaster.

¹⁸Let those who persecute me be shamed, but as for me,
protect me from shame;
Let them lose courage, but let me be undaunted.
Bring on them a day of tragedy,
And destroy them with double destruction!

¹⁹Thus the LORD said to me, “Go and stand in the public
gate, through which the kings of Judah come in and go out,
and [stand] also in all the gates of Jerusalem; ²⁰and say to
them, ‘Listen to the word of the LORD, kings of Judah, and all
Judah, and all the people of Jerusalem who enter through these
gates.

²¹Thus says the LORD, “Pay attention for your own good,
[and for the sake of your future] do not carry any load on the
Sabbath day or bring anything in through the gates of
Jerusalem.

22“*You shall not carry a load out of your houses on the Sabbath day nor do any work, but keep the Sabbath day holy [by setting it apart as a day of worship], as I commanded your fathers.*

23“*Yet they would not listen and obey and control their behavior; but they were stiff-necked in order not to hear and take instruction.*

24“*But it will come about, if you listen diligently to Me,” says the LORD, “to bring no load in through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but keep the Sabbath day holy by doing no work on it,* 25*then kings and princes who will sit on the throne of David will enter through the gates of this city, riding in chariots and on horses—the kings and their princes, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city will be inhabited and endure throughout the ages.*

26“*People will come from the cities of Judah and the places all around Jerusalem, from the land of Benjamin, from the lowland, from the hill country and from the South (the Negev), bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, grain offerings and incense, and bringing sacrifices of thanksgiving to the house of the LORD.*

27“*But if you will not listen to Me and keep the Sabbath day holy by not carrying a load as you come in the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in her gates that cannot be extinguished, and it will devour the palaces of Jerusalem.”*”

18 THE WORD which came to Jeremiah from the LORD:

²“Arise and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will make you hear My words.”

³Then I went down to the potter’s house, and saw that he was working at the wheel.

⁴But the vessel that he was making from clay was spoiled by the potter’s hand; so he made it over, reworking it and making it into another pot that seemed good to him.

⁵Then the word of the LORD came to me:

⁶“O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?” says the LORD. “Look carefully, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel.

⁷“At one moment I might [suddenly] speak concerning a nation or kingdom, that I will uproot and break down and destroy;

⁸if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will ^{*}relent *and* reverse My decision concerning the devastation that I intended to do.

⁹“Or at another time I might [suddenly] speak about a nation or kingdom that I will build up or establish;

¹⁰and if they do evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will reverse My decision concerning the good with which I had promised to bless them.

¹¹“Now then, say to the men of Judah and to the citizens of Jerusalem, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Behold, I am shaping a disaster and working out a plan against you. Turn back, each of you from his evil way; correct your habits and change your actions for the better.”’

¹²“But they will say, ‘That is hopeless! For we are going to

follow our own plans, and each of us will act in accordance with the stubbornness of his evil heart.’

13“Therefore thus says the LORD,

‘Ask now among the nations,
Who has heard of such things?

The virgin Israel

Has done a very vile *and* horrible thing.

14‘Will the snow of [Mount] Lebanon melt *and* vanish from its
rocks [which tower above Israel]?

Will the cold, rushing waters of foreign *lands* [that flow
down from the distant land] be dried up?

15‘Yet My people have forgotten Me;

They burn incense to worthless gods,

They have stumbled from their ways

From the ancient roads,

To walk in pathways,

Not on a highway,

16Making their land a desolation *and* a horror,

A thing to be hissed at perpetually;

Everyone who passes by will be astounded

And shake his head [in scorn].

17‘I will scatter them like an east wind

Before the enemy;

I will show them My back and not My face

In the day of their disaster [says the LORD].”

18Then [my enemies] said, “Come and let us work out schemes against Jeremiah. Surely the law is not going to be lost to the priest [as Jeremiah predicts], nor the counsel from

the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come and let us strike him with our tongue [by making charges against him before the king], and let us ignore anything he says.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Good Habits Lead to a Good Life

Habits are things we learn to do through such frequent repetition that we eventually do them unconsciously or with very little effort. Don't be deceived, however, into thinking you can't help what you do, because the truth is you can do or not do anything if you really want to. The Bible says, "Correct your habits and change your actions for the better" (Jer. 18:11).

One of the ingredients of forming good habits and breaking bad ones is focusing on what you want to do and not on what you want to stop doing. For example, if you want to form a good habit of thinking right thoughts, don't sink into condemnation each time you catch yourself thinking something that you should not think. Simply thank God for the revelation He is giving you, fill your mind with good thoughts, and keep focusing on what your goal is rather than on the times you fail.

- ¹⁹Pay attention to me, O LORD [and intercede];
Listen to what my adversaries are saying [and are plotting
against me]—
- ²⁰Should good be repaid with evil?
Yet they have dug a pit for me.
Remember [with compassion] that I stood before You

To speak good on their behalf,
To turn Your anger away from them.

²¹ Therefore, give their children over to the famine;
Give them over to the power of the sword.
And let their wives become childless and widowed;
Let their men meet death [by virulent disease],
Their young men be struck down by the sword in battle.

²² Let an outcry be heard from their houses
When You suddenly bring [a troop of] raiders upon them,
For they have dug a pit to capture me
And have hidden snares for my feet.

²³ Yet You, O LORD, know
All their deadly plotting against me;
Do not forgive their wickedness
Or blot out their sin from Your sight.
But let them be overthrown before You;
Deal with them in the time of Your anger.

19 **THUS SAYS the LORD,** “Go and buy a potter’s earthenware jar, and take some of the elders of the people and some of the senior priests ²and go out to the Valley of Ben-hinnom (son of Hinnom), which is near the entrance of the Potsherd Gate; and proclaim there the words that I tell you,

³and say, ‘Hear the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, “Behold (listen carefully), I am going to bring such disaster on this place that the ears of everyone who hears

about it will tingle [in shock].

⁴“Because the people [of Jerusalem] have abandoned (rejected) Me and have made this an alien *and* profaned place by burning sacrifices *and* incense in it to other gods, that neither they nor their fathers nor the kings of Judah ever knew, and because they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent ⁵and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, which I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it ever enter My mind (heart); ⁶therefore, listen very closely, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “when this place shall no longer be called Topheth or the Valley of Ben-hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter. [Jer 7:31–32]

⁷“I will pour out *and* nullify the counsel (plans) of [the men of] Judah and Jerusalem in this place, and I will make their people fall by the sword before their enemies and by the hand of those who seek their lives; and I will give their dead bodies as food for the birds of the air and for the beasts of the earth.

⁸“I will make this city a desolation and an *object of* hissing; everyone who passes by it will be amazed and will hiss [in scorn] because of all its plagues *and* disasters.

⁹“And I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and their daughters, and each one will eat one another’s flesh during the siege and distress brought by their enemies and those who seek their lives.” ’

¹⁰“Then you are to break the jar in the sight of the men who accompany you,

¹¹and say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “This is the way I will break this people and this city as one breaks a potter’s vessel, so that it cannot be mended. They will bury

[corpses] in Topheth until there is no more room left [in that place] to bury [the dead].

¹²“This I will do to this place,” says the LORD, “and to its inhabitants; and I will even make this city like Topheth.

¹³“The houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah will be defiled like this place, Topheth, all the houses on whose rooftops incense has been burned to all the host of heaven (sun, moon, stars), and where drink offerings have been poured out to other gods.”” [Acts 7:42, 43]

¹⁴Then Jeremiah came from Topheth, where the LORD had sent him to prophesy; and he stood in the court of the LORD’s house and said to all the people: ¹⁵“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Behold, I am going to bring on this city and on all its towns, all the devastation that I have declared against it, because they have become stiff-necked and refused to hear *and* obey My words.’”

20 NOW PASHHUR the son of Immer, the priest, who was [also] chief officer in the house of the LORD, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things.

²Then Pashhur beat Jeremiah the prophet and put him in the stocks that were at the upper Benjamin Gate by the house of the LORD. [Jer 1:19; 15:15]

³And the next day Pashhur brought Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then Jeremiah said to him, “The LORD does not call your name Pashhur, but Magor-missabib (terror on every side).

⁴“For thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, I will make you a terror

to yourself and to all your friends; they will fall by the sword of their enemies while you look on. And I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon; he will carry them away to Babylon as captives and will slaughter them with the sword.

⁵Moreover, I will hand over all the riches of this city, all the result of its labor, all its precious things; even all the treasures of the kings of Judah I will hand over to their enemies, and they will plunder them, and take them away and carry them to Babylon.

⁶And you, Pashhur, and all who live in your house will go into captivity; you will go to Babylon, and there you will die and be buried, you and all your friends to whom you have falsely prophesied.”

⁷[Jeremiah said,] O LORD, You have persuaded me and I was deceived;

You are stronger than I and You have prevailed.

I am a laughingstock all day long;

Everyone mocks me.

⁸For whenever I speak, I must shout out;

I shout violence and destruction,

Because the word of the LORD has become to me

A reprimand and a mockery *and* has brought me insult all day long.

⁹If I say, “I will not remember Him

Or speak His name anymore,”

Speak God's Word

*The Lord is with me as a
dread champion; therefore my
persecutors will stumble and
not overcome me.*

| adapted from JEREMIAH 20:11 |

Then my heart becomes a burning fire

Shut up in my bones.

And I am weary of enduring *and* holding it in;

I cannot endure it [nor contain it any longer].

¹⁰For I have heard the whispering *and* defaming words of
many,

“Terror on every side!

Denounce him! Let us denounce him!”

All my familiar *and* trusted friends,

[Those who are] watching for my fall, say,

“Perhaps he will be persuaded *and* deceived; then we will
overcome him,

And take our revenge on him.”

¹¹But the LORD is with me as a dread champion [one to be
greatly feared];

Therefore my persecutors will stumble and not overcome

[me].

They will be completely shamed, for they have not acted wisely *and* have failed [in their schemes];

Their eternal dishonor will never be forgotten.

¹²But, O LORD of hosts, You who examine the righteous,

Who see the heart and the mind,

Let me see Your vengeance on them;

For to You I have committed my cause.

¹³Sing to the LORD! Praise the LORD!

For He has rescued the life of the needy one

From the hand of evildoers.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord of hosts, You examine the
righteous. You see the heart
and the mind. Let me see Your
vengeance on my persecutors,
for I have committed my cause
to You.*

• adapted from Jeremiah 20:12

-
- ¹⁴Cursed be the day on which I was born;
Do not bless the day on which my mother gave birth to me!
- ¹⁵Cursed be the man who brought the news
To my father, saying,
“A son has been born to you!”
Making him very glad.
- ¹⁶And let that man be like the cities
Which the LORD overthrew without regret.
Let him hear an outcry in the morning
And a shout of alarm at noon;
- ¹⁷Because he did not kill me before my birth,
So that my mother might have been my grave,
And her womb always pregnant.
- ¹⁸Why did I come out of the womb
To see trouble and sorrow,
So that my days have been filled with shame?

21 THE WORD which came to Jeremiah from the LORD when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur the son of Malchijah, and Zephaniah the priest the son of Maaseiah, saying, ²“Please inquire of the LORD for us, because Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon is making war against us. Perhaps the LORD will deal [favorably] with us according to all His wonderful works and force him to withdraw from us.”

³Then Jeremiah said to them, “Say this to Zedekiah:

⁴“Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, “Behold, I will turn back *and* dull the edge of the weapons of war that are in your hands, [those] with which you fight against the king of Babylon and the Chaldeans who are besieging you outside the walls; and I will bring them into the center of this city (Jerusalem).

⁵“I Myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm in anger, in fury, and in great indignation *and* wrath.

⁶“I will also strike the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast; they will die of a great virulent disease.

⁷“Then afterward,” says the LORD, “I will hand over Zedekiah king of Judah and his servants and the people in this city who survive the virulent disease, the sword, and the famine, to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their enemy, into the hand of those who seek their lives. And he will strike them with the edge of the sword; he will not spare them nor have mercy and compassion on them.” ’

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Lord, You set before me the

way of life and the way of death. Help me to always choose the way of life.

• adapted from Jeremiah 21:8

8“And to this people you (Jeremiah) shall also say, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death.

9“He who remains in this city [of Jerusalem] will die by the sword and by famine and by virulent disease. But he who goes outside and surrenders to the Chaldeans who are besieging you will live, and his life will be like a prize of war to him.

10“For I have set My face against this city to do harm and not good,” says the LORD. “It shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon and he will burn it with fire.” ’

11“And concerning the royal house of the king of Judah [you shall say], ‘Hear the word of the LORD,

12O house of David, thus says the LORD:

“Administer justice in the morning,
And rescue the one who has been robbed from the hand of
his oppressor,
That My wrath will not roar up like fire
And burn so [hotly] that none can extinguish it,
Because of the evil of their deeds.

13“Understand this, I am against you, O inhabitant of the valley,
O rock of the plain,” says the LORD—

“You who say, ‘Who will come down against us?
Or who will enter into our dwelling places?’

14“But I will punish you in accordance with the [appropriate] consequences of your decisions *and* your actions,” says the LORD.

“I will kindle a fire in your forest,
And it will devour all that is around you.””

22 THUS SAYS the LORD, “Go down to the house of the king of Judah and speak this word there: ²‘Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, you who sit on the throne of David—you and your servants and your people who enter by these gates.

³‘Thus says the LORD, “Execute justice and righteousness, and rescue the one who has been robbed from the hand of his oppressor. And do no wrong; do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.

⁴“For if you will indeed obey this word, then kings will enter through the gates of this palace, sitting in David’s place on his throne, riding in chariots and on horses, *even the king* himself and his servants and his people.

⁵“But if you will not hear *and* obey these words, I swear [an oath] by Myself,” says the LORD, “that this house will become a desolation.””

⁶For thus says the LORD in regard to the house of the king of Judah:

“You are [as valuable] to Me as [the green pastures of]
Gilead [east of the Jordan]

Or as the [plentiful] summit of Lebanon [west of the Jordan],
Yet most certainly [if you will not listen to Me] I will make
you a wilderness,
And uninhabited cities.

⁷“For I will prepare *and* appoint destroyers [to execute My
judgments] against you,
Each with his weapons;
And they will cut down your [palaces built of] choicest
cedars
And throw them in the fire.

⁸“Many nations will pass by this city; and each man will
say to another, ‘Why has the LORD done this to this great
city?’

⁹“Then they will answer, ‘Because the people ignored *and*
abandoned the [solemn] covenant with the LORD their God and
worshiped other gods and served them.’”

¹⁰Do not weep for the dead or mourn for him;
But weep bitterly for the one who goes away [into exile],
For he will never return
And see his native country [again].

¹¹For thus says the LORD in regard to Shallum (Jehoahaz)
the [third] son of Josiah, king of Judah, who reigned instead of
Josiah his father and who went from this place, “Shallum will
not return here anymore; ¹²he will die in the place where they
led him captive and not see this land again.

13“Woe (judgment is coming) to him who builds his house by
[acts of] unrighteousness

And his upper chambers by injustice,
Who uses his neighbor’s service without pay
And does not give him wages [for his work],

14Who says, ‘I will build myself a spacious house
With large upper rooms,
And cut out its [wide] windows,
And panel it with cedar and paint it vermilion.’”

15“Do you think that you become a king because you have
much more cedar [in your palace than Solomon]?
Did not your father [Josiah], as he ate and drank,
Do just and righteous acts [being upright and in right
standing with God]?
Then all was well with him.

16“He defended the cause of the afflicted and needy;
Then all was well.
Is that not what it means to know Me?”
Says the LORD.

17“But your eyes and your heart
Are only intent on your own dishonest gain,
On shedding innocent blood,
On oppression and extortion *and* violence.”

18Therefore thus says the LORD in regard to Jehoiakim the
[second] son of Josiah, king of Judah,

“The relatives will not lament (mourn over with expressions
of grief) for him:

‘Alas, my brother!’ or, ‘Alas, sister,’ [how great our loss]!
The subjects will not lament for him:

‘Alas, master!’ or ‘Alas, majesty [how great was his glory]!’

19“He shall be buried with the burial of a donkey—

Dragged off and thrown out beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

20“Go up [north] to Lebanon and cry out,

And raise your voice in [the hills of] Bashan [across the
Jordan];

Cry out also from Abarim,

For all your lovers (allies) have been destroyed. [Jer 27:6, 7]

21“I spoke to you in your [times of] prosperity,

But you said, ‘I will not listen!’

This has been your attitude *and* practice from your youth;

You have not obeyed My voice.

22“‘The wind [of adversity] will carry away all your shepherds
(rulers, statesmen),

And your lovers (allies) will go into exile.

Surely then you will be ashamed and humiliated *and*
disgraced

Because of all your wickedness.

23“O inhabitant of [Jerusalem, whose palaces are made from
the cedars of] Lebanon,

You who nest in the cedars,

How you will groan *and* how miserable you will be when
pains come on you,

Pain like a woman in childbirth! [1 Kin 7:2]

24“‘As I live,” says the LORD, “though Coniah the son of

Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet [ring] on My right hand, yet would I pull you (Coniah) off.

25“And I will place you in the hand of those who seek your life and in the hand of those whom you fear, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and into the hand of the Chaldeans.

26“I will hurl you and the mother who gave you birth into another country where you were not born, and there you will die.

27“But as for the land to which they long to return, they will not return to it.

28“Is this man [King] Coniah a despised, broken jar?

Is he a vessel in which no one takes pleasure?

Why are he and his [royal] descendants hurled out

And cast into a land which they do not know *or* understand?

29“O land, land, land,

Hear the word of the LORD!

30“Thus says the LORD,

‘Write this man [Coniah] down as childless,

A man who will not prosper (succeed) in his lifetime;

For not one of his descendants will succeed

In sitting on the throne of David

Or ruling again in Judah.’”

23 “WOE TO the shepherds (civil leaders, rulers) who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!” says the

LORD.

²Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, in regard to the shepherds who care for *and* feed My people: “You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; hear this, I am about to visit *and* attend to you for the evil of your deeds,” says the LORD.

³“Then I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries to which I have driven them and bring them back to their folds *and* pastures; and they will be fruitful and multiply.

⁴“I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them. And they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing,” says the LORD.

⁵“Behold (listen closely), the days are coming,” says the LORD,

“When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch;
And He will reign as King and act wisely

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, God, that You are
the Lord my Righteousness.*

And will do [those things that accomplish] justice and righteousness in the land.

⁶“In His days Judah will be saved,
And Israel will dwell safely;
Now this is His name by which He will be called;
‘The LORD Our Righteousness.’ [Matt 1:21–23; Rom 3:22]

⁷“Therefore behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD,
“when they will no longer say, ‘As the LORD lives, who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,’

⁸but [they will say], ‘As the LORD lives, who brought up and led back the descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries to which I had driven them.’ Then they will live in their own land.” [Jer 16:14, 15]

⁹Concerning the prophets:

My heart [says Jeremiah] is broken within me,
All my bones shake;
I have become like a drunken man,
A man whom wine has overcome,
Because of the LORD
And because of His holy words [declared against unfaithful leaders].

¹⁰For the land is full of adulterers (unfaithful to God);
The land mourns because of the curse [of God upon it].
The pastures of the wilderness have dried up.
The course of action [of the false prophets] is evil *and* they

rush into wickedness;
And their power is not right.

¹¹“For both [false] prophet and priest are ungodly (profane, polluted);
Even in My house I have found their wickedness,” says the LORD.

¹²“Therefore their way will be to them like slippery paths
In the dark; they will be pushed and fall into them;
For I will bring disaster on them,
In the year of their punishment,” says the LORD.

¹³“And I have seen a foolish *and* an offensive thing in the prophets of Samaria:

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Say the Right Thing Consistently

God is faithful. We can always expect Him to do what He says He will do. He doesn't do it part of the time, but all the time and every time. There is never a moment when God doesn't keep His promises.

We should also be faithful all the time to do what we know to do. God says that those who have His word should speak His word faithfully (see Jer. 23:28), which means speaking it at all times, not merely part of the time. Don't speak positively when you are with your friends from church but at home revert to words of fear, worry, and doubt. It's important to get rid of a mixture of words—positive and negative, faith and fear—and to be committed to speaking the right thing all the time. Saying the right thing occasionally does not lead to victory. But when you are relentless and speak God's Word faithfully, you will be in agreement with Him and see amazing results in due time.

They prophesied by Baal and caused My people Israel to go astray.

¹⁴“Also I have seen a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem:

They commit adultery and walk in lies;

They encourage *and* strengthen the hands of evildoers,

So that no one has turned back from his wickedness.
All of them have become like Sodom to Me,
And her inhabitants like Gomorrah.

15“Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts in regard to the prophets,

‘Behold, I am going to feed them [the bitterness of]
wormwood
And make them drink the poisonous water [of gall],
For from the [counterfeit] prophets of Jerusalem
Profaneness *and* ungodliness have spread into all the
land.’”

16Thus says the LORD of hosts,

“Do not listen to the words of the [false] prophets who
prophecy to you.
They are teaching you worthless things *and* are leading
you into futility;
They speak a vision of their own mind *and* imagination
And not [truth] from the mouth of the LORD.

17“They are continually saying to those who despise Me [and
My word],

‘The Lord has said, “You will have peace” ’;
And they say to everyone who walks after the
stubbornness of his own heart,
‘No evil will come on you.’

18“But who [among them] has stood in the council of the
LORD,

That he would perceive and hear His word?

Who has marked His word [noticing and observing and paying attention to it] and has [actually] heard it?

19“Behold, the tempest of the LORD has gone forth in wrath,
A whirling tempest;
It will whirl *and* burst on the heads of the wicked.

20“The anger of the LORD will not turn back
Until He has set in motion and accomplished the thoughts
and intentions of His heart;
In the last days you will clearly understand it.

21“I did not send [these counterfeit] prophets,
Yet they ran;
I did not speak to them,
Yet they prophesied.

22“But if they had stood in My council,
Then they would have caused My people to hear My
words,
Then they would have turned My people from their evil way
And from the evil of their decisions *and* deeds.

23“Am I a God who is at hand,” says the LORD,
“And not a God far away?”

24“Can anyone hide himself in secret places
So that I cannot see him?” says the LORD.
“Do I not fill heaven and earth?” says the LORD.

25“I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy
lies in My Name, saying, ‘I have dreamed, I have dreamed
[visions when on my bed at night].’

26“How long [shall this state of affairs continue]? Is there

anything in the hearts of the prophets who prophesy falsehood, even these prophets of the deception of their own heart,²⁷ who think that they can make My people forget My Name by their [contrived] dreams which each one tells another, just as their fathers forgot My Name because of Baal?

²⁸“The prophet who has a dream may tell his dream; but he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat [for nourishment]?” says the LORD.

²⁹“Is not My word like fire [that consumes all that cannot endure the test]?” says the LORD, “and like a hammer that breaks the [most stubborn] rock [in pieces]?”

³⁰“Therefore behold (hear this), I am against the [counterfeit] prophets,” says the LORD, “[I am descending on them with punishment, these prophets] who steal My words from one another [imitating the words of the true prophets].

³¹“Hear this, I am against the prophets,” says the LORD, “who use their [own deceitful] tongues and say, ‘Thus says *the Lord*.’

³²“Hear this, I am against those who have prophesied false *and* made-up dreams,” says the LORD, “and have told them and have made My people err *and* go astray by their lies and by their reckless boasting; yet I did not send them or command them nor do they benefit *and* enhance [the life of] these people in the slightest way,” says the LORD.

³³“Now when this people or a prophet or a priest asks you [in jest], ‘What is the oracle of the LORD [the burden to be lifted up and carried]?’ Then you shall say to them, ‘What oracle [besides the one that declares you people to be the burden]!’

The LORD says, ‘I will unburden Myself *and* I will abandon you.’

³⁴“And as for the prophet, the priest, or [any of] the people, whoever says, ‘The oracle of the LORD,’ [as if he knows God’s will], I will punish that man and his household.

³⁵“[For the future, in speaking of the words of the LORD] thus each of you shall say to his neighbor and to his brother, ‘What has the LORD answered?’ or, ‘What has the LORD spoken?’

³⁶“For you will no longer remember the oracle of the LORD, because every man’s own word will become the oracle, [for as they mockingly call all prophecies oracles, whether good or bad, so will it prove to be to them; God will take them at their own word]; and you have perverted the words [not of a lifeless idol, but] of the living God, the LORD of hosts, our God.

³⁷“Thus you will [reverently] say to the prophet, ‘What has the LORD answered you?’ and, ‘What has the LORD spoken?’

³⁸“For if you say, ‘The oracle of the LORD!’ surely thus says the LORD, ‘Because you said this word, “The oracle of the LORD!” when I have also sent to you, saying, “You shall not say, ‘The oracle of the LORD!’” ’

³⁹“Therefore behold, I, even I, will assuredly forget you and send you away from My presence, you and the city (Jerusalem) which I gave to you and to your fathers.

⁴⁰“And I will bring an everlasting disgrace on you and a perpetual humiliation (shame) which will not be forgotten.”

24 AFTER NEBUCHADNEZZAR king of Babylon had taken Jeconiah [who was also called Coniah and Jehoiachin] the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and the princes of Judah [along] with the craftsmen and smiths into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, the LORD showed me [in a vision] two baskets of figs set before the temple of the LORD.

²One basket had very good figs, like the figs that are the first to ripen; but the other basket had very bad figs, so rotten that they could not be eaten.

³Then the LORD said to me, “What do you see, Jeremiah?” And I said, “Figs, the good figs, very good; and the bad *figs*, very bad, so rotten that they cannot be eaten.”

⁴Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

⁵“Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the captives of Judah, whom I have sent from this place into the land of the Chaldeans.

⁶‘For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them again to this land; and I will build them up and not overwhelm them, and I will plant them and not uproot them.

⁷‘I will give them a heart to know Me, [understanding fully] that I am the LORD; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart.

⁸‘And as for the bad figs, which are so rotten that they cannot be eaten,’ surely thus says the LORD, ‘so I will abandon Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes, and the remnant of Jerusalem who remain in this land and those who live in the land of Egypt.

⁹‘I will make them a focus of ridicule *and* disappointment

[tossed back and forth] among all the kingdoms of the earth, a [notorious] disgrace, a byword, a taunt and a curse in all places where I will scatter them.

¹⁰“I will send the sword, famine and virulent disease among them until they are consumed from the land which I gave to them and to their fathers.”

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, I pray that You would
give me a heart to know You
and the ability to understand
fully that I am one of Your
people and You are my God.*

• adapted from Jeremiah 24:7

25 THE WORD that came to Jeremiah in regard to all the people of Judah in the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (that was the first year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), ²which Jeremiah the

prophet spoke to all the people of Judah and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying,

³“For these twenty-three years—from the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, even to this day—the word of the LORD has come to me and I have spoken to you over and over again, but you have not listened.

⁴“Although the LORD has persistently sent to you all His servants the prophets, you have not listened nor [even] inclined your ear to hear [His message], ⁵saying, ‘Turn now everyone from his evil way and the evil of your actions [that you may not forfeit the right to] live in the land that the LORD has given to you and your forefathers forever and ever; ⁶and do not go after other gods to serve them and to worship them, and do not provoke Me to anger with the work of your hands, and I will do you no harm.’

⁷“Yet you have not listened to Me,” says the LORD, “so that you have provoked Me to anger with the work (idols) of your hands to your own harm.

⁸“Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Because you have not obeyed My words,

⁹behold (hear this), I will send for all the families of the north,’ says the LORD, ‘and *I will send* for Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant [to enact My plan], and I will bring them against this land and against its inhabitants and against all these surrounding nations; and I will utterly destroy them and make them a horror and a hissing [that is, an object of warning and ridicule] and an everlasting desolation.

¹⁰Moreover, I will take from them the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of

the bride, the sound of the millstones [grinding meal] and the light of the lamp [to light the night]. [Jer 7:34]

¹¹‘This whole land will be a waste and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. [2 Chr 36:20–23; Jer 4:27; 12:11, 12; Dan 9:2]

¹²‘Then when seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans (Babylonia),’ says the LORD, ‘for their wickedness, and will make the land [of the Chaldeans] a perpetual waste. [Jer 29:10]

¹³‘I will bring on that land all My words which I have pronounced against it, all that is written in this book which Jeremiah has prophesied against all the nations.

¹⁴‘(For many nations and great kings will make slaves of them, even the Chaldeans [who enslaved other nations]; and I will repay [all of] them according to their deeds and according to the work of their [own] hands.)’”

¹⁵For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, to me, “Take this cup of the wine of wrath from My hand and cause all the nations to whom I send you to drink it.

¹⁶“They will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will send among them.”

¹⁷Then I (Jeremiah) took the cup from the LORD’s hand and made all the nations to whom the LORD had sent me drink it:

¹⁸Jerusalem and the cities of Judah [being most guilty because their privileges were greatest], its kings and princes, to make them a horror, a ruin, a hissing and a curse, as it is to this day; [1 Pet 4:17]

¹⁹Pharaoh king of Egypt, his servants, his princes, all his people,

²⁰and all the foreign (mixed) population, all the kings of the land of Uz, and all the kings of the land of the Philistines (and [their cities of] Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod); ²¹Edom, Moab, and the children of Ammon;

²²all the kings of Tyre, all the kings of Sidon, and the kings of the islands *and* the coastlands across the [Mediterranean] Sea;

²³Dedan, Tema, Buz [the neighboring tribes north of Arabia], and all who clip off the side-growth *of their hair*; [Lev 19:27; Jer 9:26]

²⁴all the kings of Arabia and all the kings of the foreign population who live in the desert;

²⁵all the kings of Zimri, all the kings of Elam (Persia), and all the kings of Media;

²⁶all the kings of the north, far and near, one after another—and all the kingdoms of the world which are on the face of the earth. And the king of Sheshach (Babylon) shall drink after them.

²⁷“Then you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Drink, be drunk, vomit, and fall to rise no more because of the sword which I will send among you.” ’

²⁸“And if they refuse to take the cup from your hand to drink, then you will say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “You shall surely drink!

²⁹“For behold, I am beginning to work disaster in the city which is called by My Name, and shall you go unpunished? You will not be exempt from punishment, for I am calling for a sword against all the inhabitants of the earth,” says the LORD of hosts.’ [Jer 7:10]

³⁰“Therefore prophesy all these words against them and say to them:

‘The LORD will roar from on high
And utter His voice from His holy dwelling;
He will roar mightily against His fold *and* pasture.
He will jubilantly shout like those who tread *the grapes* [in
the wine press],
Against all the inhabitants of the earth.

³¹‘A noise has come to the end of the earth,
For the LORD has a controversy with *and* an indictment
against the nations.
He is entering into judgment with all mankind;
As for the wicked, He has given them to the sword,’ says
the LORD.”

³²Thus says the LORD of hosts,
“Behold, evil is going forth
From nation to nation,
And a great whirling tempest is rising
From the remotest part of the earth.

³³“And those slain by the LORD on that day will be from
one end of the earth to the other end of the earth. They will not
be lamented (mourned over with expressions of grief) or
gathered or buried; they will be like dung on the ground. [Jer
8:2; 16:4]

³⁴“Wail, you shepherds, and cry;
And roll in ashes, you masters of the flock.
For the days of your slaughter and of your dispersions

have come in full,
And you will fall *and* be broken into pieces like a choice vessel.

35“‘The shepherds will have no way to flee,
Nor the masters of the flock any [way of] escape.

36“‘A voice! The cry of the shepherds
And the wailing of the masters of the flock!
For the LORD is destroying their pasture,

37“‘And the peaceful folds are devastated *and* made silent
Because of the fierce anger of the LORD.

38“‘He has left His lair like the lion;
For their land has become a horror
Because of the fierceness of the oppressor
And because of the LORD’s fierce anger.”

26 IN THE beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came from the LORD, saying,

2“‘Thus says the LORD, ‘Stand in the court of the LORD’s house [Jeremiah], and speak to all [the people of] the cities of Judah who have come to worship in the LORD’s house all the words that I have commanded you to speak to them. Do not omit a word!

3“‘It may be that they will listen and everyone will turn from his wickedness, so that I may relent *and* reverse [My decision concerning] the disaster which I am planning to do to them because of their malevolent deeds.’

4“‘And you will say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD, “If you

will not listen to Me and obey My law which I have set before you,

⁵and listen *and* follow [carefully] the words of My servants the prophets, whom I have been sending to you repeatedly—though you have not listened—

⁶then I will make this house [the temple] like Shiloh, and I will make this city [subject to] the curse of all nations of the earth [because it will be so vile in their sight].”” [1 Sam 4; Jer 7:12]

⁷The priests and the [false] prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD.

⁸Now when Jeremiah finished proclaiming everything that the LORD had commanded him to speak to all the people, the priests and the [false] prophets and all the people seized him, saying, “You must die!

⁹“Why have you prophesied in the name of the LORD saying, ‘This house will be like Shiloh [after the ark of the LORD had been taken by our enemies] and this city [Jerusalem] will be desolate, without inhabitant’?” And all the people were gathered around Jeremiah in the [outer area of the] house of the LORD.

¹⁰When the princes (court officials) of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king’s house to the house of the LORD and sat in the entrance of the New Gate of the house of the LORD.

¹¹Then the priests and the [false] prophets said to the princes and to all the people, “This man is deserving of death, for he has prophesied against this city as you have heard with your own ears.”

¹²Then Jeremiah spoke to all the princes and to all the people, saying, “The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that you have heard.

¹³“Therefore, now change your ways and your deeds and obey the voice of the LORD your God; then the LORD will relent *and* reverse His decision concerning the misfortune which He has pronounced against you.

¹⁴“As for me, behold, I am in your hands; do with me as seems good and suitable to you.

¹⁵“But know for certain that if you put me to death, you will bring innocent blood on yourselves and on this city and on its inhabitants, for in truth the LORD has sent me to you to speak all these words in your hearing.”

¹⁶Then the princes and all the people said to the priests and to the [false] prophets, “This man is not deserving of death, for he has spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God.”

¹⁷Then some of the elders of the land stood up and spoke to all the assembly of the people, saying,

¹⁸“Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah; and he spoke to all the people of Judah, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Zion will be plowed like a field, And Jerusalem will become [heaps of] ruins,

And the mountain of the house [of the LORD—Mount Moriah, on which stands the temple, shall become covered not with buildings, but] like a densely wooded height.” ’ [Mic 3:12]

¹⁹“Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put Micah to

death? Did he not [reverently] fear the LORD and entreat the favor of the LORD? And did not the LORD relent *and* reverse His decision concerning the misfortune which He had pronounced against them? But [here] we are [thinking of] committing a great evil against ourselves.”

²⁰And there was also a man who prophesied in the name of the LORD, Uriah the son of Shemaiah of Kiriath-jearim, who prophesied against this city and against this land in words similar to all those of Jeremiah.

²¹And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put Uriah to death; but when Uriah heard of it, he was afraid and fled and escaped to Egypt.

²²Then Jehoiakim the king sent men to Egypt: Elnathan the son of Achbor and certain [other] men with him [went] to Egypt.

²³And they brought Uriah [God’s spokesman] from Egypt and led him to King Jehoiakim, who executed him with a sword and threw his dead body among the graves of the common people.

²⁴But the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, so that he was not given into the hands of the people to put him to death.

27 IN THE beginning of the reign of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD: ²Thus says the LORD to me, “Make for yourself bonds and yokes and put them on your neck,

³and send word to the king of Edom, to the king of Moab, to the king of the sons of Ammon, to the king of Tyre, and to the king of Sidon by the messengers who come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah.

⁴“Command them to go to their masters, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, you shall say this to your masters: ⁵“I have made the earth, the men and the animals that are on the face of the earth by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and I will give it to whomever pleases Me.

⁶“Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant *and* instrument, and I have also given the wild animals of the field to serve him.

⁷“All nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson until the [appointed] time [of punishment] for his own land comes; then many nations and great kings shall make him their servant.

⁸“But any nation or kingdom that will not serve this same Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation I will punish,” says the LORD, “with the sword, with famine and with pestilence (virulent disease), until I have destroyed it by Nebuchadnezzar’s hand.

⁹“And as for you, do not listen to your [counterfeit] prophets, your diviners, your dreams *and* dreamers, your soothsayers or your sorcerers, who say to you, ‘You will not serve the king of Babylon.’

¹⁰“For they prophesy a lie to you which will cause you to be removed far from your land; and I will drive you out and you will perish.

¹¹“But the nation which will bow its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, that nation I will let remain on its own land,” says the LORD, “to cultivate it and live in it.””

¹²I spoke to Zedekiah king of Judah in the same way, saying, “Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him and his people, and live!

¹³“Why will you die, you and your people, by the sword, by famine and by virulent disease, as the LORD has spoken to any nation which will not serve the king of Babylon?

¹⁴“Do not listen to *and* believe the words of the [false] prophets who are saying to you, ‘You will not serve the king of Babylon,’ for they prophesy a lie to you; ¹⁵for I have not sent them,” says the LORD, “but they are prophesying falsely in My Name, in order that I may drive you out and that you may perish, you [together] with the [false] prophets who prophesy to you.”

¹⁶Then I said to the priests and to all these people, saying, “Thus says the LORD: Do not listen to the words of your [false] prophets who are prophesying to you, saying, ‘Behold, the articles of the LORD’s house will now shortly be brought back from Babylon’; for they are prophesying a lie to you.

¹⁷“Do not listen to them; serve the king of Babylon, and live! Why should this city become a ruin?

¹⁸“But if they are [true] prophets, and if the word of the LORD is [really spoken] by them, let them now entreat the LORD of hosts that the articles which are [still] left in the house of the LORD, in the house of the king of Judah and in Jerusalem may not go to Babylon.

¹⁹“For thus says the LORD of hosts concerning the [bronze] pillars, the [bronze] Sea, the [bronze] bases [of the ten basins in Solomon’s temple used for washing sacrificial animals], and the rest of the articles that are left in this city (Jerusalem), [1 Kin 7:23–37; 2 Chr 4:6; Jer 52:17]

²⁰which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon did not take when he carried Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, along with all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem.

²¹“Yes, thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the articles which remain in the house of the LORD, in the house of the king of Judah and in Jerusalem, ²²‘They will be carried to Babylon and they will be there until the day that I visit them [with My favor],’ says the LORD. ‘Then I will bring them back and restore them to this place.’”

28 IN THE same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year and the fifth month, the [false] prophet Hananiah the son of Azzur, who was from Gibeon [one of the priests’ cities], spoke [without godly authority] to me in the house of the LORD in the presence of the priests and all the people, saying: ²“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon.

³‘Within two years I am going to bring back to this place all the articles of the LORD’s house, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place and carried to Babylon.

⁴‘And I will also bring back to this place Jeconiah the son

of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, along with all the exiles from Judah who went to Babylon,' says the LORD, 'for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.'" [Jer 22:10, 24–27; 52:34]

⁵Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and all the people who stood in the house of the LORD, ⁶and the prophet Jeremiah said, "Amen! May the LORD do so; may the LORD confirm *and* fulfill your words which you have prophesied to bring back the articles of the LORD's house and all the captives, from Babylon to this place.

⁷"Nevertheless, listen now to this word which I am about to speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people!

⁸"The prophets who were before me and before you from ancient times prophesied against many lands and against great kingdoms, of war and of disaster and of virulent disease.

⁹"But as for the prophet who [on the contrary] prophesies of peace, when that prophet's word comes to pass, [only] then will it be known that the LORD has truly sent him."

¹⁰Then Hananiah the [false] prophet took the yoke off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah and smashed it.

¹¹Hananiah spoke in the presence of all the people, saying, "Thus says the LORD, 'Even so within two full years I will break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all the nations.'" Then the prophet Jeremiah went his way.

¹²The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah [some time] after Hananiah the prophet had broken the yoke off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, saying, ¹³"Go and tell Hananiah, 'The LORD says this, "You have broken yokes of wood, but you have

made in their place bars of iron.”

¹⁴“For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “I have put the iron yoke [of servitude] on the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they will serve him. And I have even given him the beasts of the field.”” [Jer 27:6, 7]

¹⁵Then the prophet Jeremiah said to Hananiah the prophet, “Listen now, Hananiah, the LORD has not sent you, and you have made this people trust in a lie.

¹⁶“Therefore thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, I am about to send you away from the face of the earth. This year you will die, because you have spoken *and* counseled rebellion against the LORD.”

¹⁷So Hananiah the [false] prophet died [two months later], the same year, in the seventh month.

29 NOW THESE are the words of the letter which Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the rest of the elders in exile and to the priests, the prophets and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon.

²(This was after King Jeconiah and the queen mother, the eunuchs, the princes (court officials) of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem.)

³*The letter was hand-carried by Elasah the son of Shaphan and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, saying,* ⁴“So says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the captives

whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon,

⁵‘Build houses and live *in them*; plant gardens and eat their fruit.

⁶‘Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there and do not decrease [in number].

⁷‘Seek peace *and* well-being for the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its peace (well-being) you will have peace.’

⁸“For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Do not let your [false] prophets who are among you and your diviners deceive you; pay no attention *and* attach no significance to the dreams which they dream *or* to yours, ⁹for they prophesy falsely to you in My Name. I have not sent them,’ says the LORD.

¹⁰“For thus says the LORD, ‘When seventy years [of exile] have been completed for Babylon, I will visit (inspect) you and keep My good promise to you, to bring you back to this place.

Speak God's Word

*God has plans and thoughts
for me, plans for peace and
well-being and not for
disaster, to give me a future
and a hope.*

| adapted from JEREMIAH 29:11 |

¹¹‘For I know the plans *and* thoughts that I have for you,’ says the LORD, ‘plans for peace *and* well-being and not for disaster to give you a future and a hope.

¹²‘Then you will call on Me and you will come and pray to Me, and I will hear [your voice] *and* I will listen to you.

¹³‘Then [with a deep longing] you will seek Me *and* require Me [as a vital necessity] and [you will] find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. [Deut 4:29, 30]

¹⁴‘I will be found by you,’ says the LORD, ‘and I will restore your fortunes and I will [free you and] gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,’ says the LORD, ‘and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.’

¹⁵‘Because you [who have remained in Jerusalem] have said, ‘The LORD has raised up prophets for us in Babylon,’

¹⁶thus says the LORD concerning the king who sits on the throne of David, and concerning all the people who live in this city, your brothers (fellow people of Judah) who did not go with you into captivity—

POWERPOINT

We need God, and we are no good without Him. In Jeremiah 29:13, He promises that we will find Him if we seek Him. He is waiting for us to call on Him and talk to Him about every aspect of our lives. He wants to hear us say that we need Him and love Him, and that He is a vital necessity in our lives.



KEYS to a Victorious Life

Who Do You Agree With?

In Jeremiah 29:11, God says, “For I know the plans and thoughts that I have for you.” God has thoughts specifically for you. They are “plans for peace and well-being and not for disaster to give you a future and a hope.”

Do you ever think about you and your life the way God is thinking about you? Whose thoughts are you thinking? If you’re thinking the way God is thinking, you will end up with God’s plan for you, and you will have what God wants you to have. The Bible says in Proverbs 23:7, “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.” You can hinder God’s plan by thinking your own fleshly thoughts, or agreeing with others’ or the devil’s thoughts. Or you can think God’s thoughts and believe and receive the good plan He has for your life. Who are you in agreement with? God says He has a good life planned for you. Do you believe and speak the same thing God does?

¹⁷thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Behold (listen very carefully), I am sending the sword, famine, and virulent disease (pestilence) on them, and I will make them like rotten figs that are so bad they cannot be eaten.

¹⁸‘I will pursue them with the sword, with famine and with virulent disease; and I will make them a terror (warning) to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, a horror, a hissing, and

a disgrace among all the nations to which I have driven them,
¹⁹because they have not listened to *and* honored My words,’ says the LORD, ‘which I sent to them again and again by My servants the prophets. Moreover, you [exiles] did not listen [either],’ says the LORD. [Ezek 2:5, 7]

²⁰“Hear, therefore, the word of the LORD, all you exiles whom I have sent away from Jerusalem to Babylon.

²¹“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning Ahab the son of Kolaiah and concerning Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, who are prophesying lies to you in My Name, ‘Behold, I will hand them over to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he will slaughter them before your eyes [yes, all the false prophets in Babylon whom you follow shall die]!’ [Jer 29:15]

²²“Because of them, this curse shall be taken up *and* used by all the exiles from Judah who are in Babylon, saying, “May the LORD make you like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire,²³ because they have acted foolishly in Israel and have committed adultery with their neighbors’ wives and in My Name have spoken false *and* concocted words, which I did not command them. I am He who knows and I am a witness,’ says the LORD.”

²⁴Also you shall speak to Shemaiah of Nehelam [among the exiles in Babylon], saying,

²⁵“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Because you have sent letters in your own name to all the people who are in Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah, the priest, and to all the priests, saying,²⁶“The LORD has made you [Zephaniah] priest instead of Jehoiada the

[deputy] priest, to be the overseer in the house of the LORD over every madman who prophesies, to put him in the stocks and in the iron collar,²⁷ now therefore [continued the letter from Shemaiah in Babylon to Zephaniah in Jerusalem], why have you not rebuked Jeremiah of Anathoth, who prophesies to you?

²⁸“For he has sent *word* to us in Babylon, saying, ‘*This captivity [of yours] will be long; build houses and live in them and plant gardens and eat their fruit.*’””

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Have a Positive Vision for Your Life

God called the children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt to the land He had promised to give them as a perpetual inheritance, a land of prosperity in every realm of their existence. The Lord said to them, “For I know the plans *and* thoughts that I have for you... plans for peace *and* well-being and not for disaster to give you a future and a hope” (Jer. 29:11).

But the Israelites had no positive vision for their lives—no dreams. They wandered around in the wilderness for forty years on their way to the Promised Land, a journey that actually should have taken only eleven days. They knew where they came from, but they did not know what life in the Promised Land would be like. Everything was based on what they had seen in the past or what they could see in the present.

Unfortunately, many of us follow their example and keep dealing with the same problems over and over again. It often

takes us years to experience victory over something that could have been dealt with quickly.

I came from a background of abuse. My childhood was filled with shame, fear, and torment. I built up walls of protection to keep people from hurting me, not realizing that I was also locking myself away from those who might truly love me. I believed that the only way I could face life was to be in control so no one could hurt me.

As a young adult trying to live for Christ, I knew where I had come from, but I did not know where I was going. I felt that my past had permanently marred my future. But God had a different plan. He came to open the prison doors and set the captives—including me—free (see Luke 4:18). However, I first had to believe that neither my past nor my present could determine my future. Only then could I receive the freedom Jesus offered me—freedom from the bondage of my past.

You may be facing situations so bad that it seems you have no real reason to hope. But I say to you boldly: *Your future is not determined by your past or by your present!*

Mark 9:23 assures you that with God *all* things are possible. All you need is to have faith in Him, believe His Word, and follow His instructions—He will do the rest!

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Dear Father, I thank You for loving me and having a vision—a good plan—for my life. I pray that You will help me to overcome any negative thoughts regarding my future. Help me to come into agreement with You so I can experience all the good things You have planned for me. Amen.

²⁹Zephaniah the priest read this letter to Jeremiah the prophet.

³⁰Then came the word of the LORD to Jeremiah, saying,

³¹“Send [this message] to all the exiles, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD concerning Shemaiah of Nehelam, “Because Shemaiah has prophesied to you, although I did not send him, and he has made you trust in a lie,”

³²therefore thus says the LORD, “Behold, I am about to punish Shemaiah of Nehelam and his descendants. He will not have anyone [born] to live among this people, nor will he see the good that I am about to do to My people,” says the LORD, “because he has spoken *and* preached rebellion against the LORD.””

30 THE WORD which came to Jeremiah from the LORD:

²“Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘Write in a book all the words which I have spoken to you.

³‘For behold (hear this), the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘when I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel and Judah,’ says the LORD, ‘and I will return them to the land that I gave to their forefathers and they will take possession of it.’”

⁴Now these are the words the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah:

⁵“Thus says the LORD,

‘We have heard a terrified voice

Of panic *and* dread, and there is no peace.

6‘Ask now, and see

Whether a man can give birth [to a child].

Why then do I see every man

With his hands on his loins, as a woman in labor?

Why have all faces turned pale?

7‘Alas! for that day is great,

There is none like it;

It is the time of Jacob’s [unequaled] trouble,

But he will be saved from it. [Matt 24:29, 30; Rev 7:14]

8‘It shall come about on that day,’ says the LORD of hosts,
‘that I will break the yoke off your neck and I will tear off your
bonds *and* force apart your shackles; and strangers will no
longer make slaves of the people [of Israel].

9‘But they shall serve the LORD their God and [the
descendant of] David their King, whom I will raise up for them.
[Jer 23:5]

10‘Fear not, O Jacob My servant,’ says the LORD,

‘Nor be dismayed *or* downcast, O Israel;

For behold, I will save you from a distant land [of exile]

And your descendants from the land of their captivity.

Jacob will return and will be quiet and at ease,

And no one will make him afraid.

11‘For I am with you,’ says the LORD, ‘to save you;

For I will destroy completely all the nations where I have
scattered you,

But I will not destroy you completely.

But I will judge *and* discipline you fairly
And will by no means regard you as guiltless *and* leave you
unpunished.'

12'For thus says the LORD,

'Your wound is incurable
And your injury is beyond healing.

13'There is no one to plead your cause;
No [device to close and allow the] healing of your wound,
No recovery for you.

14'All your lovers (allies) have forgotten you;
They do not seek *and* long for you.
For I have injured you with the wound of an enemy,
With the punishment of a cruel *and* merciless foe,
Because your guilt is great
And your sins are glaring *and* innumerable.

15'Why do you cry out over your injury [since it is the natural
result of your sin]?
Your pain is incurable (deadly).
Because your guilt is great
And your sins are glaring *and* innumerable,
I have done these things to you.

16'Therefore all who devour you will be devoured;
And all your adversaries, every one of them, will go into
captivity.
And they who plunder you will become plunder,
And all who prey upon you I will give for prey.

17'For I will restore health to you

And I will heal your wounds,’ says the LORD,
‘Because they have called you an outcast, saying:
“This is Zion; no one seeks her *and* no one cares for her.” ’

18‘Thus says the LORD,
‘Behold (hear this), I will restore the fortunes of the tents of
Jacob

And have mercy on his dwelling places;
The city will be rebuilt on its [old, mound-like] ruin,
And the palace will stand on its rightful place.

19‘From them (city, palace) will come [songs of] thanksgiving
And the voices of those who dance *and* celebrate.
And I will multiply them and they will not be diminished [in
number];

I will also honor them and they will not be insignificant.

20‘Their children too will be as in former times,
And their congregation will be established before Me;
And I will punish all their oppressors.

21‘Their prince will be one of them,
And their ruler will come forward from among them.
I will bring him near and he shall approach Me,
For who is he who would have the boldness *and* would
dare [on his own initiative] to risk his life to approach
Me?’ says the LORD.

22‘Then you shall be My people,
And I will be your God.’” [Jer 7:23]

23Behold, the tempest of the LORD!
Wrath has gone forth,

A sweeping *and* gathering tempest;
It will burst on the head of the wicked.

²⁴The fierce (righteous) anger of the LORD will not turn back
Until He has fulfilled and until He has accomplished
The intent of His heart (mind);
In the latter days you will understand this.

31 “AT THAT time,” says the LORD, “I will be the God of all
the families of Israel, and they shall be My people.”

²Thus says the LORD,
“The people who survived the sword
Found grace in the wilderness [of exile]—
Israel (the Northern Kingdom), when it went to find its rest.”

³The LORD appeared to me (Israel) from ages past, *saying*,
“I have loved you with an everlasting love;
Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you *and*
continued My faithfulness to you. [Deut 7:8]

⁴“Again I will build you and you will be rebuilt,
O Virgin Israel!
You will again be adorned with your tambourines *and*
timbrels
And go out to the dances of those who celebrate. [Is 37:22;
Jer 18:13]

⁵“Again you will plant vineyards
On the mountains of Samaria;
The planters will plant
And enjoy the [abundant] fruit [in peace].

⁶“For there will be a day when the watchmen
On the hills of Ephraim cry out,
‘Arise, and let us go up to Zion,
To the LORD our God.’”

⁷For thus says the LORD,
“Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob,
And shout for the first *and* foremost of the nations [the
chosen people, Israel];
Proclaim, give praise and say,
‘O LORD save Your people,
The remnant of Israel!’

⁸“Behold, I am bringing them from the north country,
And I will gather them from the remote parts of the earth,
Among them [will be] the blind and the lame,
The woman with child and she who labors in childbirth,
together;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Know Who You Are as God's Child

Many people have deep feelings of insecurity about themselves because they can't accept themselves for who they are. If that describes you, are you tired of playing games, wearing masks, trying to be someone other than who you are? Wouldn't you like the freedom just to be accepted as you are, without pressure to be someone you really don't know how to be?

God loves us with an everlasting love and He accepts us unconditionally (see Jer. 31:3). I like to say that "God meets us where we are and helps us get to where we need to be." God will make the changes in our character that need to be made as we study His Word and walk in fellowship with Him, but He totally loves and accepts us every step of our journey with Him.

The enemy's plan is to deceive us into continuing to base our worth on our performance, and then keep us focused on all our faults and shortcomings. Satan wants us to have low opinions of ourselves so that we live ineffectively for God, miserable and unreceptive to His blessings because we don't think we deserve them.

It is so important to have a positive sense of self-esteem, self-value, and self-worth, to be secure in who we are in Christ, and to truly like ourselves. We learn to like ourselves by

learning how much God loves us. Once we become rooted and grounded in God's love, we can come to terms of peace with ourselves and stop feeling insecure (see Eph. 3:17–19).

In spite of struggles and imperfections, which everyone has, God loves us with an everlasting love just the way we are.

A great company, they will return here [to Jerusalem].

⁹“They will come with weeping [in repentance and for joy],
And by [their] prayer [for the future] I will lead them;
I will make them walk by streams of waters,
On a straight path in which they will not stumble,
For I am a Father to Israel,
And Ephraim (Israel) is My firstborn.”

¹⁰Hear the word of the LORD, O you nations,
And declare it in the isles *and* coastlands far away,
And say, “He who scattered Israel will gather him
And will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.”

¹¹For the LORD has ransomed Jacob
And has redeemed him from the hand of him who was
stronger than he.

¹²“They will come and sing aloud *and* shout for joy on the
height of Zion,
And will be radiant [with joy] over the goodness of the
LORD—

For the grain, for the new wine, for the oil,
And for the young of the flock and the herd.
And their life will be like a watered garden,

And they shall never sorrow *or* languish again.

13“Then the virgin will rejoice in the dance,
And the young men and old, together,
For I will turn their mourning into joy
And will comfort them and make them rejoice after their
sorrow.

14“I will fully satisfy the soul of the priests with abundance,
And My people will be satisfied with My goodness,” says
the LORD.

15Thus says the LORD,
“A voice is heard in Ramah,
Lamentation (songs of mourning) and bitter weeping.
Rachel (Israel) is weeping for her children;
She refuses to be comforted for her children,
Because they are gone.” [Matt 2:18]

16Thus says the LORD,
“Restrain your voice from weeping
And your eyes from tears,
For your work will be rewarded,” says the LORD;
“And your children will return from the enemy’s land.

17“There is [confident] hope for your future,” says the LORD;
“Your children will come back to their own country.

18“I have surely heard Ephraim (Israel) moaning *and* grieving,
‘You have chastised me, and I was chastised,
Like a bull unaccustomed to the yoke *or* an untrained calf;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Comforts Those Who Mourn

The Bible makes many references to those who are mourning. Both Jesus' words in Matthew 5:4 and Jeremiah's words in Jeremiah 31:13 make clear that it is God's will to comfort those who mourn; therefore, we can determine that comfort should come after mourning. If comfort never comes, we are missing something God intends for us to receive.

If you are grieving or struggling right now, God has promised to turn your mourning into joy (see Isa. 61:1–3). God wants complete restoration of your joy. I encourage you to hold on to this promise while you are working through the grieving process of any loss or painful experience you have had. Doing so will give you hope for the future.

No matter what happens on earth, there is always hope in God. As a ship's anchor keeps it from floating away in a storm, hope does the same thing for our souls. Hope is like an anchor securely holding us in place when we are being tossed to and fro, this way and that, by the storms of life (see Heb. 6:17–19).

You may not understand much about what is happening to you when you are hurting and the pain of loss is ripping through your soul, but know and hold on to this one truth: God loves you, and He has a future for you. Hope in Him and trust Him to turn your mourning into joy and to give you

beauty for ashes, even as you go through the various stages of grief and recovery.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

How To Be Truly Happy

The realization that God wants each of us to be thoroughly happy and to fully enjoy life was life-changing for me. I grew up not enjoying much of anything, but God has given me the opportunity to experience true happiness as an adult. He fulfills His promise: “For I will turn their mourning into joy and will comfort them and make them rejoice after their sorrow” (Jer. 31:13).

This is a process that begins with replacing our old thoughts with God’s thoughts, which are found in His Word. It is a process that goes on throughout our lifetime. Each toxic thought replaced with a healthy one releases more joy into our lives. Here are three key points: 1. *Put God first.* Jesus came that we might have and enjoy our lives in full measure (John 10:10). Believe that God loves you, He is for you, He is with you, and He delights in helping you. He is interested in everything about you, and He wants to see you enjoying your life.

2. *Know who you are.* As God’s child, it is important to

understand that no matter what you may have done wrong in your past, you are now a new creation in Christ (see 2 Cor. 5:17). Old things have passed away and all things are made new. Jesus took all our sin upon Himself and gave us His righteousness (see 2 Cor. 5:21). Through Him, we are made right with God, approved by and acceptable to Him. We no longer need to feel “wrong” about ourselves.

3. *Know the power that is yours as a believer:* Feeling incapable, unable, and overwhelmed hinders our happiness, but God has solved that problem for us, and we simply need to believe it and to know the power available to us as believers (see Eph. 1:19). We are strong in Christ, not in ourselves. When you need to do something, don’t look to yourself and ask if you are able—look to Jesus and know that in Him you are able.

Anyone can be happy by believing right and thinking right. Let us make a commitment to think like God thinks so we can be the people He wants us to be and live the joy-filled lives He purchased for us through His Son, Jesus Christ.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Heavenly Father, I believe with all my heart that You love me, You are for me, You are with me, and You actually delight in helping me. I thank You for making me Your child, and I look to You for all that I need. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Bring me back that I may be restored,
For You are the LORD my God.

¹⁹‘After I turned away [from You], I repented;
After I was instructed, I struck my thigh [in remorse];
I was ashamed and even humiliated
Because I carried the disgrace of my youth [as a nation].’

²⁰“Is Ephraim My dear son?
Is he a darling *and* beloved child?
For as often as I have spoken against him,
I certainly still remember him.
Therefore My affection is renewed *and* My heart longs for
him;
I will surely have mercy on him,” says the LORD.

²¹“Place for yourself road signs [toward Canaan],
Make for yourself guideposts;
Turn your thought *and* attention to the highway,
To the way by which you went [into exile].
Retrace your steps, O virgin of Israel,
Return to these your cities.

²²“How long will you hesitate [to return],
O you faithless *and* renegade daughter?
For the LORD has created a new thing in the land [of Israel]:
A woman will encompass (tenderly love) a man.”

²³Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Once
more they will speak these words in the land of Judah (the
Southern Kingdom) and in her cities when I restore their

fortunes *and* release them from exile, ‘The LORD bless you, O habitation of justice *and* righteousness,

O holy mountain!’

²⁴“And [the people of] Judah and all its cities will live there together—the farmer and they who wander about with flocks.

²⁵“For I [fully] satisfy the weary soul, and I replenish every languishing *and* sorrowful person.”

²⁶At this I (Jeremiah) awoke and looked, and my [trancelike] sleep was sweet [in the assurance it gave] to me.

²⁷“Behold (listen carefully), the days are coming,” says the LORD, “when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and with the seed of beast.

²⁸“It will be that as I have watched over them to uproot and to break down, to overthrow, destroy, and afflict with disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to plant [with good],” says the LORD.

²⁹“In those days they will not say again,

‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes,

And the children’s teeth are set on edge.’ [Ezek 18:2]

³⁰“But everyone will die [only] for his own wickedness; every man who eats sour grapes—his [own] teeth shall be set on edge.

³¹“Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel (the Northern Kingdom) and with the house of Judah (the Southern Kingdom), [Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25]

³²not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the

land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” says the LORD.

³³“But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” says the LORD, “I will put My law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.

³⁴“And each man will no longer teach his neighbor and his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me [through personal experience], from the least of them to the greatest,” says the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness, and I will no longer remember their sin.” [Heb 8:8–12; 10:16, 17]

³⁵Thus says the LORD,
Who gives the sun for light by day
And the fixed order of the moon and of the stars for light by
night,
Who stirs up the sea’s roaring billows *or* stills the waves
when they roar;
The LORD of hosts is His name:

³⁶“If this fixed order departs
From before Me,” says the LORD,
“Then the descendants of Israel also will cease
From being a nation before Me forever.”

³⁷Thus says the LORD,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

You're Free from Condemnation

One of the biggest tools Satan uses to try to make us feel bad about ourselves is condemnation. According to Romans 8:1, we who are in Christ Jesus are no longer condemned, no longer judged guilty or wrong. Yet so often we judge and condemn ourselves.

I lived a large part of my life feeling guilty. Had someone asked me what I felt guilty about, there were times when I could connect my guilt to a specific thing I had done wrong, but more often I could not have answered the question. All I knew was that a vague feeling of guilt followed me around all the time.

As I learned more and more about God, He gave me a revelation about walking free from guilt and condemnation. He showed me that we not only need to receive forgiveness from Him, we also need to forgive ourselves. God wants us to believe His mercy is new every day and receive it as His gift to us. We should stop remembering and recounting our sins that God's Word says He has forgiven and forgotten (see Jer. 31:34).

We are told in Isaiah 26:3 that God will guard and keep us in perfect and constant peace—if we will keep our mind stayed on Him. Guilt and condemnation will find no entrance into our life if we allow the Holy Spirit to guide our thoughts.

God has new things on the horizon of your life, but you will struggle to experience them if you live in the past. Start enjoying the freedom from condemnation that Jesus died to give you, and look toward a great future. Receive God's love, forgiveness, and mercy today!

“If the heavens above can be measured
And the foundations of the earth searched out below,
Then I will also cast off *and* abandon all the descendants of
Israel

For all that they have done,” says the LORD.

³⁸“Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “when the city [of Jerusalem] will be rebuilt for the LORD from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate.

³⁹“The measuring line will go out farther straight ahead to the hill Gareb; then it will turn to Goah.

⁴⁰“And the whole valley (Hinnom) of the dead bodies and [the hill] of the ashes [long dumped there from the temple sacrifices], and all the fields as far as the brook Kidron, to the corner of the Horse Gate toward the east, shall be holy to the LORD. It (the city) will not be uprooted or overthrown anymore to the end of the age.” [Zech 14:10, 11]

32 THE WORD that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar.

²Now at that time the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem, and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in

the court of the guard, which was in the house of the king of Judah.

³For Zedekiah [the last] king of Judah had locked him up, saying, “Why do you prophesy [disaster] and say, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Behold, I am giving this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it; ⁴and Zedekiah king of Judah will not escape from the hand of the Chaldeans, but he will surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will speak with him face to face and see him eye to eye; ⁵and he will lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and he will be there until I visit him [for evaluation and judgment],” says the LORD. “If you fight against the Chaldeans, you will not succeed” ’?” [Jer 21:3–7; 34:2–5; 37:17; 52:7–14]

⁶And Jeremiah [answered King Zedekiah and] said, “The word of the LORD came to me, saying,

⁷‘Behold (listen carefully), Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle is coming to you, saying, “Buy my field that is in Anathoth, for you have the right of redemption to buy it [in accordance with the law].” ’

⁸“Then Hanamel my uncle’s son came to me in the court of the guard in accordance with the word of the LORD, and he said to me, ‘Please buy my field that is at Anathoth, which is in the land of Benjamin, for you have the right of inheritance and the redemption is yours; buy it for yourself.’ Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD.

⁹“I bought the field that was at Anathoth from Hanamel my uncle’s son, and weighed out the money for him, seventeen shekels of silver.

¹⁰“I signed the deed and sealed it, and called in witnesses,

and weighed out the money on the scales.

¹¹“So I took the deeds of the purchase, both the sealed *copy containing* the terms and conditions, and the unsealed copy;

¹²and I gave the purchase deed to Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, in the sight of Hanamel my uncle’s son and in sight of the witnesses who signed the purchase deed, in the presence of all the Jews who were sitting in the court of the guard.

¹³“And I commanded Baruch in their presence, saying,

¹⁴“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Take these deeds, both this purchase deed which is sealed and this unsealed deed, and put them in an earthen jar, that they may last a long time.”

¹⁵“For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Houses and fields and vineyards will again be purchased in this land.” ’

¹⁶“Now when I had delivered the purchase deed to Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed to the LORD, saying,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

We Can Press Through to Victory

“This is too hard” is one of the excuses we hear most frequently when people do not do what they find to be difficult. We need to remember that God’s Spirit equips us to handle difficult things. We are anointed to press through and see victory. The next time you are tempted to say that something is too hard, consider Deuteronomy 30:11, which says, “For this commandment which I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach.”

Anything God leads you to do, you can do. God never leads you to do something unless He also gives you the power and the ability to do it, and there is nothing too difficult or too wonderful for Him (see Jer. 32:17). Prepare yourself for right action with power thoughts. Think, I believe that I can do whatever I need to do in life through Christ Who enables me and is my strength.

¹⁷‘Ah Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! There is nothing too difficult *or* too wonderful for You— ¹⁸You who show lovingkindness to thousands, but repay the wickedness (sin, guilt) of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them [that is, calling the children to account for the sins of their fathers], O great and mighty God; the LORD of

hosts is His name; ¹⁹great [are You] in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men, to reward *or* repay each one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds; ²⁰who set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, and even to this day [continues to do so] both in Israel and among mankind; and You have made a name for Yourself, as at this day.

²¹‘You brought Your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders, with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm and with great terror;

²²and gave them this land, which You swore to their forefathers to give them, a land [of plenty] flowing with milk and honey.

²³‘They entered and took possession of it, but they did not obey Your voice or walk in Your law; they have done nothing of all that You commanded them to do. Therefore You have caused all this disaster *and* suffering to come upon them.

²⁴‘See the siege ramps [of mounded earth that the enemy has built against the walls]; they have come up to the city to capture it. And the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans [of Babylon] who fight against it, because of the sword, the famine and the virulent disease [that have overcome the people]. What You have spoken has come to pass, and behold, You see it.

²⁵‘Yet, O Lord GOD, You said to me, “Buy the field with money and get witnesses,” even though the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans.”’

²⁶Then came the word of the LORD to Jeremiah, saying,

²⁷“Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh; is there

anything too difficult for Me?”

²⁸Therefore thus says the LORD, “Behold, I am about to give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he will take it.

²⁹“The Chaldeans who are fighting against this city will come in and set this city on fire and burn it, along with the houses on whose roofs incense has been offered to Baal and drink offerings have been poured out to other gods to provoke Me to anger. [Jer 19:13]

³⁰“For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have done only evil in My sight from their youth; for the children of Israel have been provoking Me to anger by the [idols that are the] work of their hands,” says the LORD.

³¹“From the day that they built it [during the reign of Solomon], even to this day, this city has been such a *provocation of My anger and My wrath*, that I must remove it from My sight, [1 Kin 11:1–13]

³²because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah which they have done to provoke Me to anger—they, their kings, their princes, their priests, their prophets, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

³³“They have turned their back to Me and not their face; though I taught them repeatedly, yet they would not listen and receive instruction.

³⁴“But they put their detestable things (idols) in the house which is called by My Name, to defile it.

³⁵“They built the high places [for worship] of Baal in the Valley of Ben-hinnom (son of Hinnom) to make their sons and their daughters pass through *the fire* to [worship and honor]

Molech—which I had not commanded them nor had it entered My mind that they should do this repulsive thing, to cause Judah to sin. [Jer 7:30, 31]

³⁶“Now therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning this city of which you say, ‘It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword and by famine and by virulent disease.’

³⁷“Behold, I will gather them out of all countries to which I have driven them in My anger, in My wrath and in great indignation; and I will bring them back to this place and make them live in safety.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Believe Anyone Can Change

The best way to end a relationship is to think this about someone: *You will never change.* Thankfully, God always believes we can change, so He continues to work with us. We would be more patient and long-suffering with people if we purposefully thought, *God is patient with me, and I will be patient with you.* We can always choose to pray for people instead of giving up on them.

The first few years of my marriage to Dave, my behavior at times was very bad. I had never been in a healthy relationship and had no idea how to behave in one. My experience to that point in life was that nobody cared about me or would take care of me, so it was my job to look out for myself. My thoughts about what to expect from Dave were warped and unrealistic: *Dave needs to make me feel good about myself and do more things to make me happy. I don't "feel" like Dave loves me! Dave is too involved in sports and doesn't talk enough to me.* All my thoughts were focused on me and on why Dave wasn't making me feel happy. I was expecting Dave to give me what I

could only find in God—a feeling of confidence and self-worth.

When I asked Dave why he stuck with me, he said, “I knew that God could change you!” His belief that God could change me was a key factor in my healing. God used Dave’s faith to open a door for God to work in my life. Those years were not easy on Dave, but no matter how difficult things were, he always believed that God was changing me and would continue to change me.

God says, “Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh; is there anything too difficult for Me?” (Jer. 32:27). Nobody is beyond change! It may take a long time for change to come, but it can happen. My father was in his eighties when he finally apologized to me for his abusive behavior and asked for forgiveness from me and from God. He received Christ, and I saw a genuine change in him. I am glad I didn’t give up, but that doesn’t mean that I wasn’t tempted to, or that there were not times when I did for a season.

Even if you see no change at all yet, you can continue believing that God is working to change people. I changed. My father changed. You can change, and so can the people you love. Nothing is impossible with God.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord God, forgive me for the many times I’ve not believed You could change me or change another person. Nothing is too difficult for You! Amen.

³⁸“They will be My people, and I will be their God;

³⁹and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may [reverently] fear Me forever, for their own good and for the good of their children after them.

⁴⁰“I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will do them good and not turn away from them; and I will put in their heart a fear *and* reverential awe of Me, so that they will not turn away from Me. [Jer 31:31–34]

⁴¹“I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will faithfully plant them in this land with all My heart and with all My soul.

⁴²“For thus says the LORD, ‘Just as I have brought all this great disaster on this people, so I am going to bring on them all the good that I am promising them.

⁴³‘Fields will be bought in this land of which you say, “It is desolate, without man or animal; it is given into the hands of the Chaldeans.”

⁴⁴‘People will buy fields for money, sign deeds, seal them, and call in witnesses in the land of Benjamin, in the places around Jerusalem, in the cities of Judah, in the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the lowland, and in the cities of the South (the Negev); for I will restore their fortunes *and* release them from exile,’ says the LORD.”

33 THEN THE word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the second time, while he was still confined in the court of the

guard, saying, ²“Thus says the LORD who made *the earth*, the LORD who formed it to establish it—the LORD is His name,
³‘Call to Me and I will answer you, and tell you [and even show you] great and mighty things, [things which have been confined and hidden], which you do not know *and* understand *and* cannot distinguish.’

Speak God's Word

God will bring health and healing, and He will heal me; and He will reveal to me an abundance of peace, prosperity, security, stability, and truth.

| adapted from JEREMIAH 33:6 |

⁴“For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city and the houses of the kings of Judah which are torn down *to make a defense* against the siege ramps and against the sword, [Is 22:10; Jer 6:6]

⁵“While they (the besieged Jews) are coming to fight against the Chaldeans and to fill the houses with the dead bodies of men whom I have slain in My anger and in My wrath, for I have hidden My face [in disgust] from this city because of all their wickedness.

⁶“Behold, [in the restored Jerusalem] I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them; and I will reveal to them an abundance of peace (prosperity, security, stability) and truth.

⁷“I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel and will rebuild them as they were at first.

⁸“I will cleanse them from all their wickedness (guilt) by

which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon (forgive) all their sins by which they rebelled against Me.

⁹‘Jerusalem will be to Me a name of joy, praise and glory before all the nations of the earth which will hear of all the good that I do for it, and they shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the peace (prosperity, security, stability) that I provide for it.’

¹⁰“Thus says the LORD, ‘Yet again there will be heard in this place of which you say, “It is a [desolate] waste, without man and without animal”—even in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without man and without inhabitant and without animal— ¹¹the [sound of the] voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the [song-filled] voice of those who say,

“Give praise *and* thanks to the LORD of hosts,
For the LORD is good;
For His [steadfast] lovingkindness (mercy) endures
forever”;

and of those who bring a thank offering into the house of the LORD. For I will restore the fortunes of the land as they were at first,’ says the LORD.

Speak God's Word

*I will praise and give thanks
to the Lord of hosts, for the
Lord is good; for His
steadfast lovingkindness and
mercy endure forever.*

| adapted from JEREMIAH 33:11 |

¹²“Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘There will again be in this desolate place—[a place] without man or animal—and in all its cities, pastures for shepherds who rest their flocks.

¹³‘In the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the lowland, in the cities of the South (the Negev), in the land of Benjamin, in the places around Jerusalem and in the cities of Judah, the flocks will again pass under the hand of the one who counts them,’ says the LORD.

¹⁴‘Behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘when I will fulfill the good word *and* promise which I have made regarding the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

¹⁵‘In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He (the Messiah) shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth. [Is 4:2; Jer 23:5; Zech 3:8; 6:12]

¹⁶‘In those days Judah will be saved and [the people of] Jerusalem will live in safety; and this is *the name* by which she will be called: the LORD Our Righteousness (Justice).’

¹⁷“For thus says the LORD, ‘David shall never lack a man (descendant) to sit on the throne of the house of Israel;

¹⁸and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man (descendant) to offer burnt offerings before Me and to burn grain offerings and to prepare sacrifices all day long.’”

¹⁹The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying,

²⁰“Thus says the LORD, ‘If you can break My covenant for the day and My covenant for the night, so that day and night do not take place at their appointed times,’ ²¹then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant so that he will not have a son to reign on his throne, and [My covenant may also be broken] with the Levitical priests, My ministers.

²²‘As the host of [the stars of] heaven cannot be counted and the sand of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me.’”

²³And the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying,

²⁴“Have you not noticed what this people have spoken, saying, ‘The two families [Israel the northern kingdom, and Judah the southern kingdom] which the LORD chose, He has rejected’? Thus they despise My [chosen] people, no longer are they [considered] as a nation in their sight.

²⁵“Thus says the LORD, ‘If My covenant with day and night does not stand, and if I have not established the fixed patterns of heaven and earth, [the whole order of nature,]

²⁶then I would [also] reject the descendants of Jacob and David My servant, not taking from his descendants rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But I will restore their fortunes, and will have mercy on them.” [Gen 49:10]

34 THE WORD that came to Jeremiah from the LORD when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army, with all the kingdoms of the earth that were under his sovereignty and all the peoples, were fighting against Jerusalem and against all of its cities: ²“Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘Go and speak to Zedekiah king of Judah and tell him: “Thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, I am giving this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will set it on fire *and* burn it down.

³‘You will not escape from his hand, for you will definitely be captured and handed over to him; you will see the king of Babylon eye to eye, and he will speak with you face to face; and you will go to Babylon.’” ’

⁴“Yet hear the word of the LORD, O Zedekiah king of Judah! Thus says the LORD concerning you, ‘You will not die by the sword.

⁵‘You will die in peace; and as *spices* were burned for [the memory and honor of] your fathers, the former kings who reigned before you, so shall a [ceremonial] burning be made for you; and people will lament (grieve) for you, saying, “Alas, lord (master)!” ’ For I have spoken the word,” says the LORD.

⁶Then Jeremiah the prophet spoke all these words to Zedekiah king of Judah in Jerusalem

⁷when the army of the king of Babylon was fighting against Jerusalem and against all the remaining cities of Judah, against Lachish and Azekah, for these were the [only] fortified cities among the cities of Judah.

⁸The word came to Jeremiah from the LORD after King Zedekiah had made a covenant (solemn pledge) with all the [Hebrew] people who were [slaves] in Jerusalem to proclaim liberty to them: ⁹that every man should let his Hebrew slaves, male and female, go free, so that no one should make a slave of a Jew, his brother.

¹⁰So all the princes and all the people who had entered into the covenant agreed that everyone would let his male servant and his female servant go free, and that no one would keep them in bondage any longer; they obeyed, and set *them free*.

¹¹But afterward they backed out [of the covenant] and made the male servants and the female servants whom they had set free return [to them], and brought the male servants and the female servants again into servitude.

¹²Therefore the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

¹³“Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘I made a covenant (solemn pledge) with your forefathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, saying, ¹⁴“At the end of seven years each of you shall set free his Hebrew brother who has sold himself [into servitude] *or* who has been sold to you and has served you six years, you shall release him from [serving] you; but your forefathers did not listen [submissively] to Me or obey Me. [Deut 15:12]

¹⁵“So then you recently turned *and* repented, doing what was right in My sight, each man proclaiming release [from servitude] to his countryman [who was his bond servant]; and you had made a covenant before Me in the house which is called by My Name.

¹⁶“Yet you backed out [of the covenant] and profaned My Name, and each man took back his servants, male and female, whom had been set free in accordance with their desire, and you brought them into servitude [again] to be your male servants and your female servants.”’

¹⁷“Therefore says the LORD, ‘You have not obeyed Me; you have not proclaimed liberty to your brother and your countryman. Behold (listen very carefully), I am proclaiming liberty to you—[liberty to be put] to the sword, [liberty] to [be ravaged by] the virulent disease, and [liberty] to [be decimated by] famine,’ says the LORD; ‘and I will make you a horror *and* a warning to all the kingdoms of the earth.

¹⁸“The men who have violated My covenant, who have not kept the terms of the solemn pledge which they made before Me when they split the [sacrificial] calf in half, and then afterwards walked between its separated pieces [sealing their pledge to Me by placing a curse on themselves should they violate the covenant—those men I will make like the calf]! [Gen 15:9, 10, 17]

¹⁹“The princes of Judah, the princes of Jerusalem, the high officials, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf,

²⁰I will give into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their lives. And [like the body of the

calf] their dead bodies will be food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth.

²¹“Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes I will place into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their life, and into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon which has withdrawn from you.

²²“Behold, I am going to command [the Chaldeans who rule Babylon],” says the LORD, “and I will bring them back to this city; and they will fight against it and take it and set it on fire. I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without inhabitant.””

35 THE WORD that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah: ²“Go to the house of the Rechabites and speak to them, and bring them into the house of the LORD, into one of the [side] chambers; then give them [who are pledged not to drink wine] some wine to drink.”

³So I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habazziniah, and his brothers and all his sons and the whole house of the Rechabites,

⁴and I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan the son of Igdaiah, the man of God, which was near the chamber of the princes, above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum the doorkeeper.

⁵Then I set before the men of the house of the Rechabites pitchers full of wine, and cups, and I said to them, “Drink wine.”

⁶But they said, “We will not drink wine, for Jonadab the

son of Rechab, our father, commanded us: ‘You shall not drink wine, neither you nor your sons, forever.

⁷‘Nor shall you build a house or sow seed or plant a vineyard or own one; but you shall live in tents all your days, that you may live many days in the land where you are sojourners (temporary residents).’

⁸“We have obeyed the words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he commanded us, in all our days we have never drunk wine, nor have our wives, our sons, or our daughters, ⁹nor have we built ourselves houses to live in; nor do we have vineyards or fields or seed.

¹⁰“We have lived only in tents, and have obeyed and done [everything] according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us.

¹¹“But when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against the land, we said, ‘Come and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans [who rule Babylon] and for fear of the army of the Arameans.’ So we have lived in Jerusalem.”

¹²Then came the word of the LORD to Jeremiah, saying,

¹³“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Go and say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, “Will you not receive instruction by listening to My words *and* honoring them?”’ says the LORD.

¹⁴“The command which Jonadab the son of Rechab gave to his sons not to drink wine has been observed [as a custom for more than two hundred years]. To this day they do not drink *wine*, for they have obeyed their father’s command. But I have repeatedly spoken to you, yet you have not listened to

Me.

¹⁵“I have also sent to you all My servants the prophets, sending them repeatedly, saying, ‘Let every one of you turn now from his evil way and alter your behavior, and do not follow other gods to worship *and* serve them; and then you will live in the land which I have given to you and to your forefathers. But you have not submitted or listened to Me.

¹⁶“Indeed, the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have observed the command of their father which he gave them, but this people has not listened to Me.”’

¹⁷“Therefore thus says the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Behold (hear this), I am bringing on Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the disaster that I have pronounced against them, because I have spoken to them, but they have not listened, and I have called to them, but they have not answered.’”

¹⁸Then Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Because you have obeyed the command of Jonadab your father and have kept all his commands and have done according to all that he commanded you, ¹⁹therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Jonadab the son of Rechab shall never fail to have a man (descendant) to stand before Me always.”’”

36 IN THE fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

²“Take a scroll [of parchment] and write on it all the words which I have spoken to you concerning Israel and Judah, and

all the nations, from the day I [first] spoke to you in the days of [King] Josiah until this day.

³“It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the disaster which I plan to bring on them, so that each one will turn from his evil way, that I may forgive their wickedness and their sin.” [Jer 18:7–10; 26:3]

⁴Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote on the scroll of the book all the words which Jeremiah dictated, [words] which the LORD had spoken to him.

⁵Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, “I am [in hiding, virtually] restrained; I cannot go into the house of the LORD.

⁶“So you go to the LORD’s house on a day of fasting and read from the scroll the words of the LORD to the people which you have written as I dictated. And also you shall read them to *all the people of Judah* who come from their cities.

⁷“It may be that their supplication [for mercy] will come before the LORD, and everyone will turn from his evil way, for great is the anger and the wrath that the LORD has pronounced against this people.”

⁸Baruch the son of Neriah did everything that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading from [Jeremiah’s scroll] the words of the LORD in the LORD’s house.

⁹Now in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, in the ninth month, a fast was proclaimed before the LORD for all the people in Jerusalem and all the people who came to Jerusalem from the cities of Judah.

¹⁰Then Baruch read to all the people the words of Jeremiah from the scroll of the book in the house of the LORD, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, in the

upper court, at the entry of the New Gate of the LORD's house.

¹¹When Micaiah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, had heard all the words of the LORD from the scroll,

¹²he went down to the king's house, into the scribe's chamber; and behold, all the princes were sitting there: Elishama the scribe, Delaiah the son of Shemaiah, Elnathan the son of Achbor, Gemariah the son of Shaphan, Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the [other] princes.

¹³Then Micaiah declared to them all the words that he had heard when Baruch read from the scroll to all the people.

¹⁴Therefore all the princes sent Jehudi the son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi, to Baruch, saying, "Take in your hand the scroll from which you have read to the people and come [to us]." So Baruch the son of Neriah took the scroll in his hand and went to them.

¹⁵And they said to him, "Sit down now and read it to us." So Baruch read it to them.

¹⁶Now when they had heard all the words, they turned one to another in fear and said to Baruch, "We must surely report all these words to the king."

¹⁷And they asked Baruch, "Tell us now, how did you write all these words? At his (Jeremiah's) dictation?"

¹⁸Then Baruch answered them, "He dictated all these words to me, and I wrote them with ink on the scroll."

¹⁹Then the princes said to Baruch, "Go and hide, you and Jeremiah, and do not let anyone know where you are."

²⁰Then they went into the court to the king, but they [first] put the scroll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe; then they reported all the words to the king.

²¹So the king sent Jehudi to get the scroll, and he took it out of the chamber of Elishama the scribe. And Jehudi read it to the king and all the princes who stood beside the king.

²²Now it was the ninth month, and the king was sitting in the winter house, with *a fire* burning there in the brazier before him.

²³And after Jehudi had read three or four columns [of the scroll], *King Jehoiakim* would cut off *that portion* with a scribe's knife and throw it into the fire that was in the brazier, until the [entire] scroll was consumed by the fire.

²⁴Yet the king and all his servants who heard all these words were not afraid, nor did they tear their clothes.

²⁵Even though Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah pleaded with the king not to burn the scroll, he would not listen to them.

²⁶And the king commanded Jerahmeel the king's son, Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel to seize Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet, but the LORD hid them.

POWERPOINT

Can you imagine how discouraged the imprisoned Jeremiah must have felt when he learned that all their hard work of writing the prophecy with quill and ink had been burned up (see Jer. 36:28)? And now he was being told to do it again! If we want to be strong and victorious in the kingdom of God, we need to be willing to do whatever God asks us to do—again and again, if necessary—until we experience our breakthrough.



²⁷Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah after the king had burned the scroll containing the words which Baruch had written at the dictation of Jeremiah: ²⁸“Take another scroll and write on it all the former words that were on the first scroll which Jehoiakim the king of Judah burned.

²⁹“And concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah you shall say, ‘Thus says the LORD, “You have burned this scroll, saying, ‘Why have you written on it that the king of Babylon will certainly come and destroy this land, and will cut off man and beast from it?’”’”

³⁰‘Therefore thus says the LORD concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah, “He shall have no heir to sit on the throne of David, and his dead body shall be thrown out to the heat of the day and to the frost of the night.

³¹“I will also punish him and his descendants and his servants for their wickedness, and I will bring on them and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the men of Judah all the destruction that I have declared against them—but they would not listen.”’”

³²Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah, who wrote on it at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the scroll which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire; and many similar words were added to them.

37 NOW NEBUCHADNEZZAR king of Babylon made Zedekiah the son of Josiah king in the land of Judah so he reigned as king instead of Coniah (also called Jeconiah and Jehoiachin) the son of Jehoiakim.

²But neither he nor his servants nor the people of the land listened to the words of the LORD which He spoke through the prophet Jeremiah.

³Yet King Zedekiah sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah

[along] with Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah, the priest, to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, “Please pray [now] to the LORD our God for us.”

⁴Now Jeremiah was coming and going among the people, for they had not [yet] put him in prison.

⁵Meanwhile, Pharaoh’s army had set out from Egypt; and when the Chaldeans who were besieging Jerusalem heard the news about them, they withdrew from Jerusalem.

⁶Then the word of the LORD came to the prophet Jeremiah:

⁷“Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘This is what you are to say to the king of Judah, who sent you to Me to inquire of Me: “Behold, Pharaoh’s army, which has come out to help you, will return to Egypt, to their own land.

⁸“And the Chaldeans [of Babylon] will come again and fight against this city, and they will capture it and set it on fire.”

⁹“Thus says the LORD, ‘Do not deceive yourselves, saying, “The Chaldeans will certainly stay away from us,” for they will not stay away.

¹⁰“For even if you had defeated the whole army of the Chaldeans who fight against you, and there remained only the wounded men among them, yet they would rise up, every man confined in his tent, and burn down this city with fire.”

¹¹Now it happened when the army of the Chaldeans departed from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh’s [approaching] army,

¹²that Jeremiah left Jerusalem [during the withdrawal of the Chaldean invaders] to go to [Anathoth, his hometown, in] the land of Benjamin to take possession of [the title to] the land

[which he had purchased] there among the people. [Jer 32:6–12]

¹³When he was at the Gate of Benjamin, a captain of the guard whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah the son of Hananiah was there; and he seized *and* arrested Jeremiah the prophet, saying, “You are deserting to join the Chaldeans [of Babylon]!”

¹⁴But Jeremiah said, “That is a lie! I am not deserting to join the Chaldeans.” But the guard would not listen to him. So Irijah took Jeremiah and brought him to the princes (court officials).

¹⁵The princes were enraged with Jeremiah and beat him and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe—for they had made that the prison.

¹⁶When Jeremiah had come into the vaulted cell in the dungeon and had remained there many days,

¹⁷Zedekiah the king sent and brought him out; and in his palace the king secretly asked him, “Is there any word from the LORD?” And Jeremiah said, “There is!” Then he said, “You will be handed over to the king of Babylon.”

¹⁸Moreover, Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah, “In what way have I sinned against you, or against your servants, or against this people, that you have put me in prison?

¹⁹“Where then are your prophets who prophesied to you, saying, ‘The king of Babylon will not come against you or against this land?’

²⁰“Therefore now, please listen, O my lord the king; please let my petition come before you *and* be acceptable and do not make me return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, that I may not die there.”

²¹Then King Zedekiah commanded, and they committed Jeremiah to the court of the guardhouse, and a [round] loaf of bread from the bakers' street was given to him daily, until all the bread in the city was gone. So Jeremiah remained [imprisoned] in the court of the guardhouse.

38 NOW SHEPHATIAH the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashhur, and Jucal (also called Jehucal) the son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur the son of Malchijah heard the words that Jeremiah was speaking to all the people, saying, ²“So says the LORD, ‘He who remains in this city will die by the sword, by famine, and by virulent disease (pestilence), but he who goes out to the Chaldeans [of Babylon] will live and have his [own] life as a reward and stay alive.’ [Jer 21:9]

³“Thus says the LORD, ‘This city will certainly be given into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon and he will take it.’”

⁴Therefore the princes (court officials) said to the king, “Please [we implore you] let this man [Jeremiah] be put to death; for [speaking] in this way he discourages *and* weakens [the will of] the soldiers who remain in this city and he discourages *and* weakens [the will of] all the people by speaking such words to them; for this man is not seeking the well-being of these people, but rather their harm.”

⁵Then King Zedekiah [fearing the princes] said, “Listen, he is in your hand; for the king is in no position to do anything against you.”

⁶So they took Jeremiah and threw him into the cistern of

Malchijah the king's son, which was in the court of the guardhouse; and they let Jeremiah down [into the cistern] with ropes. Now there was no water in the cistern but only mud, and Jeremiah sank in the mud.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Suffering Has Its Rewards

Because Jeremiah spoke God's word to the people, wicked men threw him into a cistern, intending for him to starve to death, and he sank into the mud (see Jer. 38:6). According to 1 Peter 3:14, you are blessed and can be happy even if you are suffering for the sake of righteousness. Why? Because God is just, and even though you are being persecuted for doing the right thing, in the end you will win, because when you sow right seeds, you will reap a good harvest.

The Bible says you are to "be admired and favored by God" when you are persecuted, and that means God will reward your suffering. Justice means everything wrong is made right. God will give you double blessings for your former trouble (see Isa. 61:7), because God always blesses those who do the right thing.

⁷Now Ebed-melech the Ethiopian (Cushite), one of the eunuchs who was in the king's palace, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the cistern, and while the king was sitting in the Gate of Benjamin, ⁸Ebed-melech went out of the king's palace and spoke to the king, saying,

⁹"My lord the king, these men have acted wickedly in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet whom they have thrown into the cistern; and he will die [of hunger] where he is

because of the famine, for there is no more bread in the city.”

¹⁰Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, “Take thirty men from here with you and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the cistern before he dies.”

¹¹So Ebed-melech took the men with him and went into the palace of the king to *a place* under the storeroom and took from there old rags and worn-out clothes and let them down by ropes into the cistern to Jeremiah.

¹²Then Ebed-melech the Ethiopian said to Jeremiah, “Now put these old rags and worn-out clothes under your armpits, then place the ropes under the padding”; and Jeremiah did so.

¹³So they pulled Jeremiah up with the ropes and took him up out of the cistern; and Jeremiah remained in the court of the guardhouse.

¹⁴Then King Zedekiah sent and had Jeremiah the prophet brought to him at the third entrance that is in the house of the LORD. And the king said to Jeremiah, “I am going to ask you something; hide nothing from me.”

¹⁵Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, “If I tell you, will you not certainly put me to death? Even if I do give you advice, you will not listen to me.”

¹⁶But King Zedekiah swore secretly to Jeremiah, “As the LORD lives, who made our lives, be assured that I will not put you to death or put you into the hand of these men who are seeking your life.”

¹⁷Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, “Thus says the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘If you will go out *and* surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, then you will live and this city will not be burned with fire; and you and your

household will live.

¹⁸“But if you will not go out to the officers of the king of Babylon, then this city will be given into the hand of the Chaldeans [of Babylon] and they will set it on fire; and you yourself will not escape from their hand.”

¹⁹Then King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, “I am afraid of the Jews [my former subjects] who have deserted to join the Chaldeans, for the enemy may put me into their hand and they will mock me *and* abuse me.”

²⁰But Jeremiah said, “They will not hand you over [to them]. Please obey [the voice of] the LORD [who speaks to you through me] in what I am saying to you. Then it will go well with you and you will live.

²¹“But if you keep refusing to go out *and* surrender to them, this is the word [and the vision] which the LORD has shown me: ²²“Then behold, all the women who are left in the palace of the king of Judah will be brought out to the officers of the king of Babylon and those women will say [to you, King Zedekiah], “Your close friends

Have prevailed against your better judgment *and* have overpowered and deceived you;

While your feet were sunk in the mire [of trouble],

They turned back.”

²³“Also, all your wives and your children will be brought out to the Chaldeans; and you yourself will not escape from their hand, but you will be seized by the king of Babylon, and this city [Jerusalem] will be burned down with fire.”

²⁴Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, “Let no man know about this conversation and you will not die.

²⁵“But if the princes (court officials) hear that I have talked with you, and they come to you and say, ‘Tell us now what you said to the king and what he said to you; do not hide it from us and we will not execute you,’

²⁶then you are to say to them, ‘I was presenting my [humble] petition *and* plea to the king so that he would not send me back to Jonathan’s house to die there.’”

²⁷Then all the princes (court officials) came to Jeremiah and asked him [just what King Zedekiah had anticipated they would ask], and he reported to them in accordance with all that the king had commanded. So they stopped questioning him, since the conversation [with the king] had not been overheard.

²⁸So Jeremiah remained in the court of the guardhouse until the day that Jerusalem was captured [by the Chaldeans of Babylon].

39 NOW REGARDING the capture of Jerusalem: In the ninth year of [the reign of] Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army came against Jerusalem and besieged it; [Jer 52:4–27]

²and in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, on the ninth day of the month, they breached the wall *and* broke into the city.

³Then all the officials of the king of Babylon came in and sat in the Middle Gate [establishing both military control of the city and their authority to judge the captives]: Nergal-sar-ezer, Samgar-nebu, Sar-sekim the Rab-saris (chief of the eunuchs), and Nergal-sar-ezer the Rab-mag (chief of the magicians), with

all the rest of the officials of the king of Babylon.

⁴When Zedekiah the king of Judah and all the men of war saw them, they fled and escaped from the city at night by way of the king's garden, through the gate between the two walls; and the king went out toward the Arabah (Jordan Valley).

⁵But the Chaldean (Babylonian) army pursued them and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. When they had seized him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon at Riblah in the [Aramean] land of Hamath, where he passed sentence on him.

⁶Then at Riblah the king of Babylon killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes; the king of Babylon also killed all the nobles of Judah.

⁷Moreover, he blinded Zedekiah and bound him with bronze shackles to take him to Babylon. [Ezek 12:13]

⁸The Chaldeans also burned down the king's palace and the houses of the people, and they broke down the walls of Jerusalem.

⁹Then Nebuzaradan the [chief executioner and] captain of the bodyguard took the rest of the people who remained in the city, along with those who had deserted *and* surrendered to him, and the rest of the [so-called better class of] people who were left and carried them into exile in Babylon.

¹⁰But Nebuzaradan the [Babylonian] captain of the bodyguard left behind in the land of Judah some of the poor people who had nothing, and gave them vineyards and fields at that time.

¹¹Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon gave orders concerning Jeremiah through Nebuzaradan the captain of the

bodyguard, saying,

¹²“Take him and look after him; do nothing to harm him, but rather deal with him just as he asks of you.”

¹³So Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard sent *word*, along with Nebushazban the Rab-saris (chief of the high officials), and Nergal-sar-ezer the Rab-mag (chief of the magicians), and all the leading officers of the king of Babylon;

¹⁴they even sent and took Jeremiah out of the court of the guardhouse and entrusted him to Gedaliah [a prominent citizen], the son of Ahikam [who had once saved Jeremiah’s life], the son of Shaphan, to take him home [with him to Mizpah]. So Jeremiah [was released and] lived among the people. [Jer 26:24]

¹⁵Now the word of the LORD had come to Jeremiah while he was [still] confined in the court of the guardhouse, saying,

¹⁶“Go and speak to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Behold, I am about to bring My words [of judgment] against this city through disaster and not for good; and they will take place before you on that day.

¹⁷“But I will protect you [Ebed-melech] on that day,” says the LORD, “and you will not be handed over to the men of whom you are afraid. [Jer 38:7–13]

¹⁸“For I will certainly rescue you; and you will not fall by the sword, but you will have your [own] life as a reward of battle, because you have placed your trust in Me,” says the LORD.””

40 THE WORD which came to Jeremiah from the LORD after Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard had released him from Ramah, when he had taken him bound in chains among all the captives of Jerusalem and Judah who were being taken as exiles to Babylon.

²And the captain of the bodyguard had taken Jeremiah and said to him, “The LORD your God promised this disaster on this place.

³“Now the LORD has brought it about and has done just as He promised. Because you [people of Judah] have sinned against the LORD and did not listen to *and* honor His voice, therefore this thing has happened to you.

⁴“But now, listen carefully, [because of your innocence] I am freeing you today from the chains which are on your hands. If you would prefer to come with me to Babylon, come, and I will look after you [carefully]; but if you would prefer not to come with me to Babylon, then do not do so. Look, all the land is before you; go wherever it seems good and right (convenient) for you to go.”

⁵While Jeremiah was still hesitating, the captain of the bodyguard said, “Go on back then to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon has appointed [governor] over the cities of Judah, and stay with him among the people; or else go wherever it seems right for you to go.” So the captain of the bodyguard gave him an allowance of food and a gift and let him go.

⁶Then Jeremiah went to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam at Mizpah and stayed with him among the people who were left in the land.

⁷Now when all the commanders of the forces that were [scattered] in the open country [of Judah] and their men heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor in the land [of Judah] and had put him in charge of the men, women, and children, those of the poorest of the land who had not been exiled to Babylon, ⁸they went to Gedaliah at Mizpah—Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth, the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, and Jezaniah the son of the Maacathite, they and their men.

⁹Then Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, swore to them and their men, saying, “Do not be afraid to serve the Chaldeans; stay in this land and serve the king of Babylon, that it may go well with you.

¹⁰“As for me, I am going to stay at Mizpah to stand [for you] before the Chaldeans who come to us [ministering to them and looking after the king’s interests]; but as for you, gather in wine, summer fruit and oil and store them in your utensils [designed for such purposes], and live in your cities that you have taken over.”

¹¹Likewise, when all the Jews who were in Moab and among the people of Ammon and in Edom and who were in all the [other] countries heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant [of the people] in Judah and had appointed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan over them [as governor], ¹²then all the Jews returned from all the places to which they had been driven and came back to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah at Mizpah, and gathered a great abundance of wine and summer fruits.

¹³Moreover, Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces that were [scattered] in the open country came to Gedaliah at Mizpah

¹⁴and said to him, “Do you know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites has sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to take your life?” But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam did not believe them.

¹⁵Then Johanan the son of Kareah spoke secretly to Gedaliah in Mizpah, saying, “Let me go and kill Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and not a man will know [who is responsible]. Why should he kill you and cause all the Jews who are gathered near you to be scattered and the remnant of Judah to perish?”

¹⁶But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said to Johanan the son of Kareah, “Do not do this thing, for you are lying about Ishmael.”

41 NOW IN the seventh month Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the royal family [of David] and one of the princes of the king, came [at the instigation of the Ammonites] with ten men to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam in Mizpah. As they were eating a meal together there in Mizpah, ²Ishmael the son of Nethaniah and the ten men who were with him got up and struck down Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, with the sword and killed the one whom the king of Babylon had appointed [governor] over the land. [2 Kin 25:25]

³Ishmael also killed all the Jews who were [at the banquet] with Gedaliah at Mizpah, in addition to the Chaldean soldiers

who were there.

⁴Now it happened on the second day after the killing of Gedaliah, before anyone knew about it,

⁵that eighty men came from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria with their beards shaved off and their clothes torn and their bodies cut, carrying in their hands grain offerings and incense to present at the [site of the] house of the LORD [in Jerusalem].

⁶Then Ishmael the son of Nethaniah went out from Mizpah to meet them, weeping [false tears] as he went. As he met them, he said to them, “Come to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam!”

⁷Yet when they came into the city, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah and the men who were with him slaughtered them *and threw them* into the cistern (underground water reservoir).

⁸But ten men who were among them said to Ishmael, “Do not kill us! We have stores of wheat and barley and oil and honey hidden in the field.” So he stopped and did not kill them along with their companions.

⁹Now the cistern into which Ishmael had thrown all the corpses of the men whom he had killed along with Gedaliah was the one which King Asa [of Judah] had made [about three hundred years earlier] on account of King Baasha of Israel [believing that Baasha would lay siege to Mizpah]. Ishmael the son of Nethaniah filled it with [the bodies of] those who were killed.

¹⁰Then Ishmael took captive all the rest of the people who were in Mizpah—even the king’s daughters (ladies of the court) and all the people who remained in Mizpah, whom Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard had put under the

charge of Gedaliah the son of Ahikam. Ishmael the son of Nethaniah took them captive and crossed over [the Jordan] to [meet his allies] the Ammonites.

¹¹But when Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces that were with him heard of the murderous behavior of Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, ¹²they took all their men and went to fight with Ishmael the son of Nethaniah and found him by the great pool in Gibeon.

¹³Now when all the [captive] people who were with Ishmael saw Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces that were with him, they were glad.

¹⁴So all the people whom Ishmael had taken captive from Mizpah turned around and came back, and joined Johanan the son of Kareah.

¹⁵But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men and went to join the Ammonites.

¹⁶Then Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces that were with him took from Mizpah all the people whom he had rescued from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, after Ishmael had killed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam: the soldiers, the women, the children, and the high officials whom Johanan had brought back from Gibeon.

¹⁷And they went and stayed in Geruth [the lodging place of] Chimham, which is near Bethlehem, intending to go to Egypt

¹⁸because of the Chaldeans; for they were afraid of them because Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had killed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon had appointed [governor] over the land [and whose death the king might

avenge].

42 THEN ALL the commanders of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah and Jezaniah (Azariah) the son of Hoshaiah, and all the people from the least to the greatest approached² and said to Jeremiah the prophet, “Please let our petition be presented before you, and pray to the LORD your God for us, *that is*, for all this remnant [of the people of Judah]; for we were once many, but now [only] a few of us are left, as you see with your own eyes, [so please pray]

³that the LORD your God may show us the way in which we should walk and the thing that we should do.”

⁴Then Jeremiah the prophet said to them, “I have heard you. Now hear me, I will pray to the LORD your God in accordance with your words; and I will declare to you whatever message the LORD answers; I will keep nothing back from you.”

⁵Then they said to Jeremiah, “May the LORD be a true and faithful witness against us if we fail to act in accordance with all the things that the LORD your God sends you to tell us.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Sins of Commission and Omission

According to Jeremiah 42:3, 6, when the Israelites asked Jeremiah to speak to God on their behalf, they had already decided they were going to learn what to do, and, no matter what it was, they were going to do it. Set your mind and keep it set on obeying God (see Col. 3:2)!

I wonder what would happen if people today had this same attitude every single time they read or heard the Word of God. What would your life be like if every time you went to church or listened to a teaching or read the Bible you had the mind-set, Whatever I learn today, I'm going to do it!

James 4:17 says if we know what to do and don't do it, that is sin. The wrong things we commit are sin, but the right things we omit are also sin. Make a decision to be a "doer" of God's Word, and not merely a "hearer."

⁶“Whether it is pleasant or unpleasant, we will listen to *and* honor the voice of the LORD our God to whom we are sending you, so that it may go well with us when we listen to the voice of the LORD our God.”

⁷Now after ten days [of prayer] had passed the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah.

⁸Then he called for Johanan the son of Kareah and all the

commanders of the forces that were with him and all the people from the least to the greatest,

⁹and said to them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, to whom you sent me to present your petition before Him:

¹⁰“If you will indeed remain in this land, then I will build you up and not tear you down, and I will plant you and not uproot you; for I will relent *and* be satisfied concerning the disaster that I have inflicted on you [as discipline, and I will replace judgment with compassion]. [Jer 31:4, 28]

¹¹“Do not be afraid of the king of Babylon, whom you now fear [as if he were deity]; do not be afraid of him,’ says the LORD, ‘for [he is a mere man, but I am the living, omniscient God and] I am with you [always] to protect you and to deliver you from his hand.

¹²“And I will show you compassion, so that he will have compassion on you and restore you to your own land.

¹³“But if you are going to say, “We will not stay in this land,” and [in so doing] do not listen to the voice of the LORD your God, ¹⁴saying, “No, but we will go to the land of Egypt, where we will not see war or hear the sound of the [warrior’s] trumpet or hunger for bread, and we will stay there,”

¹⁵then in that case listen to the word of the LORD, O remnant of Judah. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “If you are really determined to go to Egypt and to reside there [temporarily], ¹⁶then the sword, of which you are afraid, will overtake you there in the land of Egypt; and the famine of which you are afraid will follow closely after you in Egypt, and you will die there.

¹⁷“So all the men who set their mind to go to Egypt to

reside there [temporarily] will die by the sword, by famine and by virulent disease; none of them will remain or survive the disaster that I am going to bring on them.”””

¹⁸For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “As My anger and My wrath have been poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so My wrath will be poured out on you when you enter Egypt. You will become detested, an object of horror, a curse and a people scorned; and you will no longer see this place.”

¹⁹The LORD has spoken to you, O remnant of Judah, “Do not go into Egypt!” Know with certainty that I [Jeremiah] have warned you *and* testified to you this day ²⁰that you have deceived yourselves; for you sent me to the LORD your God, saying, “Pray for us to the LORD our God; and whatever the LORD our God says, declare it to us and we will do it.”

²¹And so I have told you today, but you have not listened to the voice of the LORD your God, in anything that He has sent me to tell you.

²²Now therefore know for certain that you will die by the sword, by famine, and by virulent disease in the land [of Egypt] where you wish to reside [temporarily].

43 NOW IT happened when Jeremiah, whom the LORD their God had sent, had finished telling all the people all the words of the LORD their God—that is, all these words—²Azariah the son of Hoshaiah and Johanan the son of Kareah and all the proud *and* insolent men said to Jeremiah, “You are not telling the truth! The LORD our God has not sent you to say, ‘Do not

go into Egypt to live there.’

³“But Baruch the son of Neriah is inciting you against us to hand us over to the Chaldeans, so they may [either] put us to death or exile us to Babylon.”

⁴So Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces and all the people disobeyed the voice of the LORD [which told them] to stay in the land of Judah.

⁵But Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces took all the remnant of Judah who had returned to live in the land of Judah from all the nations to which they had been driven— ⁶the men, women, and children, the king’s daughters (ladies of the court), and every person whom Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan; he also took Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch the son of Neriah.

⁷So they entered the land of Egypt (for they did not obey the voice of the LORD) and they went in as far as Tahpanhes.

⁸Then came the word of the LORD to Jeremiah in Tahpanhes, saying,

⁹“Take some large stones in your hands and hide them in the mortar in the brickwork [of the terrace] which is at the entrance of Pharaoh’s house in Tahpanhes, in the sight of some of the *men of* Judah; ¹⁰and say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Behold, I am going to send and get Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and I am going to set his throne over these stones that I have hidden; and his [majestic, royal] canopy will be spread over them. [Ezek 29:19, 20]

¹¹“He will also come and strike the land of Egypt, giving

those who are [destined] for death, to death, and those who are [destined] for captivity, to captivity, and those who are [destined] for the sword, to the sword.

¹²“And [through him] I will set fire to the temples of the gods of Egypt, and he will burn them and take them (Egyptian idols) captive. He will wrap himself with the land of Egypt as a shepherd wraps himself with his garment, and he will go away from there safely.

¹³“Nebuchadnezzar will also break the images *and* shatter the obelisks of Heliopolis in the land of Egypt; and he will burn down the temples of the gods of Egypt.””

44 THE WORD that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews who were living in the land of Egypt—at Migdol, at Tahpanhes, at Memphis, and in the land of Pathros, saying, ²“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘You have seen all the disaster that I have brought on Jerusalem and on all the cities of Judah; and see, this day they are desolated and no one lives in them ³because of the wickedness which they committed, provoking Me to anger by continuing to burn sacrifices *and* incense to serve other gods that they had not known, *neither* they, nor you, nor your fathers.

⁴‘Yet I sent to you all My servants the prophets, again and again, saying, “Oh, do not do this shamefully vile thing which I hate.”

⁵‘But they did not listen or turn [obediently] from their wickedness, and stop burning sacrifices *and* incense to other gods.

⁶“Therefore My wrath and My anger were poured out and burned in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; so they have become a ruin and a desolation, as it is this day.

⁷“Therefore now thus says the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, “Why did you commit this great evil against yourselves [bringing disaster] that will cut off from you man and woman, child and infant, out of Judah, leaving yourselves without a remnant?

⁸“Why do you [deliberately] provoke Me to anger with the works (idols) of your hands, burning sacrifices *and* incense to [make-believe] gods in the land of Egypt, where you [of your own accord] have come to live [as temporary residents], that you might be cut off and become a curse and a disgrace [an object of taunts] among all the nations of the earth?

⁹“Have you forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, the wickedness of the kings of Judah, the wickedness of their wives [who served their foreign gods], your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your wives [who imitated the sin of the queens], which they committed in the land of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?

¹⁰“They have not become apologetic [for their guilt and sin] even to this day; they have not feared [Me with reverence] nor walked in My law or My statutes, which I have set before you and before your fathers.” ’ [Jer 6:15; 26:4–6; 44:23]

¹¹“Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Behold, I am going to set My face against you for woe—even to cut off (destroy) all Judah [from the land].

¹²‘And I will take the remnant of Judah who have decided to go into the land of Egypt to live there [instead of

surrendering to the Chaldeans as directed], and they will all fall and die in the land of Egypt; they will fall by the sword or perish by famine. From the least to the greatest, they will die by the sword or by famine; and they will become detestable, an object of horror, a curse, and a disgrace.

¹³“For I will punish all the inhabitants of the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, with the sword, with famine, and with virulent disease;

¹⁴so none of the survivors from the remnant of Judah who have entered the land of Egypt to live there will survive, even though they lift up their souls in longing to return to the land of Judah, [the place] to which they long to return to live; none will return except a few refugees.”

¹⁵Then all the men who knew that their wives were burning sacrifices to other gods, and all the women who were standing by, a large group, including all the people who were living in Pathros in the land of Egypt, answered Jeremiah, saying, ¹⁶“As for the word (message) that you have spoken to us in the name of the LORD, we are not going to listen to you.

¹⁷“But rather we will certainly perform every word of the vows we have made: to burn sacrifices to the queen of heaven (Ishtar) and to pour out drink offerings to her, just as we ourselves and our forefathers, our kings and our princes did in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; for [then] we had plenty of food and were prosperous and saw no misfortune.

¹⁸“But since we stopped burning sacrifices to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have lacked everything and have been consumed by the sword and by famine.”

¹⁹*And said the wives*, “When we were burning sacrifices to the queen of heaven and were pouring out drink offerings to her, was it without [the knowledge and approval of] our husbands that we made cakes [in the shape of a star] to represent her and pour out drink offerings to her?”

²⁰Then Jeremiah said to all the people, to the men and to the women and to all the people who had given him that answer,

²¹“The smoking sacrifices (incense) that you burned in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem—you and your forefathers, your kings and your princes, and the people of the land—did not the LORD remember [in detail your idolatry] and did it not all come into His mind?

²²“The LORD could no longer endure it, because of the evil of your acts and the repulsive acts which you have committed; because of them your land has become a ruin, an object of horror and a curse, without inhabitant, as it is this day.

²³“Because you have burned sacrifices [to idols] and because you have sinned against the LORD and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD or walked in His law and in His statutes and in His testimonies, therefore this tragedy has fallen on you, as it has this day.”

²⁴Then Jeremiah said to all the people, including all the women, “Hear the word of the LORD, all [you of] Judah who are in the land of Egypt, ²⁵thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, as follows: ‘You and your wives have both declared with your mouth and fulfilled it with your hand, saying, “We will certainly perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn sacrifices to the queen of heaven (Ishtar) and to pour out drink

offerings to her.” Surely then confirm your vows and go ahead and perform your vows! [If you intend to defy all My warnings, proceed!]

²⁶“Therefore hear the word of the LORD, all [you people of] Judah who are living in the land of Egypt, ‘Behold, I have sworn [an oath] by My great Name,’ says the LORD, ‘that My Name shall never again be invoked by the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, “As the Lord GOD lives.”’

²⁷‘Behold, I am watching over them for harm and not for good; and all the men of Judah who are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by famine until they are all destroyed.

²⁸‘Yet a small number [of My choosing] who escape the sword will return from the land of Egypt to the land of Judah; and all the remnant of Judah who have gone to the land of Egypt to reside there will know whose words will stand, Mine or theirs.

²⁹‘And this will be the sign to you,’ says the LORD, ‘that I am going to punish you in this place, so that you may know that My words will surely stand against you for harm.’

³⁰“Thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, I will give Pharaoh Hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies and into the hand of those who seek his life, just as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, who was his enemy and was seeking his life.’”

45 THE WORD that Jeremiah the prophet spoke to Baruch the son of Neriah, when he had written these words in a book

at the dictation of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying, ²“Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, to you, O Baruch:

³“You said, “Woe is me! For the LORD has added sorrow to my pain; I am weary with my groaning *and* sighing and I find no rest.” ’

⁴“Say this to him, ‘The LORD speaks in this way, “Behold, what I have built I will break down, and that which I have planted I will uproot, that is, the whole land.”

⁵‘And do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them; for behold, I will bring disaster on all flesh,’ says the LORD, ‘but I will give your life to you [as your only reward and] as a prize of war wherever you go.’”

46 THE WORD of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the [Gentile] nations.

²Concerning Egypt, against the army of Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates at Carchemish, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon defeated [decisively] in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah: [Is 19–20; Ezek 29–32; Zech 14:18, 19]

³“Line up the buckler (small shield) and [large] shield,
And advance for battle!

⁴“Harness the horses,
And mount, you riders!
Take your stand with your helmets!
Polish the spears,

Put on the coats of mail!

⁵“Why have I seen it?

They are terrified

And have turned back,

And their warriors are beaten down.

They take flight in haste

Without looking back;

Terror is on every side!”

Says the LORD. [Ps 31:13; Jer 6:25; 20:3, 10; 49:29]

⁶Do not let the swift man run,

Nor the mighty man escape;

In the north by the river Euphrates

They have stumbled and fallen.

⁷Who is this that rises up like the Nile [River],

Like the rivers [in the delta of Egypt] whose waters surge
about?

⁸Egypt rises like the Nile,

Even like the rivers whose waters surge about.

And He has said, “I will rise, I will cover that land;

I will certainly destroy the city and its inhabitants.”

⁹Charge, you horses,

And drive like madmen, you chariots!

Let the warriors go forward:

Ethiopia and Put (Libya) who handle the shield,

And the Lydians who handle and bend the bow.

¹⁰For that day belongs to the Lord GOD of hosts,

A day of vengeance, that He may avenge Himself on His
adversaries.

And the sword will devour and be satiated
And drink its fill of their blood;
For the Lord GOD of hosts has a sacrifice [like that of a great
sin offering]
In the north country by the river Euphrates.

¹¹Go up to Gilead and obtain [healing] balm,
O Virgin Daughter of Egypt!
In vain you use many medicines;
For you there is no healing *or* remedy.

¹²The nations have heard of your disgrace *and* shame,
And your cry [of distress] has filled the earth.
For warrior has stumbled against warrior,
And both of them have fallen together.

¹³The word that the LORD spoke to Jeremiah the prophet
concerning the coming of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to
strike the land of Egypt: ¹⁴“Declare in Egypt and proclaim in
Migdol,

And proclaim in Memphis and in Tahpanhes;
Say, ‘Take your stand and get yourself ready,
For the sword has devoured those around you.’

¹⁵“Why have your strong ones been cut down?
They do not stand because the LORD drove them away.

¹⁶“He will make many stumble *and* fall;
Yes, they have fallen one on another.
Then they said, ‘Arise, and let us go back
To our own people and to the land of our birth,
Away from the sword of the oppressor.’

17“They cried there, ‘Pharaoh king of Egypt is destroyed *and*
is merely a loud noise;

He has let the appointed time [of opportunity] pass by!’

18“As I live,” says the King,

Whose name is the LORD of hosts,

“Surely like Tabor among the mountains

Or like Carmel by the sea,

So shall he [the great king of Babylon] come.

19“O you daughter who dwells in Egypt *and* you who dwell
with her,

Prepare yourselves [with all you will need] to go into exile,

For Memphis will become desolate;

It will even be burned down and without inhabitant.

20“Egypt is a very pretty heifer,

But a horsefly (Babylonia) is coming [against her] out of the
north!

21“Also her mercenaries in her army

Are like fattened calves,

For they too have turned back and have fled together;

They did not stand [their ground],

Because the day of their disaster has come upon them,

The time of their punishment.

22“*The sound [of Egypt fleeing from the enemy] is like [the
rustling of] an escaping serpent,*

For her foes advance with a mighty army

And come against her like woodcutters with axes.

23“*They have cut down her forest,*” says the LORD;

“Certainly it will no longer be found,

Because they (the invaders) are more numerous than
locusts

And cannot be counted.

²⁴“The Daughter of Egypt has been shamed,
Given over to the power of the people of the north [the
Chaldeans of Babylonia].”

²⁵The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, says, “Behold, I am
going to punish Amon [chief god of the sacred city] of Thebes
[the capital of Upper Egypt], and Pharaoh, and Egypt along
with her gods and her kings—even Pharaoh and those who put
their trust in him [as a shield against Babylon].

Speak God's Word

*I will not fear nor be
dismayed, for behold, the
Lord will save me. I will be
quiet and at ease, and no one
will make me afraid.*

| *adapted from* JEREMIAH 46:27 |

²⁶“I will put them into the hand of those who seek their lives, and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and into the hand of his servants. Afterward Egypt will be inhabited as in the days of old,” says the LORD.

²⁷“But as for you, do not fear, O My servant Jacob,
Nor be dismayed, O Israel!
For behold, I will save you from [your captivity in] a distant
land,
And your descendants from the land of their exile;
And Jacob will return and be quiet and secure,
And no one will make him afraid.

²⁸“Do not fear, O Jacob My servant,” says the LORD,
“For I am with you.
For I will make a full *and* complete end of all the nations

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Hope Is Active

Many of God's words through Jeremiah speak of destruction, words that could cause fear or grief in the heart of those for whom they were intended. But Jeremiah 46:27–28 gives words of hope. God is telling them, "Things are going to get better."

When I talk to people about hope, I've discovered that many have a misconception about what hope really is. If we don't understand hope, it's hard to live in the reality of hope. There are people who think that hope is a passive, lazy emotion that doesn't require anything of us. They incorrectly assume that if they sit around passively, just hoping their situations will improve, maybe they will. But hope is not a sit-back-and-do-nothing feeling. It's more than a daydream or a wishful thought.

Hope energizes us and motivates us to believe that God is working on our behalf. It's the happy, confident expectation of good; and that happy, confident expectation of good causes us to step out in faith and to act on any direction God gives us. Hope is too exciting to be passive. Hope believes boldly, decides daringly, speaks firmly, and perseveres passionately.

There is no passivity with hope, because there is no passivity with God. He is always moving and working in your life, and He wants you to believe passionately and move in obedience to Him. A lazy, passive person is not a happy person. When

you understand the power of hope, you're expecting something amazing to happen at any moment.

To which I have driven you;
Yet I will not make a full end of you.
But I will discipline *and* correct you appropriately
And by no means will I declare you guiltless *or* leave you
unpunished.”

47 THE WORD of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the Philistines before Pharaoh attacked *and* conquered [the Philistine city of] Gaza. [Is 14:29–31; Ezek 25:15–17; Amos 1:6–8; Zeph 2:4–7; Zech 9:5–7]

²Thus says the LORD:

“Behold, waters are going to rise out of the north
(Babylonia)
And become an overflowing stream
And overflow the land and all that is in it,
The city and those who live in it.
Then the people will cry out,
And all the inhabitants of the land [of Philistia] will wail.

³“Because of the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of the war-horses [of the Babylonian king],
The rattling of his chariots, and the rumbling of his wheels,
The fathers have not looked *and* turned back for their children,
So weak are their hands [with terror]

⁴Because of the day that is coming
To destroy all the Philistines
And to cut off from Tyre and Sidon
Every ally who remains.
For the LORD is going to destroy the Philistines,
The remnant [still surviving] of the coastland of Caphtor.
[Amos 9:7]

⁵“Baldness [as a sign of mourning] will come on Gaza;
Ashkelon will be cut off *and* ruined.
O remnant of their valley,
How long will you gash yourselves [as a sign of mourning]?

⁶“O you sword of the LORD,
How long will it be before you are quiet?
Put yourself into your sheath;
Rest and be still.

⁷“How can His sword be quiet
When the LORD has given it an order?
Against Ashkelon and against the [whole Philistine]
seashore
There He has assigned it.”

48 CONCERNING MOAB.

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel,
“Woe (judgment is coming) to [the city of] Nebo, for it has
been destroyed!
Kiriathaim has been shamed, it has been captured;
Misgab [the high fortress] has been shamed, broken down

and crushed. [Is 15–16; 25:10–12; Ezek 25:8–11; Amos 2:1–3; Zeph 2:8–11]

2“*The glory of Moab is no more;*

In Heshbon they planned evil against her,

Saying, ‘Come, let us cut her off from being a nation!’

You also, O [city of] Madmen, shall be silenced;

The sword will pursue you.

3“*The sound of an outcry from Horonaim,*

‘Desolation and great destruction!’

4“*Moab is destroyed;*

Her little ones have called out a cry of distress [to be heard as far as Zoar].

5“*For the Ascent of Luhith*

Will be climbed by [successive groups of] fugitives with continual weeping;

For on the descent of Horonaim

They have heard the distress of the cry of destruction.

6“*Run! Save your lives,*

That you may be like a juniper in the wilderness.

7“*For because you have trusted in your works [your*

handmade idols] and in your treasures [instead of in God],

Even you yourself will be captured;

And Chemosh [your disgusting god cannot rescue you, but] will go away into exile [along with the fugitives]

Together with his priests and his princes.

8“*And the destroyer will come upon every city;*

No city will escape.

The [Jordan] valley also will be ruined

And the plain will be devastated,
As the LORD has said.

9“Give a gravestone to Moab,
For she will fall into ruins;
Her cities (pastures, farms) will be desolate,
Without anyone to live in them.

10“Cursed is the one who does the work of the LORD
negligently,
And cursed is the one who restrains his sword from blood
[in executing the judgment of the LORD].

11“Moab has been at ease from his youth;
He has also been undisturbed, and settled like wine on his
dregs,
And he has not been emptied from one vessel to another,
Nor has he gone into exile.
Therefore his flavor remains in him,
And his scent has not changed.

12“Therefore behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD,
“when I will send to Moab those who will tip him over and who
will empty his vessels and break his [earthenware] jars in
pieces.

13“And Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh [his
worthless, disgusting god], as the house of Israel was ashamed
of Bethel, their [misplaced] confidence. [1 Kin 12:28, 29]

14“How can you say, ‘We are great warriors
And valiant men in war?’

15“Moab has been made desolate and his cities have gone up

- [in smoke and flame];
And his chosen young men have gone down to the
slaughter,”
Says the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts.
- 16“‘The destruction of Moab will come soon,
And his disaster hurries quickly.
- 17“‘Show sympathy for him, all you [nations] who are around
him,
And all you [distant nations] who know his name;
Say, ‘How has the mighty scepter [of national power] been
broken,
And the splendid staff [of glory]!’
- 18“‘Come down from your glory,
O Daughter living in Dibon,
And sit on the parched ground [among the thirsty]!
For the destroyer of Moab has advanced against you;
He has destroyed your strongholds.
- 19“‘O inhabitant of Aroer,
Stand by the road and keep watch!
Ask [of] him who flees and [ask of] her who escapes,
Saying, ‘What has happened?’
- 20“‘Moab is shamed, for she has been broken down *and*
shattered.
Wail and cry out!
Tell by [the banks of] the Arnon
That Moab has been destroyed.
- 21“‘Judgment has come on [the land of] the plain—upon

Holon, Jahzah, and against Mephaath,

²²against Dibon, Nebo, and Beth-diblathaim,

²³against Kiriathaim, Beth-gamul, and Beth-meon,

²⁴against Kerioth, Bozrah and all the cities of the land of Moab, far and near.

²⁵“The horn (strength) of Moab has been cut off and his arm [of authority] is shattered,” says the LORD.

²⁶“Make him drunk, for he has become arrogant *and* magnified himself against the LORD [by denying Reuben’s occupation of the land the LORD had assigned him]. Moab also will wallow in his vomit, and he too shall become a laughingstock. [Num 22:1–7]

²⁷“For was not Israel a laughingstock to you? Was he caught among thieves? For whenever you speak of him you shake *your head in scorn*.

²⁸“You inhabitants of Moab,

Leave the cities and live among the rocks,

And be like the dove that makes her nest

In the walls of the yawning ravine.

²⁹“We have heard of the [giddy] pride of Moab, the extremely proud one—

His haughtiness, his arrogance, his conceit, and his self-exaltation.

³⁰“I know his [insolent] wrath,” says the LORD,

“But it is futile;

His idle boasts [in his deeds] have accomplished nothing.

³¹“Therefore I will wail over Moab,

And I will cry out for all Moab.

I will sigh *and* mourn over the men of Kir-heres (Kir-hareseth). [Is 15:1; 16:7, 11]

³²“O vines of Sibmah, I will weep for you
More than the weeping of Jazer [over its ruins and wasted vineyards].

Your tendrils [of influence] stretched across the sea,
Reaching [even] to the sea of Jazer.

The destroyer has fallen

On your summer fruits and your [season's] crop of grapes.

³³“So joy and gladness are taken away
From the fruitful field and from the land of Moab.
And I have made the wine cease from the wine presses;
No one treads *the grapes* with shouting.
Their shouting is not joyful shouting [but is instead, a battle cry].

³⁴“From the outcry at Heshbon even to Elealeh, even to Jahaz they have raised their voice, from Zoar even to Horonaim and Eglath-shelishiyah; for even the waters of Nimrim will become desolations.

³⁵“Moreover, I will cause to cease in Moab,” says the LORD, “the one who ascends *and* offers sacrifice in the high place and the one who burns incense to his gods.

³⁶“Therefore My heart moans *and* sighs for Moab like flutes, and My heart moans *and* sighs like flutes for the men of Kir-heres (Kir-hareseth); therefore [the remnant of] the abundant riches they gained has perished.

³⁷“For every head is [shaven] bald and every beard cut off;

there are cuts (slashes) on all the hands and sackcloth on the loins [all expressions of mourning]. [Is 15:2, 3]

³⁸“On all the housetops of Moab and in its streets there is lamentation (expressions of grief for the dead) everywhere, for I have broken Moab like a vessel in which there is no pleasure,” says the LORD.

³⁹“How it is broken down! How they have wailed! How Moab has turned his back in shame! So Moab will become a laughingstock and a [horrifying] terror to all who are around him.”

⁴⁰For thus says the LORD:

“Behold, one (Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon) will fly swiftly like an eagle

And spread out his wings against Moab. [Ezek 17:3]

⁴¹“Kerioth [and the cities] has been taken

And the strongholds seized;

And the hearts of the warriors of Moab in that day

Shall be like the heart of a woman in childbirth.

⁴²“Moab will be destroyed from being a nation (people)

Because he has become arrogant *and* magnified himself against the LORD.

⁴³“Terror and pit and snare are before you,

O inhabitant of Moab,” says the LORD. [Is 24:7]

⁴⁴“The one who flees from the terror

Will fall into the pit,

And the one who gets up out of the pit

Will be taken *and* caught in the trap;

For I shall bring upon it, even upon Moab,

The year of their punishment,” says the LORD.

45“In the shadow of Heshbon

The fugitives stand powerless [helpless and without strength],

For a fire has gone out from Heshbon,

A flame from the midst of Sihon;

It has destroyed the forehead of Moab

And the crowns of the heads of [the arrogant Moabites] the ones in tumult.

46“Woe (judgment is coming) to you, O Moab!

The people of [the pagan god called] Chemosh have perished;

For your sons have been taken away captive

And your daughters into captivity.

47“Yet I will return the captives *and* restore the fortunes of Moab

In the latter days,” says the LORD.

Thus far is the judgment on Moab.

49 CONCERNING THE sons (descendants) of Ammon.

Thus says the LORD:

“Does Israel have no sons [to reclaim Gad from the Ammonites]?

Has he no heir?

Why then has Malcam taken possession of Gad

And [why do] his people live in the cities [of Gad]?

- 2“Therefore behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD,
“When I will cause an alarm of war to be heard
Against Rabbah of the Ammonites;
And it [along with the high ground on which it stands] will
become a desolate heap,
And its villages will be set on fire.
Then will Israel take possession of his possessors,”
Says the LORD. [Ezek 21:28–32; 25:1–7, 11; Amos 1:13–15;
Zeph 2:8–11]
- 3“Wail, O Heshbon, for Ai [in Ammon] has been destroyed!
Cry out, O daughters of Rabbah!
Wrap yourselves with sackcloth and lament (cry out in
grief),
And rush back and forth inside the enclosures;
For Malcam [your powerless god] will go into exile
Together with his priests and his princes.
- 4“Why do you boast of your valleys?
Your valley is flowing away,
[O Ammon] rebellious *and* faithless daughter
Who trusts in her treasures, *saying*,
‘Who will come against me?’
- 5“Behold, I am going to bring terror on you,”
Says the Lord GOD of hosts,
“From all who are around you;
And each of you will be driven out headlong,
And there will be no one to gather the fugitives together.
- 6“But afterward I will reverse
The captivity of the children of Ammon *and* restore their

fortunes,”
Says the LORD.

⁷Concerning Edom.

Thus says the LORD of hosts,

“Is there no longer any wisdom in Teman?

Has good counsel vanished from the intelligent *and*
prudent?

Has their wisdom decayed? [Is 34; 63:1–6; Ezek 25:12–14;
35; Amos 1:11, 12; Obad 1–16; Mal 1:2–5]

⁸“Flee, turn back, dwell in the depths [of the desert to escape
the judgment of Edom],

O inhabitants of Dedan,

For I will bring the destruction of Esau (Edom) upon him

When I inspect *and* punish him.

⁹“If grape gatherers came to you,

Would they not leave some ungleaned grapes [on the
vines]?

If thieves came by night,

Would they not destroy [only] what is enough [for them]?

¹⁰“But I have stripped Esau (Edom) bare;

I have uncovered his hiding places

And he cannot hide himself.

His descendants have been destroyed along with his
brothers (relatives) and his neighbors;

And he is no more.

¹¹“Leave your orphans behind; I will [do what is needed to]
keep them alive.

And let [those who are] your widows trust *and* confide in Me.”

¹²For thus says the LORD, “Behold, those (Israel) who were not sentenced to drink the cup [of wrath] shall certainly drink it, and are you to remain unpunished? You will not be acquitted *and* go unpunished, but you will certainly drink [from the cup of wrath and judgment]. [Jer 25:28, 29]

¹³“For I have sworn [an oath] by Myself,” says the LORD, “that Bozrah will become an object of horror, a reproach, a ruin, and a curse; and all its cities will become perpetual ruins.”

¹⁴I have heard a report from the LORD,
And a messenger has been sent to the nations, saying,
“Gather together and come against her,
And rise up for the battle.”

¹⁵“For behold, [Edom] I have made you small among the nations
And despised among men. [Ezek 35:9]

¹⁶“As for Your terror,
The pride *and* arrogance of your heart have deceived you,
O you who live in the clefts of the rock (Sela also called Petra),
Who hold *and* occupy the height of the hill.
Though you make your nest as high as the eagle’s,
I will bring you down from there,” says the LORD.

¹⁷“Edom will become an object of horror; everyone who goes by it will be astonished and shall hiss [scornfully] at all its plagues *and* disasters.

¹⁸“As [it was] in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah with their neighboring cities,” says the LORD, “no man will live there, nor will a son of man dwell in it.

¹⁹“See, one will come like a lion from the thicket of the Jordan against the enduring habitation [of Edom] *and* its watered pastures; for in an instant I will make him (Edom) run from his land. I will appoint over him the one whom I choose. For who is like Me, and who will summon Me [into court] *and* prosecute Me [for this]? Who is the [earthly] shepherd who can stand [defiantly] before Me?”

²⁰Therefore hear the plan of the LORD which He has devised against Edom, and [hear] what He has purposed against the inhabitants of Teman: surely they will be dragged away, even the little ones of the flock; surely He will make their dwelling place desolate because of them.

²¹The earth has quaked at the noise of their downfall. There is an outcry! The sound of its noise has been heard at the Red Sea.

²²Behold, He will mount up and fly swiftly like an eagle and spread His wings against [the city of] Bozrah; and in that day the heart of the mighty warriors of Edom will be like the heart of a woman in childbirth. [Jer 48:41]

²³Concerning Damascus [in Syria].

“Hamath and Arpad are perplexed *and* shamed,
For they have heard bad news;
They are disheartened;
Troubled *and* anxious like a [storm-tossed] sea
Which cannot be calmed.

24“Damascus has become helpless;
She has turned away to flee,
Terror (panic) has seized her;
Anguish and distress have gripped her
Like a woman in childbirth.

25“Why has the renowned city not been deserted,
The city of My joy!

26“Therefore, her young men will fall in her streets,
And all her men of war will be destroyed in that day,” says
the LORD of hosts. [Is 17:1–3; Amos 1:3–5; Zech 9:1]

27“I will set fire to the wall of Damascus,
And it will consume the palaces of Ben-hadad.”

28Concerning Kedar and concerning the kingdoms of
Hazor, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon defeated. Thus
says the LORD, “Arise, go up against Kedar
And destroy the men of the east.

29“They (the Babylonians) will take away their tents and their
flocks;
They will carry off for themselves
Their tent curtains, all their goods and their camels,
And they will call out to one another, ‘Terror on every side!’
[Ps 31:13; Jer 6:25; 20:3, 10; 46:5]

30“Flee, run far away! Dwell in the depths [of the desert],
O inhabitants of Hazor,” says the LORD,
“For Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has planned a course
of action against you
And devised a scheme against you.

31“Arise [Nebuchadnezzar], go up against a nation which is at ease,
Which lives securely,” says the LORD,
“A nation which has neither gates nor bars;
They dwell apart *and* alone.

32“Their camels will become plunder,
And their herds of cattle a spoil;
And I will scatter to all the [four] winds those who cut the corners of their hair [as evidence of their idolatry],
And I will bring their disaster from every side,” says the LORD. [Lev 19:27]

33“Hazor will become a haunt *and* dwelling place of jackals,
A desolation forever;
No one will live there,
Nor will a son of man reside in it.”

34The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning Elam, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, saying: 35“Thus says the LORD of hosts,

‘Behold (listen carefully), I am going to break the bow of Elam,

The finest [weapon] of their strength.

36“And I will bring upon Elam the four winds
From the four corners of heaven;
And I will scatter them toward all those winds,
And there will be no nation
To which the outcasts of Elam will not go.

37“So I will cause Elam to be shattered (dismayed) before their

enemies

And before those who seek their lives;

And I will bring disaster on them,

Even My fierce anger,' says the LORD.

'And I will send the sword after them

Until I have consumed them.

³⁸'Then I will set My throne [of judgment] in Elam

And I will destroy from there the king and princes,'

Says the LORD. [Neh 1:1; Esth 1:2; Dan 8:1, 2]

³⁹'But it will be in the last days (the end of days)

That I will reverse the captivity *and* restore the fortunes of
Elam,'"

Says the LORD.

50 THE WORD that the LORD spoke concerning Babylon
and concerning the land of the Chaldeans through Jeremiah the
prophet: [Is 13:1–14:23; 47; Hab 1:1, 2]

²'Declare among the nations.

Lift up a signal [to spread the news]—publish *and* proclaim
it,

Do not conceal it; say,

'Babylon has been taken,

Bel [the patron god] has been shamed, Marduk (Bel) has
been shattered.

Babylon's images have been shamed, her [worthless] idols
have been thrown down.'

³“For out of the north a nation (Media) has come against her which will make her land desolate, and no one will live there. They have fled, they have gone away—both man and animal.

⁴“In those days and at that time,” says the LORD, “the children of Israel will come, they and the children of Judah together; they will come up weeping [in repentance] as they come and seek the LORD their God [inquiring for and of Him].

⁵“They will ask the way to Zion, with their faces in that direction, saying, ‘Come, let us join ourselves to the LORD in an everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten.’

⁶“My people have become lost sheep;
Their shepherds have led them astray.
They have made them turn aside [to the seductive places of idolatry] on the mountains.
They have gone along [from one sin to another] from mountain to hill;
They have forgotten their [own] resting place. [Is 53:6; 1 Pet 2:25]

⁷“All who found them have devoured them;
And their adversaries have said, ‘We are not guilty,
Because they have sinned against the LORD [and are no longer holy to Him], their [true] habitation of righteousness *and* justice, Even the LORD, the [confident] hope of their fathers.’

⁸“Wander away from the midst of Babylon
And go out of the land of the Chaldeans;
Be like the male goats [who serve as leaders] at the head of

the flocks. [Jer 51:6, 9, 45; 2 Cor 6:17; Rev 18:4]

9“For behold, I will stir up and bring up against Babylon
An assembly of great nations from the north country.
They will equip themselves *and* set up the battle lines
against her;

From there she will be taken captive.
Their arrows will be like an expert warrior
Who will not return empty-handed.

10“Chaldea will become plunder;
All who plunder her will be satisfied,” says the LORD.

11“Though you are glad, though you rejoice,
O you who plunder My heritage,
Though you are wanton *and* skip about like a heifer in the
grass
And neigh like stallions,

12Your mother [Babylon] shall be greatly shamed;
She who gave you birth will be ashamed.
Behold, *she will be* the least of the nations,
A wilderness, a parched land and a desert.

13“Because of the wrath of the LORD she will not be inhabited
But she will be completely desolate;
Everyone who goes by Babylon will be appalled
And will hiss (mock) at all her wounds *and* plagues.

14“Set yourselves in battle formation against Babylon on
every side,
All you archers.
Shoot at her! Do not spare the arrows,

For she has sinned against the LORD.

¹⁵“Raise the battle cry against her on every side!

She has given her hand [in agreement] *and* has
surrendered; her pillars have fallen,

Her walls have been torn down.

For this is the vengeance of the LORD:

Take vengeance on her;

As she has done [to others], do to her.

¹⁶“Cut off the sower from Babylon

And the one who handles the sickle at the time of harvest.

For fear of the sword of the oppressor

Everyone will return to his own people

And everyone will flee to his own land.

¹⁷“Israel is a hunted *and* scattered flock [driven here and there as prey]; the lions have chased *them away*. First the king of Assyria devoured him, and now at last Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has broken (gnawed) his bones.

¹⁸“Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Behold, I will visit (inspect, examine) *and* punish the king of Babylon and his land, just as I visited *and* punished the king of Assyria.

¹⁹“And I will bring Israel [home] again to his pasture and he will graze on [the most fertile lands of] Carmel [in the west] and Bashan [in the east], and his soul will be satisfied on the hills of Ephraim and Gilead.

²⁰“In those days and at that time,’ says the LORD, ‘a search will be made for the wickedness of Israel, but there will be none and for the sins of Judah, but none will be found, for I will

pardon those whom I leave as a remnant.’ [Is 1:9; 43:25; Jer 31:34; 33:8; Rom 9:27]

21“Go against [Babylon] the land of Merathaim (Double Rebellion),

Go up against it and against the people of Pekod (Punishment).

Kill and utterly destroy them,” says the LORD,

“And do everything that I have commanded you.”

22“The noise of battle is in the land,

And [the noise of] great destruction.

23“How the hammer of the whole earth

Is crushed and broken!

How Babylon has become

A horror [of desolation] among the nations!

24“I set a trap for you and you also were caught, O Babylon,

And you did not know it;

You have been found and also seized

Because you have struggled against the LORD.”

25The LORD has opened His armory

And has brought out [the nations who unknowingly are]
the weapons of His indignation (wrath),

For it is a work of the Lord GOD of hosts

In the land of the Chaldeans.

26Come against her from the farthest border.

Open her storehouses;

Pile it up like heaps of rubbish.

Burn *and* destroy her completely;

Let nothing be left of her.

- ²⁷ Kill all her young bulls [her strength—her young men];
Let them go down to the slaughter!
Woe (judgment is coming) to the Chaldeans, for their day
has come,
The time of their punishment.

- ²⁸ Listen to the voice of the refugees who flee and escape from
the land of Babylon,
Proclaiming in Zion the vengeance of the LORD our God,
The vengeance [of the LORD against the Chaldeans] for
[plundering and destroying] His temple.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Redeems the Past

Many people are stuck in their past. If they have done something bad or if something negative has happened to them, they may believe (think) they can never get beyond it. This is exactly what the devil wants them to believe (think). According to God's Word, it is not true. We can recover from bad things in our past, and God will even work good out of those things (see Rom. 8:28).

God is our Redeemer, which means He takes what is bad in us or in our lives and turns it into something beautiful. Even when God's people were held in captivity, Jeremiah could say, "Their Redeemer is strong; the LORD of hosts is His name. He will most certainly... defend their cause" (Jer. 50:34). No matter what you did or what was done to you in the past, start saying, "I am forgiven, God has a good plan for my life, and I will never look back."

29 "Call together many [archers] against Babylon,
All those who bend the bow.
Encamp against her on every side;
Let no one from there escape.
Repay her according to her actions;
Just as she has done, do to her.
For she has been proudly defiant *and* presumptuous

against the LORD,
Against the Holy One of Israel.

³⁰“Therefore her young men will fall in her streets,
And all her soldiers will be destroyed on that day,” says the
LORD.

³¹“Behold, I am against you, [O Babylon, you] arrogant one,
[you who are pride and presumption personified],”
Says the Lord GOD of hosts,
“For your day has come,
The time when I will punish you.

Speak God's Word

*My Redeemer is strong. The
Lord of hosts is His name. He
will most certainly plead my
case and defend my cause.*

| adapted from JEREMIAH 50:34 |

32“**The arrogant (proud) one will stumble and fall
With no one to raise him up;
And I will set fire to his cities
And it will devour all who are around him.”**

33**Thus says the LORD of hosts,
“The children of Israel are oppressed,
And the children of Judah as well;
And all who took them captive have held them tightly,
They have refused to let them go.**

34**“Their Redeemer is strong; the LORD of hosts is His name.
He will most certainly plead their case *and* defend their
cause
So that He may bring rest to their land,
But turmoil to the inhabitants of Babylon.**

35**“A sword against the Chaldeans,” says the LORD,**

- “And against the inhabitants of Babylon
And against her princes (officials, civic rulers) and against
her wise men (astrologers, religious rulers)!
- 36“ A sword against the oracle priests (the babbling liars), and
they will become fools!
A sword against her mighty warriors, and they will be
shattered *and* destroyed!
- 37“ A sword against their horses and against their chariots
And against all the foreign troops that are in her midst,
And they will become [as weak and defenseless as] women!
A sword against her treasures, and they will be plundered!
- 38“ A drought on her waters, and they will dry up!
For it is a land of [worthless] idols,
And they are mad over fearsome idols [those objects of
terror in which they foolishly trust].
- 39“ Therefore wild beasts of the desert will live there [in
Babylon] with the jackals;
The ostriches also will live there,
And it will never again be inhabited [with people]
Or lived in from generation to generation. [Is 13:20–22]
- 40“ As when God overthrew Sodom
And Gomorrah and their neighboring cities,” says the LORD,
“So no man will live there;
Nor shall any son of man live there.” [Jer 49:18]
- 41“ Behold, a people is coming from the north,
And a great nation and many kings
Will be stirring from the remote parts of the earth.

- ⁴²“They seize their bow and spear;
They are cruel and have no compassion.
They sound like the roaring of the sea;
They ride on horses,
Every man equipped like a man [ready] for the battle
Against you, O Daughter of Babylon.
- ⁴³“The king of Babylon has heard the report about them,
And his hands fall limp *and* helpless;
Anguish has seized him,
And agony like that of a woman in childbirth.

⁴⁴“See, one will come up like a lion from the thicket of the Jordan against the enduring habitation [of Babylon] *and* its watered pastures; for in an instant I will make Babylon run from his land. I will appoint over Babylon the one whom I choose. For who is like Me, and who will summon Me [into court] *and* prosecute Me [for this]? Who is the [earthly] shepherd who can stand [defiantly] before Me?” [Jer 49:19]

⁴⁵Therefore hear the plan of the LORD which He has devised against Babylon, and hear what He has purposed against [the inhabitants of the land of] the Chaldeans: surely they will be dragged away, [even] the little ones of the flock; surely He will make their habitation desolate because of them.

⁴⁶At the shout, “Babylon has been seized!” the earth quakes, and an outcry is heard among the nations.

51 **THUS SAYS the LORD:**

“Behold, I am going to stir up *and* put into action [a fury]

against Babylon

And against the [rebellious] people of Leb-kamai (Chaldea)
A destroying wind *and* hostile spirit;

²“And I will send foreigners to Babylon that they may
winnow her

And may devastate *and* empty her land;

For in the day of destruction

They will be against her on every side.

³“Do not let him (the Chaldean defender) who bends his bow
bend it,

Nor let him rise up in his coat of armor.

So do not spare her young men;

Devote her entire army to destruction.

⁴“They shall fall down dead in the land of the Chaldeans,
And wounded in her streets.”

⁵For neither Israel nor Judah has been abandoned

By his God, the LORD of hosts,

Though their land is full of sin *and* guilt

Before the Holy One of Israel.

⁶Flee out of Babylon,

Let every one of you save his life!

Do not be destroyed in her punishment,

For this is the time of the LORD’s vengeance;

He is going to pay her what she has earned. [Jer 50:28; 2 Cor
6:17; Rev 18:4]

⁷Babylon has been a golden cup in the LORD’s hand,
Intoxicating all the earth.

The nations drank her wine;
Therefore the nations have gone mad. [Rev 14:8; 17:4]

⁸Babylon has suddenly fallen and is shattered!

Wail for her [if you care to]!

Get balm for her [incurable] pain;

Perhaps she may be healed. [Jer 25:15; Rev 14:8–10; 16:19;
18:2, 3]

⁹We would have healed Babylon, but she was not to be
healed.

Abandon her and let each [captive] return to his own
country,

For her guilt *and* judgment have reached to heaven

And are lifted up to the very skies. [Gen 18:20, 21]

¹⁰The LORD has brought about our vindication *and* has
revealed the righteousness of our cause;

Come and let us proclaim in Zion

The work of the LORD our God!

¹¹Sharpen the arrows, take up the shields [and cover
yourselves]!

The LORD has stirred up the spirit of the kings of the
Medes,

Because His purpose concerning Babylon is to destroy it;

For that is the vengeance of the LORD, vengeance [on
Babylon] for [plundering and destroying] His temple.

¹²Set up a signal on the walls of Babylon [to spread the
news];

Post a strong blockade,

Station the guards,
Prepare the men for ambush!
For the LORD has both purposed and done
That which He spoke against the people of Babylon.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*I worship You, Lord, because
You have made the earth by
Your power. You have
established the world by Your
wisdom and stretched out the
heavens by Your
understanding.*

• adapted from Jeremiah 51:15

¹³[O Babylon] you who live by many waters,
Rich in treasures,
Your end has come,
And the line measuring your life is cut. [Rev 17:1–6]

¹⁴The LORD of hosts has sworn [an oath] by Himself, saying,
“Surely I will fill you with men, as with [a swarm of] locusts
[who strip the land clean],
And they will lift up a song *and* shout of victory over you.”

¹⁵He made the earth by His power;
He established the world by His wisdom
And stretched out the heavens by His understanding.

¹⁶When He utters His voice, *there is* a tumult of waters in the
heavens,
And He causes the clouds to ascend from the ends of the
earth.
He makes lightnings for the rain
And brings out the wind from His storehouses.

¹⁷Every man has become stupid *and* brutelike, without
knowledge [of God];
Every goldsmith is shamed by the cast images he has made;
For his molten idols are a lie,
And there is no breath [of life] *or* spirit in them.

¹⁸They are worthless (empty, false, futile), a work of delusion
and worthy of derision;
In the time of their inspection *and* punishment they will
perish.

¹⁹The Portion of Jacob [the true God of Israel] is not like these
[handmade gods];
For He is the Maker of all *and* the One who formed *and*
fashioned all things,
And Israel is the tribe of His inheritance—

The LORD of hosts is His name. [Jer 10:12–16]

20“You [Cyrus of Persia, soon to conquer Babylon] are My
battle-axe and weapon of war—

For with you I shatter nations,

With you I destroy kingdoms.

21“With you I shatter the horse and his rider,

With you I shatter the chariot and its driver,

22With you I shatter man and woman,

With you I shatter old man and youth,

With you I shatter young man and virgin,

23With you I shatter the shepherd and his flock,

With you I shatter the farmer and his yoke of oxen,

And with you I shatter governors and commanders.

24“And I will [completely] repay Babylon and all the people
of Chaldea for all the evil that they have done in Zion—before
your very eyes [I will do it],” says the LORD.

25“Behold, I am against you,

O destroying mountain [conqueror of nations],

Who destroys the whole earth,” declares the LORD,

“I will stretch out My hand against you,

And roll you down from the [rugged] cliffs,

And will make you a burnt mountain (extinct volcano).

26“They will not take from you [even] a stone for a
cornerstone

Nor any rock for a foundation,

But you will be desolate forever,” says the LORD.

27Lift up a signal in the land [to spread the news]!

Blow the trumpet among the nations!
Dedicate the nations [for war] against her;
Call against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and
Ashkenaz.

Appoint a marshal against her;
Cause the horses to come up like bristly locusts [with their
wings not yet released from their cases].

²⁸Prepare *and* dedicate the nations for war against her—
The kings of Media,
With their governors and commanders,
And every land of their dominion.

²⁹The land trembles and writhes [in pain and sorrow],
For the purposes of the LORD against Babylon stand,
To make the land of Babylon
A desolation without inhabitants.

³⁰The mighty warriors of Babylon have ceased to fight;
They remain in their strongholds.
Their strength *and* power have failed;
They are becoming [weak and helpless] like women.
Their dwelling places are set on fire;
The bars on her *gates* are broken.

³¹One courier runs to meet another,
And one messenger to meet another,
To tell the king of Babylon
That his city has been captured from end to end;

³²And that the fords [across the Euphrates] have been
blocked *and* [the ferries] seized,
And they have set the [great] marshes on fire,

And the men of war are terrified.

³³For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel:

“The Daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor
At the time it is being trampled *and* prepared;
Yet in a little while the time of harvest will come for her.”

³⁴“Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has devoured me, he has
crushed me,
He has set me down like an empty vessel.
Like a monster he has swallowed me up,
He has filled his belly with my delicacies;
He has spit me out *and* washed me away.

³⁵“May the violence done to me and to my flesh *and* blood be
upon Babylon,”
The inhabitant of Zion will say;
And, “May my blood be upon the inhabitants of Chaldea,”
Jerusalem will say.

³⁶Therefore thus says the LORD,
“Behold, I will plead your case
And take full vengeance for you;
I will dry up her sea *and* great reservoir
And make her fountain dry.

³⁷“Babylon will become a heap [of ruins], a haunt *and*
dwelling place of jackals,
An object of horror (an astonishing desolation) and a
hissing [of scorn and amazement], without inhabitants.

³⁸“They (the Chaldean lords) will be roaring together [before

their sudden capture] like young lions [roaring over their prey],

They (the princes) will be growling like lions' cubs.

39“When they are inflamed [with wine and lust during their drinking bouts], I will prepare them a feast [of My wrath] And make them drunk, that they may rejoice And may sleep a perpetual sleep And not wake up,” declares the LORD.

40“I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter, Like rams together with male goats.

41“How Sheshak (Babylon) has been captured, And the praise of the whole earth been seized! How Babylon has become an astonishing desolation *and* an object of horror among the nations!

42“The sea has come up over Babylon; She has been engulfed with its tumultuous waves.

43“Her cities have become an astonishing desolation *and* an object of horror, A parched land and a desert, A land in which no one lives, And through which no son of man passes.

44“I will punish *and* judge Bel [the handmade god] in Babylon And take out of his mouth what he has swallowed up [the stolen sacred articles and the captives of Judah and elsewhere].

The nations will no longer flow to him.

Yes, the wall of Babylon has fallen down!

- 45“Come out of her midst, My people,
And each of you [escape and] save yourself
From the fierce anger of the LORD. [Jer 50:8; 2 Cor 6:17; Rev
18:4]
- 46“Now *beware* so that you do not lose heart,
And so that you are not afraid at the rumor that will be
heard in the land—
For the rumor shall come one year,
And after that another rumor in another year,
And violence *shall be* in the land,
Ruler against ruler—
- 47“Therefore behold (listen carefully), the days are coming
When I will judge *and* punish the idols of Babylon;
Her whole land will be perplexed *and* shamed,
And all her slain will fall in her midst.
- 48“Then heaven and earth and all that is in them
Will shout *and* sing for joy over Babylon,
For the destroyers will come against her from the north,”
Says the LORD. [Is 44:23; Jer 51:11; Rev 12:12; 18:20]
- 49Indeed Babylon is to fall for the slain of Israel,
As also for Babylon the slain of all the earth have fallen.
- 50You who have escaped the sword,
Go away! Do not stay!
Remember the LORD from far away,
And let [desolate] Jerusalem come into your mind.
- 51We are perplexed *and* ashamed, for we have heard reproach;
Disgrace has covered our faces,

For foreigners [from Babylon] have come
Into the [most] sacred parts of the sanctuary of the LORD
[even those places forbidden to all but the appointed
priest].

52“Therefore behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD,
“When I will judge *and* punish the idols [of Babylon],
And throughout her land the mortally wounded will groan.”

53“Though Babylon should ascend to the heavens,
And though she should fortify her lofty stronghold,
Yet destroyers will come on her from Me,” says the LORD.

54The sound of an outcry [comes] from Babylon,
And [the sound] of great destruction from the land of the
Chaldeans!

55For the LORD is going to destroy Babylon *and* make her a
ruin,
And He will still her great voice [that hums with city life].
And the waves [of her conquerors] roar like great waters,
The noise of their voices is raised up [like the marching of
an army].

56For the destroyer is coming against her, against Babylon;
And her mighty warriors will be captured,
Their bows are shattered;
For the LORD is a God of [just] restitution;
He will fully repay.

57“I will make her princes and her wise men drunk,
Her governors and her commanders and her mighty
warriors;

They will sleep a perpetual sleep and not wake up,”
Says the King—the LORD of hosts is His name.

⁵⁸Thus says the LORD of hosts,

“The broad wall of Babylon will be completely overthrown
and the foundations razed
And her high gates will be set on fire;
The peoples will labor in vain,
And the nations become exhausted [only] for fire [that will
destroy their work].” [Hab 2:13]

⁵⁹The message which Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah the son of Neriah, the grandson of Mahseiah, when he went with Zedekiah the king of Judah to Babylon in the fourth year of his reign. Now this Seraiah was chief chamberlain *or* quartermaster [and brother of Baruch].

⁶⁰So Jeremiah wrote in a single scroll all the disaster which would come on Babylon, [that is] all these words which have been written concerning Babylon.

⁶¹Then Jeremiah said to Seraiah, “When you come to Babylon, see to it that you read all these words aloud,

⁶²and say, ‘You, O LORD, have promised concerning this place to cut it off *and* destroy it, so that there shall be nothing living in it, neither man nor animal, but it will be perpetually desolate.’

⁶³“And as soon as you finish reading this scroll, you shall tie a stone to it and throw it into the middle of the Euphrates.

⁶⁴“Then say, ‘In the same way Babylon will sink down and not rise because of the disaster that I will bring on her; and the Babylonians will become [hopelessly] exhausted.’” Thus the

words of Jeremiah are completed. [Rev 18:21]

52 ZEDEKIAH WAS twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. [2 Kin 24:18–25:21]

²He did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD like all that Jehoiakim had done.

³For all this came about in Jerusalem and Judah because of the anger of the LORD, and [in the end] He cast them from His presence. And Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

⁴Now it came about in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem; and they camped against it and built moveable towers *and* siege mounds all around it. [Jer 39:1–10]

⁵So the city was besieged until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. [2 Chr 36:11–13]

⁶In the fourth month, on the ninth day of the month, the famine was so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land.

⁷Then the city was broken into, and all the soldiers fled. They left the city at night [as Ezekiel prophesied] passing through the gate between the two walls by the king's garden, though the Chaldeans were all around the city. They fled by way of the Arabah (the Jordan Valley). [Ezek 12:12]

⁸But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and his entire army

was scattered from him.

⁹Then they seized the king and brought him to the king of Babylon at Riblah in the [Syrian] land of Hamath [on the northern border of Israel], where he pronounced sentence on him.

¹⁰The king of Babylon killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes; he also killed all the princes of Judah at Riblah.

¹¹Then the king of Babylon blinded Zedekiah, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon and there he put him in prison [in a mill] until the day of his death. [Ezek 12:13]

¹²Now in the fifth month, on the tenth day, which was the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan captain of the guard, who served the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem.

¹³He burned down the house of the LORD and the king's palace and all the houses of Jerusalem; every great house *or* important structure he set on fire.

¹⁴So all the army of the Chaldeans who were with the captain of the guard broke down all the walls around Jerusalem.

¹⁵Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took away into exile some of the poorest of the people, those who were left in the city [at the time it was captured], along with those who deserted to join the king of Babylon [during the siege] and the rest of the artisans.

¹⁶But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left some of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and farmers.

¹⁷Now the Chaldeans broke into pieces the pillars of bronze which belonged to the house of the LORD, and the bronze pedestals [which supported the ten basins] and the [enormous]

bronze Sea, which were in the house of the LORD, and carried all the bronze to Babylon.

¹⁸They also took away the pots [for carrying away ashes] and the shovels and the snuffers and the bowls and the spoons and all the bronze articles used in the *temple* service.

¹⁹The captain of the guard also took away the [small] bowls and the firepans and the basins and the pots and the lampstands and the incense cups and the bowls for the drink offerings—whatever was made of fine gold and whatever was made of fine silver.

²⁰The two pillars, the one [enormous] Sea (basin), and the twelve bronze bulls under the Sea, and the stands, which King Solomon had made for the house of the LORD—the bronze of all these things was beyond weighing.

²¹Concerning the pillars, the height of each pillar was eighteen cubits (twenty-seven feet), and a line [an ornamental molding] of twelve cubits (eighteen feet) went around its circumference; it was four fingers thick, and [the pillar was] hollow.

²²A capital of bronze was on [top of] it. The height of each capital was five cubits (seven and one-half feet), with a lattice-work and pomegranates around it, all of bronze. The second pillar also, with its pomegranates, was similar to these.

²³There were ninety-six pomegranates on the sides; and a hundred pomegranates were on the lattice-work all around.

²⁴Then the captain of the guard took [as prisoners] Seraiah the chief priest and Zephaniah the second priest and the three doorkeepers.

²⁵He also took out of the city one official who was overseer

of the soldiers, and seven of the king's advisers who were found in the city, and the scribe of the commander of the army who mustered the people of the land, and sixty men who were still in the city.

²⁶Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took them and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah.

²⁷Then the king of Babylon struck them down and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was led away into exile from its own land.

²⁸This is the number of people whom Nebuchadnezzar took captive *and* exiled: in the seventh year, 3,023 Jews;

²⁹in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, [he took captive] 832 persons from Jerusalem;

³⁰in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzaradan the captain of the [Babylonian] guard took captive 745 Jewish people; there were 4,600 persons in all.

³¹Now it came about in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin [also called Coniah and Jeconiah] king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-fifth of the month, Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the first year of his reign, showed favor to Jehoiachin king of Judah and brought him out of prison. [2 Kin 25:27–30]

³²He spoke kindly to him and gave him a throne above the thrones of the kings who were [captives] with him in Babylon.

³³Jehoiachin changed his prison clothes, and he dined regularly at the king's table all the days of his life.

³⁴And his allowance, a regular allowance was given to him by the king of Babylon, a daily portion [according to his needs] until the day of his death, all the days of his life.

Speak God's Word

*Thank you, Lord God, that
You have made the earth by
Your power and established
the world by Your wisdom.
You have stretched out the
heavens by Your
understanding.*

| *adapted from* JEREMIAH 51:15

|

Lamentations

Author: |
Traditionally, Jeremiah
Date: | 587 BC

The book of Lamentations was written during a time of great suffering in Judah, during and following the period when the Babylonians destroyed much of Jerusalem, razed the temple, and took the people of Judah captive. These lamentations are poems expressing the sadness and grief of that season.

Until Lamentations 3:17, the writer of Lamentations has his mind set on the devastation of Jerusalem. Then, in verse 21, he chooses to change his mind and begin thinking of God's lovingkindnesses.

No matter what you may go through or how difficult it may be, if you will follow the writer's example and shift your focus from the bad things that are happening onto the love and kindness of the Lord, you'll be on your way to victory.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM LAMENTATIONS:

When you pray or talk to God, feel free to express yourself fully to the Him (see Lamentations 2:19).

Seek God and wait confidently for Him, and you will experience His goodness in a powerful way (see Lamentations 3:25).

When you are afraid and you call out to God, He draws near and says, “Do not fear” (see Lamentations 3:57).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM LAMENTATIONS:

His [tender] compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great and beyond measure is Your faithfulness. |
Lamentations 3:22–23

I have hope in Him and wait expectantly for Him. |
Lamentations 3:24

Let us test and examine our ways, and let us return to the LORD. Let us lift up our hearts and our hands [in prayer] toward God in heaven. | Lamentations 3:40–41

THE
LAMENTATIONS
OF JEREMIAH

- 1 HOW SOLITARY *and* lonely sits the city [Jerusalem]
That was [once] full of people!
How like a widow she has become.
She who was great among the nations!
The princess among the provinces,
Has become a forced laborer!
- ² She weeps bitterly in the night
And her tears are [constantly] on her cheeks;
Among all her lovers (political allies)
She has no one to comfort her.
All her friends have dealt treacherously with her;
They have become her enemies. [Jer 3:1; 4:30]
- ³ Judah has gone into exile under affliction And under harsh servitude;
She dwells among the [pagan] nations,
But she has found no rest;
All her pursuers have overtaken her
In the midst of [her] distress.
- ⁴ The roads to Zion are in mourning
Because no one comes to the appointed feasts.

All her gates are desolate;
Her priests are groaning,
Her virgins are grieved *and* suffering,
And she suffers bitterly.

⁵Her adversaries have become her masters, Her enemies prosper;
For the LORD has caused her grief Because of the multitude of her transgressions;
Her young children have gone
Into captivity before the enemy. [Jer 30:14, 15; 52:28; Dan 9:7–14]

⁶All her beauty *and* majesty
Have departed from the Daughter of Zion (Jerusalem).
Her princes have become like deer
That have found no pasture;
They have fled without strength
Before the pursuer.

⁷In the days of her affliction and homelessness Jerusalem remembers all her precious things
That she had from the days of old,
When her people fell into the hand of the adversary, And no one helped her,
The enemy saw her,
They mocked at her downfall.

⁸Jerusalem sinned greatly;
Therefore she has become an unclean thing [and has been removed].
All who honored her [now] despise her

Because they have seen her nakedness;
Even she herself groans and turns [her face] away.

⁹Her (ceremonial) uncleanness was on her skirts; She did not
[seriously] consider her future.

Therefore she has come down [from throne to slavery] in an
astonishing manner; She has no comforter.

“O LORD” [cries Jerusalem], “look at my affliction, For the
enemy has magnified himself [in triumph]!”

¹⁰The adversary has spread out his hand
Over all her precious *and* desirable things; For she has seen
the [Gentile] nations enter her sanctuary (the Jerusalem
temple)—

Speak God's Word

I will stand against the adversary when he stretches out his hand against the people and things that are precious and desirable to me.

| *adapted from* LAMENTATIONS 1:10 |

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Trusting Without Understanding

With Jerusalem in utter ruins, Jeremiah paints a desolate picture of the city's "hopelessly miserable" state (see Lam. 1:13). When we feel hopeless, everything else about us seems miserable. And the longer we are hopeless, the more negative we become.

I find it amazing that we have the power to change the negatives we feel, negatives we may pass along to others unintentionally, simply by choosing to see things the way God does. We should not deny our circumstances, but neither

should we give them permission to control our attitudes and behavior. God has given us power, and we can live above our circumstances *if* we choose to have a hopeful, positive perspective. You don't have to wait to feel hopeful; you can think hopeful thoughts and your feelings will follow.

If you decide to view "problems" in a positive way, someone may say that you aren't being realistic. Someone may even say, "Don't be so childish," but we need childlike faith if we intend to enjoy the life God offers us. The good thing about faith is that it keeps you joyful and energized while you are trusting God to change your current reality.

We experience two types of faith in life, and we need both of them. One type of faith asks for and receives an immediate pleasurable answer, and we get very excited. The second type of faith doesn't receive the answer it had hoped for, but continues to believe that God is good and that He is working in ways that cannot yet be seen. I believe that this is the greater faith. We don't get to choose which way God will work. At times He delivers us from something difficult, and at other times He gives us grace to go through it with a good attitude. What God allows us to go through is His decision and His alone, because He knows and understands things that we don't.

When we are in the midst of difficulty, the situation may make no sense at all; yet later on, we may look back and understand that God's choice was better for us than what we would have chosen. There is also the possibility that we will never have a full understanding about a painful situation, but we do have the privilege of trusting God—and that gives us peace and joy.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord God, there are circumstances in my life that I can't control or change, but I put my faith in You to deal with them in Your time and according to Your will. I will continue to hope in You, knowing that You will do what is best. Thank You! Amen.

The ones whom You commanded
That they should not enter into Your congregation [not
even in the outer courts]. [Deut 23:3; Jer 51:51; Ezek 44:7,
9]

¹¹ All her people groan, seeking bread;
They have exchanged their desirable *and* precious things
for food To restore their lives.
“See, O LORD, and consider How despised *and* repulsive I
have become!”

¹² “Is it nothing to you, all you who pass this way?
Look and see if there is any pain like my pain
Which was severely dealt out to me,
Which the LORD has inflicted [on me] on the day of His
fierce anger.

¹³ “From on high He sent fire into my bones, And it prevailed
over them.
He has spread a net for my feet;
He has turned me back.
He has made me desolate *and* hopelessly miserable, Faint all
the day long.

¹⁴ “The yoke of my transgressions is bound; By His hand they
are knit *and* woven together.
They have come upon my neck.
He has made my strength fail;
The Lord has put me into the hand
Of *those against whom* I cannot stand. [Deut 28:48]

¹⁵ “The Lord has rejected all the strong men In my midst;

He has proclaimed an established time against me
To crush my young men.
The Lord has trampled down as in a wine press
The Virgin Daughter of Judah.

16“ I weep for these things;
My eyes overflow with tears,
Because a comforter,
One who could restore my soul, is far away from me.
My children are desolate *and* perishing,
For the enemy has prevailed.” [Lam 1:21]

17 Zion stretches out her hands,
But there is no comforter for her.
The LORD has commanded concerning Jacob That his
neighbors should be his enemies;
Jerusalem has become a filthy thing [an object of contempt]
among them.

18“ The LORD is righteous *and* just; For I have rebelled against
His commandment (His word).
Hear now, all you peoples,
And look at my pain;
My virgins and my young men
Have gone into captivity.

19“ I [Jerusalem] called to my lovers (political allies), but they
deceived me.
My priests and my elders perished in the city
While they looked for food to restore their strength.

20“ See, O LORD, how distressed I am!
My spirit is deeply disturbed;

My heart is overturned within me *and* cannot rest, For I have been very rebellious.

In the street the sword kills *and* bereaves; In the house there is [famine, disease and] death!

²¹“People have heard that I groan,
That I have no comforter [in You].
All my enemies have heard of my desperation;
They are delighted [O LORD] that You have done it.
Oh, that You would bring the day [of judgment] which You have proclaimed So that they will become like me. [Is 14:5, 6; Jer 30:16]

²²“Let all their wickedness come before You; And deal with them as You have dealt with me
Because of all my transgressions;
For my groans are many and my heart is faint.”

2 HOW THE Lord has covered the Daughter of Zion

(Jerusalem) With a cloud in His anger!

He has cast down from heaven to the earth

The glory *and* splendor of Israel

And has not remembered His footstool In the day of His anger.

²The Lord has swallowed up; He has not spared All the country places of Jacob.

In His wrath He has thrown down

The strongholds of the Daughter of Judah (Jerusalem).

He has brought them down to the ground [in disgrace]; He

has debased the kingdom and its princes.

³In fierce anger He has cut off *and* destroyed Every horn of
Israel.

He has withdrawn His right hand

From the presence of the enemy.

And He has burned in Jacob like a flaming fire

Consuming all around.

⁴He has bent His bow like an enemy;

He has set His right hand like an adversary

And slain all that were delightful *and* pleasing to the eye; In

the tent of the Daughter of Zion

He has poured out His wrath like fire.

⁵The Lord has become like an enemy;

He has swallowed up Israel.

He has swallowed up all its palaces;

He has destroyed its strongholds

And multiplied in the Daughter of Judah

Mourning and lamentation (expressions of grief).

⁶And He has violently broken down His temple like a [fragile]
garden *hedge*;

He has destroyed His appointed meeting place.

The LORD has caused the appointed feast and Sabbath To

be forgotten in Zion

And has despised *and* rejected the king and the priest In

the indignation of His anger.

⁷The Lord has rejected His altar;

He has abandoned His sanctuary.

He has given into the hand of the enemy

The walls of her palaces;
They have made a noise in the house of the LORD
As on a day of an appointed feast.

⁸The LORD determined to lay in ruins The [city] wall of the
Daughter of Zion.

He has stretched out a line,
He has not stopped His hand from destroying.
He has caused the rampart and the wall to lament (mourn in
grief); They have languished together.

⁹Her gates have sunk into the ground;
He has destroyed and broken her bars.
Her king and her princes are [exiled] among the nations; The
law is no more.

Also, her prophets no longer find
Vision from the LORD.

¹⁰The elders of the Daughter of Zion
Sit on the ground keeping silent;
They have thrown dust on their heads,
They have covered themselves with sackcloth.
The virgins of Jerusalem
Have bowed their heads to the ground.

¹¹My eyes fail because of tears [mourns Jeremiah], My spirit
is deeply disturbed;
My heart is poured out on the earth [in grief]
Because of the destruction of the daughter of my people
[Jerusalem],

POWERPOINT

In Lamentations 2:13, Jeremiah wants to comfort Jerusalem. God promises to comfort us in our pain and difficulty as we go through life, and we should ask Him to do so. James 4:3 says we do not have certain things because we do not ask for them.

We cannot assume the promises of God are ours; we should ask for and receive them by faith. Ask God to comfort you when you are hurting, and then trust Him to do it. He may give you comfort through sending someone to encourage you, or through a message you hear, or a book you read. The Holy Spirit is “the Comforter,” and He is with us all the time!



When little ones and infants faint In the streets of the city.

¹²They cry to their mothers,

“Where is grain and wine?”

As they faint like a wounded man

In the streets of the city,

As their life [slips away and] is poured out

In their mothers’ arms.

¹³How shall I console you?

To what shall I compare you,

O Daughter of Jerusalem?

With what shall I compare you, so that I may comfort you, O

Virgin Daughter of Zion?

For your ruin is as vast as the sea;
Who can heal you? [Lam 1:12; Dan 9:12]

¹⁴Your prophets have seen (imagined) for you False and foolish *visions*;
And they have not exposed your wickedness
To restore you from captivity [by teaching you to repent],
But they have seen (imagined) *and* declared to you false
and misleading oracles.

¹⁵All who pass along the way
Clap their hands *in derision* at you;
They scoff and shake their heads
At the Daughter of Jerusalem, saying,
“Is this the city that was called
‘The perfection of beauty,
The joy of all the earth’?”

¹⁶All your enemies
Have opened their mouths wide against you;
They [scornfully] hiss and gnash *their* teeth.
They say, “We have swallowed her up!
Certainly this is the day for which we waited;
We have reached it, we have seen it!”

¹⁷The LORD has done what He planned; He has accomplished
His word
Which He commanded from days of old.
He has demolished without sparing,
And He has caused the enemy to rejoice over you;
He has exalted the power of your enemies. [Lev 26:14–39;
Deut 28:15–68]

¹⁸Their hearts cried out to the Lord.

“O wall of the Daughter of Zion,
Let your tears run down like a river day and night; Give
yourself no relief,
Let your eyes have no rest.

¹⁹“Arise, cry aloud in the night,
At the beginning of the night watches;
Pour out your heart like water
Before the presence of the Lord;
Lift up your hands to Him
For the life of your little ones
Who are faint from hunger
At the head of every street.” [Ps 62:8]

²⁰See, O LORD, and look!
With whom have You dealt this way?
Should women eat their offspring,
The little ones *who were born* healthy and beautiful?
Should priest and prophet be killed
In the sanctuary of the Lord?

²¹The young and the old
Lie on the ground in the streets;
My virgins and my young men
Have fallen by the sword.
You have killed them in the day of Your anger,
You have slaughtered, not sparing.

²²You [LORD] called as in the day of an appointed feast My
terrors (dangers) on every side;
And there was no one who escaped or survived

In the day of the LORD's anger.
Those I have cared for and brought up with tenderness, My
enemy annihilated them.

3 I AM [Jeremiah] the man who has seen affliction Because of
the rod of His wrath.

²He has led me and made me walk
In darkness and not in light.

³Surely He has turned His hand against me Repeatedly all
the day.

⁴He has caused my flesh and my skin to waste away; He has
shattered my bones.

⁵He has besieged and surrounded me with bitterness and
hardship.

⁶He has made me live in dark places
Like those who have long been dead.

⁷He walled me in so that I cannot get out;

Speak God's Word

No matter what happens, this I call to mind, therefore I have hope. It is because of the Lord's lovingkindnesses that I am not consumed, because His tender compassions never fail.

| adapted from LAMENTATIONS 3:21–22 |

He has weighted down my chain.

⁸Even when I cry out and shout for help, He shuts out my prayer.

⁹He has blocked my ways with cut stone; He has made my paths crooked.

¹⁰He is to me like a bear lying in wait,
And like a lion [hiding] in secret places.

¹¹He has turned aside my ways and torn me in pieces; He has made me desolate.

¹²He has bent His bow
And set me as a target for the arrow.

¹³He has caused the arrows of His quiver
To enter my inner parts.

¹⁴I have become the [object of] ridicule to all my people, And
[the subject of] their *mocking* song all the day.

¹⁵He has filled me with bitterness;
He has made me drunk with wormwood (bitterness).

¹⁶He has broken my teeth with gravel;
He has [covered me with ashes and] made me cower in the dust.

¹⁷My soul has been cast far away from peace; I have
forgotten happiness.

¹⁸So I say, “My strength has perished
And so has my hope *and* expectation from the LORD.”

¹⁹Remember [O LORD] my affliction and my wandering, the
wormwood and the gall (bitterness).

²⁰My soul *continually* remembers them And is bowed down
within me.

²¹But this I call to mind,
Therefore I have hope.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God's Tender Compassions Never Fail

God is good, and He is faithful. At one time in my life I felt God guiding me to make a change in my life that would separate me from many people and things very dear to me. I wanted to obey God, but I was fearful. When I would not move, God changed some things in my life that put me in a position where I had no choice. I realize now that this was one of the best things that ever happened to me, but at the time I thought my world was falling apart.

Losing longtime relationships that have been important to you can be traumatic. So can the death of a loved one, a divorce, the loss of a career, a personal injury that prevents you from pursuing a hobby or sport or something that has been a major part of your life. Actually, losing anyone or anything that is important to us can lead to loneliness and grief.

I found, as Jeremiah did in one of the most difficult points in his life, that the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases and His tender compassions never fail. In fact, they are new every morning; great and beyond measure is His faithfulness (see Lam. 3:23). In difficult times, you can always count on His love for you.

²²It is because of the LORD's lovingkindnesses that we are not

consumed, Because His [tender] compassions never fail.
[Mal 3:6]

²³They are new every morning;

Great *and* beyond measure is Your faithfulness. [Is 33:2]

²⁴“The LORD is my portion *and* my inheritance,” says my
soul; “Therefore I have hope in Him *and* wait expectantly
for Him.” [Num 18:20]

²⁵The LORD is good to those who wait [confidently] for Him,
To those who seek Him [on the authority of God’s word].

²⁶It is good that one waits quietly
For the salvation of the LORD.

²⁷It is good for a man that he should bear The yoke [of godly
discipline] in his youth.

²⁸Let him sit alone [in hope] and keep quiet, Because God has
laid it on him [for his benefit]. [Rom 8:28]

²⁹Let him put his mouth in the dust [in recognition of his
unworthiness]; There may yet be hope. [Mic 7:17]

³⁰Let him give his cheek to the one who strikes him; Let him
be filled with reproach.

³¹For the Lord will not reject forever, [Ps 94:14]

³²For if He causes grief,
Then He will have compassion
According to His abundant lovingkindness *and* tender
mercy.

³³For He does not afflict willingly *and* from His heart Or grieve
the children of men. [Ezek 18:23, 32; Hos 11:8; Heb 12:5–
10; 2 Pet 3:9]

³⁴To trample *and* crush under His feet All the prisoners of the land,

³⁵To deprive a man of justice
In the presence of the Most High,

³⁶To defraud a man in his lawsuit—
The Lord does not approve of these things.

³⁷Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, Unless the
Lord has authorized *and* commanded it?

POWERPOINT

One way to make sure that we continue to live in strength and freedom is to periodically stop and “test and examine our ways” (Lam. 3:40) and return to the Lord. When you examine your ways, ask God to show you if you have strayed from Him in any area of your life. If you have, simply turn back to Him in repentance and receive His great mercy.



³⁸Is it not from the mouth of the Most High That both adversity (misfortune) and good (prosperity, happiness) proceed?

³⁹Why should any living mortal, or any man, Complain [of punishment] in view of his sins?

⁴⁰Let us test and examine our ways,
And let us return to the LORD.

- ⁴¹Let us lift up our hearts and our hands [in prayer]
Toward God in heaven;
- ⁴²We have transgressed and rebelled,
You have not pardoned.
- ⁴³You have covered *Yourself* with anger And pursued us;
You have slain [without pity] and have not spared.
- ⁴⁴You have covered Yourself with a cloud
So that no prayer can pass through.
- ⁴⁵You have made us scum and refuse
Among the peoples (Gentile nations).
- ⁴⁶All our enemies have gaped at us.
- ⁴⁷Panic and pitfall (traps, danger) have come on us,
Devastation and destruction.
- ⁴⁸My eyes overflow with streams of tears
Because of the destruction of the daughter of my people
(Jerusalem).
- ⁴⁹My eyes overflow unceasingly,
Without stopping,
- ⁵⁰Until the LORD looks down And sees from heaven.
- ⁵¹My eyes [see things that] bring pain to my soul Because of
all the daughters of my city.
- ⁵²Without cause my enemies
Hunted me down like a bird;
- ⁵³They silenced me in the pit
And placed a stone over me. [Jer 38]
- ⁵⁴The waters ran down on my head;

I said, “I am cut off (destroyed)!”

⁵⁵I called on Your name, O LORD, Out of the lowest pit. [Jer 38:6]

⁵⁶You have heard my voice,

“Do not hide Your ear from my *prayer* for relief, From my cry for help.”

⁵⁷You drew near on the day I called to You; You said, “Do not fear.” [James 4:8]

⁵⁸O Lord, You have pleaded my soul’s cause [You have guided my way and protected me]; You have rescued *and* redeemed my life.

⁵⁹O LORD, You have seen the wrong [done to me]; Judge my case.

⁶⁰You have seen all their vengeance,
All their schemes against me.

⁶¹You have heard their reproach, O LORD, And all their schemes against me.

⁶²The lips and whispering of my assailants Are against me all day long.

⁶³Look at their sitting and their rising [their actions and secret counsels]; I am their mocking song [the subject of their ridicule]. [Ps 139:2; Is 37:28]

⁶⁴You will repay them, O LORD, According to the work of their hands.

⁶⁵You will harden their hearts;
Your curse will be upon them.

⁶⁶You will pursue them in anger and destroy them From under

the heavens of the LORD.

4 HOW DARK *and* dim the gold has become, How the pure gold has changed!

The sacred stones [of the temple] are poured out *and* scattered At the head of every street.

²The [noble and] precious sons of Zion, [Once] worth their weight in fine gold,
How they are regarded [merely] as earthen jars,
The work of a potter's hands! [Is 30:14; Jer 19:11; 2 Cor 4:7]

³Even the jackals offer the breast,
They nurse their young;
But the daughter of my people has become cruel
Like ostriches in the wilderness [that desert their young].

⁴The tongue of the infant clings
To the roof of its mouth because of thirst;
The little ones ask for food,
But no one gives it to them.

⁵Those who feasted on delicacies
Are perishing in the streets;
Those reared in purple [as nobles]
Embrace ash heaps.

⁶For the [punishment of the] wickedness of the daughter of my people [Jerusalem]
Is greater than the [punishment for the] sin of Sodom,
Which was overthrown in a moment,
And no hands were turned toward her [to offer help]. [Gen

19:25]

- ⁷Her princes were purer than snow,
They were whiter than milk [in appearance];
They were more ruddy in body than rubies,
Their polishing was like lapis lazuli (sapphire).
- ⁸Their appearance is [now] blacker than soot [because of the
prolonged famine]; They are not recognized in the streets;
Their skin clings to their bones;
It is withered, and it has become [dry] like wood.
- ⁹Those killed with the sword
Are more fortunate than those killed with hunger;
For the hungry pine *and* ebb away,
For the lack of the fruits of the field.
- ¹⁰The hands of compassionate women
Boiled their own children;
They became food for them
Because of the destruction of the daughter of my people
[Judah].
- ¹¹The LORD has fulfilled His wrath; He has poured out His
fierce anger
And has kindled a fire in Zion
That has consumed her foundations.
- ¹²The kings of the earth did not believe, Nor did any of the
inhabitants of the earth,
That the adversary (oppressor) and enemy
Could enter the gates of Jerusalem.
- ¹³Because of the sins of her [counterfeit] prophets And the
wickedness of her [unfaithful] priests,

- Who have shed in her midst
The blood of the just *and* righteous;
- ¹⁴They wandered, blind, in the streets;
They were defiled with blood
So that no one could touch their garments.
- ¹⁵People cried to them, “Go away! Unclean!
Depart! Depart! Do not touch!”
So they fled, then they wandered [as fugitives];
People among the nations said,
“They shall not stay here any longer *with us*.”
- ¹⁶The presence of the LORD scattered them [among the
nations]; He will not continue to look after them.
They did not honor the priests;
They did not favor the elders.
- ¹⁷[And as for us,] yet our eyes failed,
Looking in vain for help.
Watching [from the towers] we watched
For a nation that could not save. [Ezek 29:16]
- ¹⁸The enemy hunted our steps,
So that we could not walk in our streets;
Our end drew near,
Our days were finished
For our end had come.
- ¹⁹Our pursuers were swifter
Than the eagles of the sky;
They pursued us on the mountains,
They waited in ambush for us in the wilderness.
- ²⁰The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the LORD [our

king], Was captured in their snares,
He of whom we had said, “Under his shadow
We shall live among the nations.”

²¹Rejoice and be glad, O Daughter of Edom, Who lives in the
land of Uz.

But the cup [of the wine of God’s wrath] will pass to you as
well; You will become drunk and make yourself naked. [Jer
25:17]

²²*The punishment* of your sin has been completed, O
Daughter of Zion; The LORD will no longer send you into
exile.

But He will punish your sin, O Daughter of Edom;
He will expose your sins. [Ps 137:7]

5 O LORD, remember what has come upon us; Look, and see
our reproach (national disgrace)!

²Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers, Our
houses to foreigners.

³We have become orphans without a father; Our mothers are
like widows.

⁴We have to pay for our drinking water; Our wood comes to
us at a price.

⁵Our pursuers are at our necks;
We are worn out, there is no rest for us.

⁶We have given the hand [as a pledge of fidelity and
submission] to Egypt and Assyria to get enough bread.

- ⁷Our fathers sinned, and are no more;
It is we who have carried their sin. [Is 65:7; Jer 16:11, 12;
31:29; Ezek 18:2–4]
- ⁸Servants rule over us;
There is no one to rescue us out of their hand. [Neh 5:15]
- ⁹We get our bread at the risk of our lives Because of the
sword [of the Arabs] in the wilderness [who may attack if
we go out to harvest the crop].
- ¹⁰Our skin is as hot as [the heat of] an oven Because of the
burning heat of [the fever of] famine.
- ¹¹They ravished the women in Zion,
The virgins in the cities of Judah.
- ¹²Princes were hung by their hands;
Elders were not respected.
- ¹³Young men worked at the grinding mill,
And boys fell [staggering] under loads of wood.
- ¹⁴Elders are gone from the gate;

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*I worship You, O Lord,
because You reign forever;
Your throne endures from
generation to all generations.*

• adapted from Lamentations 5:19

Young men from their music.

- ¹⁵The joy of our hearts has ended;
Our dancing has been turned into mourning.
- ¹⁶The crown has fallen from our head [our honor is covered
with dust]!
Woe to us, for we have sinned!
- ¹⁷Because of this our heart is faint,
Because of these things our eyes are dim.
- ¹⁸As for Mount Zion, which lies desolate, Foxes *and* the
jackals prowl over it.
- ¹⁹But You, O LORD, reign forever; Your throne endures from
generation to [all] generations.
- ²⁰Why do You forget us forever?
Why do You forsake us so long?
- ²¹Return us to You, O LORD, so that we may be restored;
Renew our days as of old,
- ²²Unless You have utterly rejected us
And are exceedingly angry with us.

POWERPOINT

Clearly there are times in Scripture when God displays His anger. In the books of Jeremiah and Lamentations, Jeremiah wrote a lot about God's righteous anger (see Lam. 5:22). But we are seriously mistaken if we think God is constantly angry and wrathful, just waiting to punish us for our misdeeds. If we spend our time believing God is angry with us, we are focusing on what we have done wrong rather than on what God has done right by sending His Son to pay for our sins. Let's always focus on Jesus and His forgiveness.



Ezekiel

Author: | Ezekiel
Date: | 593 BC–571
BC

One of the powerful principles of our faith that is important to keep in mind at all times is that we are in covenant with God. This means He always loves us and is always faithful to us, no matter what. The book of Ezekiel emphasizes that unbreakable covenant. In fact, Ezekiel's name means, "God is strong," reminding us not only of God's unlimited strength, but also of the strength and power of our covenant with Him. If you are a Christian, you are in a never-ending relationship with God because of His covenant. Let this truth encourage and strengthen you in every situation!

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM EZEKIEL:

Listen closely to God's words and receive them into your heart (see Ezekiel 3:10).

God is against those who speak lies and empty words in His name (see Ezekiel 13:8).

To have victory over sin, repent before God and change any ways of thinking that are making you stumble (see Ezekiel 18:30).

God has given us His Spirit and a new heart (mind) so that we can obey Him. A new heart gives us the right desires, and the Spirit empowers us to accomplish them (see Ezekiel 36:26–27).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM EZEKIEL:

And I will give them one heart [a new heart], and put a new spirit within them. I will take from them the heart of stone, and will give them a heart of flesh [that is responsive to My touch]. | Ezekiel 11:19

You will be My people, and I will be your God. | Ezekiel 36:28

I will put My Spirit in you and you will come to life. | Ezekiel 37:14

THE BOOK OF
EZEKIEL

1 NOW IT came about [when I was] in my thirtieth year [of life], on the fifth day of the fourth month, while I was among the exiles beside the River Chebar [in Babylonia], the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.

²(On the fifth of the month, which was in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity, [2 Kin 24:12–14]

³the word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the River Chebar; and the hand of the LORD came upon him there.) [1 Kin 18:46; 2 Kin 3:15]

⁴As I looked, I saw a stormy wind coming out of the north, a great cloud with fire flashing continually from it; and a brightness was around it, and in its core [there was] something like glowing [amber-colored] metal in the midst of the fire.

⁵Within it there were figures resembling four living beings. And this was their appearance: they had human form.

⁶Each one had four faces and four wings.

⁷Their legs were straight and the soles of their feet were like a calf's hoof, and they sparkled *and* gleamed like shiny bronze.

⁸Under their wings on their four sides they had human

hands. As for the faces and wings of the four of them,

⁹their wings touched one another; *their faces* did not turn when they moved, each went straight forward.

¹⁰Regarding the form *and* appearance of their faces: they [each] had the face of a man [in front], and each had the face of a lion on the right side, and the face of an ox on the left side; all four also had the face of an eagle [at the back of their heads]. [Rev 4:7]

¹¹Such were their faces. Their wings were stretched out upward; two [wings] of each one were touching another [the wings of the beings on either side of it], and [the remaining] two [wings of each being] were covering their bodies.

¹²And each went straight forward; wherever the spirit was about to go, they would go, without turning as they went.

¹³Among the living beings there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches moving back and forth among the living beings. The fire was bright, and lightning was flashing from the fire.

¹⁴And the living beings moved rapidly back and forth like flashes of lightning.

¹⁵Now as I looked at the living beings, I saw one wheel on the ground beside the living beings, for each of the four of them.

¹⁶Regarding the appearance of the wheels and their construction: they gleamed like chrysolite (beryl, olivine); and the four were made alike. Their appearance and construction were a wheel [set at a right angle] within a wheel.

¹⁷Whenever they moved, they went in any [one] of their four directions without turning as they moved.

¹⁸Regarding their rims: they were so high that they were awesome *and* dreadful, and the rims of all four of them were full of eyes all around.

¹⁹Whenever the living beings moved, the wheels moved with them; and when the living beings rose from the earth, the wheels rose also.

²⁰Wherever the spirit went, the beings went in that direction. And the wheels rose along with them; for the spirit *or* life of the living beings was in the wheels.

²¹Whenever those went, these went; and whenever those came to a stop, these came to a stop; and whenever those rose from the earth, the wheels rose close beside them, for the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels.

²²Now stretched over the heads of the living beings *there was* something like an expanse, looking like the terrible *and* awesome shimmer of icy crystal.

²³Under the expanse their wings *were stretched out* straight, one toward another. Every living being had two wings which covered its body on one side and on the other side.

²⁴As they moved, I also heard the sound of their wings like the sound of great [rushing] waters, like the voice of the Almighty, the sound of tumult like the noise of an army camp. Whenever they came to a stop, they lowered their wings.

²⁵And there was a voice above the expanse that was over their heads; whenever they stopped, they lowered their wings.

²⁶Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, it appeared like [it was made of] sapphire *or* lapis lazuli; and [seated] on that which looked like a throne, high up, was a figure with the appearance

of a man. [Phil 2:5–8]

²⁷Now upward, from that which appeared to be His waist, I saw something like glowing metal that looked like it was filled with fire all around it; and downward, from that which appeared to be His waist, I saw something like fire; and *there was* a brightness *and* a remarkable radiance [like a halo] around Him.

²⁸As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory *and* brilliance of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell face downward and I heard a voice of One speaking. [Rev 4:3]

2 THEN HE said to me, “Son of man, stand on your feet and I will speak to you.”

²Then as He spoke to me the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet; and I heard Him speaking to me.

³And He said to me, “I am sending you, son of man, to the children of Israel, to a rebellious people [in both the north and the south] that have rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have sinned *and* revolted against Me to this very day.

⁴“I am sending you to them who are stubborn and obstinate children, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD.’

⁵“As for them, whether they listen or refuse [to listen]—for they are a rebellious house—yet they will know *and* be fully aware of the fact that there has been a prophet among them.

⁶“And you, son of man, neither fear them nor fear their words; though briars and thorns are all around you and you sit

among scorpions, neither fear their words nor be dismayed at their presence, for they are a rebellious house.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Dealing with Uninvited Change

Ezekiel was taken among the exiles into a foreign land, where God called him to be a prophet to his fellow exiles who would not listen to him—a very tough assignment (see Ezek. 2:2–5). Everything about that new land was different. The people were faced with changes everywhere they turned. Of course they did not want to be in exile, and I'm sure most of the changes were very difficult for them.

Although we don't invite all the changes that come our way in life, we can still learn to embrace them. If we don't learn to adapt and adjust to people and things, we will break under the strain of life. This requires humility, trust in God, and a strong commitment to being a maker and maintainer of peace. When you face a circumstance that you didn't invite into your life, ask yourself if you can change it. If you can't, then embrace it, let God help you deal with it, learn from it, and move on.

Speak God's Word

*When God asks me to speak
His words, I will speak them
whether people will listen or
whether they refuse to hear
them.*

| adapted from EZEKIEL 2:7 |

⁷“But you shall speak My words to them whether they will listen or refuse [to listen], for they are [most] rebellious.

⁸“As for you, son of man, listen to what I say to you; do not be rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I am giving you.”

⁹Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out toward me; and behold, a scroll of a book was in it.

¹⁰And He spread it before me, and it was written on the front and on the back, and written on it were [words of] lamentation (funeral songs) and mourning and woe.

3 HE SAID to me, “Son of man, eat what you find [in this book]; eat this scroll, then go, speak to the house of Israel.”

²So I opened my mouth, and He fed me the scroll.

³He said to me, “Son of man, eat this scroll that I am giving you and fill your stomach with it.” So I ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth.

⁴Then He said to me, “Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak My words to them.

⁵“For you are not being sent to a people of unintelligible speech or difficult language, but to the house of Israel,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Eat Your Words

When the Lord told Ezekiel to eat the scroll (see Ezek. 3:1), I'm reminded of the times I've heard people say, "You are going to eat those words." That phrase may sound like nothing more than an old saying, but in the same way, the foods we eat affect us physically, the words we speak affect us spiritually, mentally, and emotionally. I believe they also affect us physically, because the more our conversations are filled with hope and happiness, the more energetic we feel. A positive, hopeful attitude expressed through our words relieves stress, which is the root cause of a lot of sickness and disease.

Several years ago, I got really serious about taking care of my health. One of the first things I learned as I studied diet and exercise routines is that everything we eat affects our body's performance. What we eat on any given day can determine how we feel, how much we accomplish, how mentally alert we are, and what our attitude will be. Good or bad—salad or doughnuts—the food that goes into our mouth affects our bodies, our emotions, and our thought processes.

In the same way, the words you speak—whether they are hopeful declarations or negative confessions—affect your life in many ways. Words have power, and what you say does make a difference. As soon as you say something, those words will go into your ears and directly into your soul. If your words are

*filled with life, you will feel happier and more energetic.
Watch your words today, because you'll eat them!*

POWERPOINT

In Ezekiel 3:7, the Israelites are
“stubborn and obstinate.”

Being stubborn means being
difficult to handle or refusing to
follow guidelines. These
definitions once described me.

The abuse I suffered in my
early life caused a lot of my
out-of-balance attitudes toward
authority. However, I could not
allow my past to become an
excuse to stay trapped in
rebellion. Victorious living
requires a consistent heart of
obedience to the Lord as we
grow in our ability and
willingness to lay aside our will
and do His.



⁶not to many peoples of unintelligible speech or difficult language, whose words you cannot understand. But I have sent you to them who should listen to you *and* pay attention

to My message;

⁷yet the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you *and* obey you, since they are not willing to listen to Me *and* obey Me, for the entire house of Israel is stubborn and obstinate.

⁸“Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces and your forehead as hard as their foreheads.

⁹“I have made your forehead like emery (diamond), harder than flint. Do not be afraid of them or be dismayed before them, though they are a rebellious house.” [Is 50:7; Jer 1:18; 15:20; Mic 3:8]

¹⁰Moreover, He said to me, “Son of man, receive into your heart all My words which I will speak to you and hear with your ears (listen closely).

Speak God's Word

*I will not only hear the words
God speaks to me with my
ears; I will also receive them
in my heart.*

| adapted from EZEKIEL 3:10 |

¹¹“Go to the [Jewish] exiles [in Babylon], to the children of your people, and speak to them, whether they listen or not, and tell them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD.’”

¹²Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard a great rushing sound behind me, “Blessed be the glory of the LORD in His place [above the expanse].”

¹³And then I *heard* the sound of the wings of the living beings as they touched one another and [I heard] the sound of the wheels beside them, a great rushing sound.

¹⁴So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went embittered [by the sins of Israel] in the rage of my spirit; and the hand of the LORD was strong on me.

¹⁵Then I came to the exiles who lived beside the River Chebar at Tel Abib. I sat there for seven days [in the place] where they were living, overwhelmed with astonishment [by my vision and the work before me].

¹⁶At the end of seven days the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

¹⁷“Son of man, I have appointed you as a watchman to the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, warn them from Me. [Is 52:8; 56:10; 62:6; Jer 6:17]

¹⁸“When I say to the wicked, ‘You will certainly die,’ and you do not warn him or speak out to tell him to turn from his wicked way to save his life, that same evil man will die in his sin, but you will be responsible for his blood.

¹⁹“However, if you have warned the wicked and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his wicked way, he will die in his sin; but you have freed yourself [from responsibility].

²⁰“Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness (right standing with God) and sins, and I place an obstacle before him, he will die; since you have not warned him, he will die in his sin, and the righteous deeds which he has done will not be remembered; but you will be responsible for his blood.

²¹“However, if you have warned the righteous man not to sin and he does not sin, he will surely live because he took warning; also you have freed yourself [from responsibility].”

²²The hand of the LORD was on me there, and He said to me, “Arise, go out to the plain, and I will speak to you.”

²³So I got up and went out to the plain; and behold, the glory *and* brilliance of the LORD was standing there, like the glory I had seen by the River Chebar, and I fell face downward.

²⁴Then the Spirit entered me and made me stand on my feet; He spoke and said to me, “Go, shut yourself up in your house.

²⁵“As for you, son of man, they will put ropes on you and bind you with them so that you cannot go out among them.

²⁶“And I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth so that you cannot talk and you cannot be a man who rebukes the people, for they are a rebellious house.

²⁷“But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth and you will say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD.’ He who hears, let him hear; and he who refuses [to hear], let him refuse; for they are a rebellious house.

4 “NOW YOU, son of man, take a brick, place it before you and inscribe on it [a diagram of] the city of Jerusalem.

²“Then lay siege against it, build a siege wall, raise a ramp against it; set up [enemy] camps and place battering rams all around it.

³“Further, take an iron plate and place it as an iron wall between you and the city, and set your face toward it so that it is under siege, and besiege it. This is a sign to the house of Israel.

⁴“Then lie down on your left side (toward the north) to bear [symbolically] the wickedness *and* punishment of the house of Israel. You shall bear their wickedness *and* punishment for the number of days that you lie on your side.

⁵“For I have assigned you the years of their wickedness *and* punishment, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days [representing three hundred and ninety years]; in this way you shall bear [symbolically] the wickedness *and* punishment of the house of Israel.

⁶“When you have completed these [days for Israel], lie down again, but on your right side (toward the south), and you shall bear the wickedness *and* punishment of the house of Judah forty days. I have assigned you one day for each year.

⁷“Then you shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem with your arm bared and prophesy against it.

⁸“Now behold, I will put ropes on you so that you cannot turn from one side to the other until you have completed the days of your siege.

⁹“But as for you, take wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and spelt, and put them into one vessel and make them into bread for yourself. You shall eat it according to the number of the days that you lie on your side, three hundred and ninety days.

¹⁰“The food you eat each day *shall be* [measured] by weight, twenty shekels, to be eaten daily at a set time.

¹¹“You shall drink water by measure also, the sixth part of a hin; you shall drink daily at a set time.

¹²“You shall eat your food as barley cakes, having baked it in their sight over human dung.”

¹³Then the LORD said, “Thus the children of Israel will eat their bread unclean *and* defiled among the nations where I will banish them.” [Hos 9:3]

¹⁴But I said, “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold (hear me), I have never been defiled; for from my youth until now I have never eaten what died on its own or was torn by beasts, nor has any unclean meat ever entered my mouth.” [Acts 10:14]

¹⁵Then He said to me, “See, I will let you use cow’s dung instead of human dung over which you shall prepare your

food.”

¹⁶Moreover, He said to me, “Son of man, behold (listen carefully), I am going to break the staff of bread [that supports life] in Jerusalem; and they shall eat bread [rationed] by weight and [eat it] with anxiety *and* fear, and drink water by measure and [drink it] in horror [of the impending starvation], [Lev 26:26; Ps 105:16; Is 3:1]

¹⁷because bread and water will be scarce; and they will look at one another in dismay and waste away [in punishment] for their wickedness.

5 “AND YOU [Ezekiel], son of man, take a sharp sword and use it as a barber’s razor and shave your head and your beard. Then take scales for weighing and divide the hair [into three parts].

²“You shall burn one third with fire in the center of the city, when the days of the siege are completed. Then you shall take one third and strike it with the sword all around the city, and one third you shall scatter to the wind; and I will unsheathe a sword behind them.

³“Also take some of them and bind them in the edges of your robes.

⁴“Again take some hair and throw them into the fire and burn them in the fire; from it a fire will spread to all the house of Israel.

⁵“Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the center of the nations, and countries are around her.

⁶“And she has rebelled against My ordinances more

wickedly than the [pagan] nations and against My statutes more than the countries that are around her; for Israel has rejected My ordinances and has not walked in My statutes.’ [Rom 2:14, 15]

⁷“Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Because you have more turmoil than the nations which surround you and have not walked in My statutes, nor kept My ordinances, nor observed the ordinances of the nations which surround you,’ [Deut 7:2–6; Josh 23:7; Judg 2:2]

⁸therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I, I Myself, am against you, and I will execute judgments among you in the sight of the nations.

⁹‘And because of all your abominations, I will do among you that which I have not done, and the like of which I will not do again. [Lam 4:6; Dan 9:12; Amos 3:2]

¹⁰‘Therefore, fathers will eat their sons among you, and sons will eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments on you and I will scatter to all the winds the remnant of you. [Lev 26:33; Deut 28:64; Ezek 12:14; Zech 2:6]

¹¹‘So, as I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable idols and with all your abominations, therefore I will also diminish you *and* withdraw, and My eye will have no pity and I will not spare [you].

¹²‘One third of you will die of virulent disease or be consumed by famine among you; one third will fall by the sword around you; and one third I will scatter to all the winds, and I will unsheathe a sword behind them.

¹³‘Thus My anger will come to an end and I will satisfy My

wrath on them, and I will be appeased; then they will know [without any doubt] that I the LORD have spoken in My zeal when I have spent My wrath on them. [Ezek 36:6; 38:19]

¹⁴Moreover, I will make you a desolation and a disgrace among the nations which surround you and in the sight of all who pass by. [Lev 26:31, 32; Neh 2:17]

¹⁵So it will be a disgrace, a taunt, a warning and an object of horror to the [pagan] nations who surround you when I execute judgments against you in anger and in wrath and in raging reprimands—I, the LORD, have spoken. [Deut 28:37; Ps 79:4; Jer 24:9]

¹⁶When I send against them the deadly arrows of hunger which were for the destruction of those whom I will send to destroy you, then I will increase the famine upon you and break your staff of bread.

¹⁷Further, I will send against you hunger and wild beasts, and they will bereave you of children; virulent disease and bloodshed also will pass through you, and I will bring the sword on you. I, the LORD, have spoken.”

6 AND THE word of the LORD came to me, saying,

²“Son of man, set your face against the mountains of Israel and prophesy against them,

³and say, ‘You mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD! Thus says the Lord GOD to the mountains and the hills, to the ravines and the valleys: “Behold, I Myself am going to bring a sword on you, and I will destroy your high places [of idolatrous worship],

⁴and your altars will become deserted and your pillars for sun-worship will be smashed in pieces; and I will throw down your slain in front of your idols [that cannot bring them back to life]. [Lev 26:30]

⁵“I will also lay the dead bodies of the children of Israel in front of their [Canaanite] idols; and I will scatter your bones all around your altars.

⁶“Everywhere you live, the cities will become waste and the high places will become deserted, so that your altars may bear their guilt *and* become deserted, your idols may be broken and destroyed, your incense altars [for sun-worship] may be cut down, and your works may be blotted out.

⁷“The slain will fall among you, then you shall know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD.

⁸“Yet I will leave some of you alive [a remnant], for you will have some who escaped the sword among the nations when you are scattered throughout the countries.

⁹“Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations to which they will be exiled, how I have been broken by their lewdness *and* their adulterous hearts which have turned away from Me, and by their eyes which lust after their idols; and they will loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed, for all their repulsive acts.

¹⁰“Then they will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD; I have not said in vain that I would bring this disaster [as punishment] on them.” ’

¹¹“Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Strike with your fist, stamp with your foot and say, “Alas, because of all the evil atrocities of the house of Israel, which will fall by sword, by famine, and

by virulent disease!

¹²“He who is far away will die of the virulent disease, and he who is near will fall by the sword, and he who remains and is besieged will die by the famine. Thus I will spend My wrath on them.

¹³“Then you will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD, when their slain are among their idols around their altars, on every high hill, on all the tops of the mountains, under every leafy tree and under every oak with thick branches, the places where they offered sweet incense *and* a soothing aroma to all their idols.

¹⁴“And I will stretch out My hand against them and make the land a more desolate waste than the wilderness toward Diblah [the Moabite city], throughout all the places where they live; and they will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD.””

7 MOREOVER, THE word of the LORD came to me, saying,

²“Also, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD to the land of Israel, ‘An end! The end is coming on the four corners of the land. [Ezek 11:13; Amos 8:2]

POWERPOINT

Ezekiel 7:3–4 makes clear that God certainly hates all sin, but we should also remember that He loves all sinners. God will never love you any more than He does right now, because His love is perfect at all times and is not based on anything we do or do not do. No amount of improvement on our part can earn us any more of God's love. He has determined to give us mercy for our failures so we might continue to have fellowship with Him and receive from Him the help we so desperately need. When we fail, we should never pull away from God, but we should run to Him and receive His mercy, grace, and forgiveness.



³‘Now the end is upon you, and I will send My anger against you and will judge you in accordance with your ways and I will bring [retribution for] all your abominations upon you.

⁴‘For My eye will have no pity on you, nor will I spare you, but I will repay you for your evil ways, while your abominations are among you; and you will know (recognize, understand) [without any doubt] that I am the LORD.’

⁵“Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘A disaster is coming, [one so destructive and injurious, so sudden and violent, that it stands alone,] a unique disaster, look it is coming!

⁶‘An end is coming; the end has come! It has awakened against you. Look, it has come!

⁷‘Your doom has come to you, O inhabitant of the land; the time has come, the day is near—tumult rather than joyful shouting on the mountains.

⁸‘Now I will soon pour out My wrath on you and spend My anger against you, and I will judge you in accordance with your ways and will repay you [with punishment] for all your outrageous acts.

⁹‘My eye will show no pity nor will I spare [you]. I will repay you in accordance with your ways, while your abominations are in your midst; then you will know *and* understand that it is I, the LORD, who strikes you.

¹⁰‘Behold, the day! Behold, it is coming! Your doom has gone forth, the rod has blossomed, arrogance has sprouted.

¹¹‘Violence has grown into a rod of wickedness; none of them (Israel) *will remain*, none of their people, none of their wealth, nor anything eminent among them.

¹²‘The time has come, the day has arrived. Let not the buyer rejoice nor the seller mourn, for wrath is against all their multitude [of people].

¹³‘For the seller will not regain *and* return to what he sold, even were they yet alive; for the vision [of punishment] regarding all the multitude [of people] will not be turned back, nor will any one of them sustain his life because of his sin.

¹⁴‘They have blown the trumpet and have made everything ready, but no one is going to the battle, for My wrath is against all their multitude [of people].

¹⁵‘The sword is outside and virulent disease and famine are within. He who is in the field will die by the sword, and famine and disease will devour those in the city.

¹⁶‘Even when their survivors escape, they will be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them moaning, each over his [punishment for] sin.

¹⁷‘All hands will hang limp and all knees will be as weak as water. [Is 13:7; Jer 6:24; Ezek 21:7]

¹⁸‘They will also cover themselves with sackcloth; horror will overwhelm them, and shame *will be* on all faces and baldness on all their heads [as evidence of grief].

¹⁹‘They will fling their silver into the streets and their gold will be [discarded] like something unclean; their silver and their gold shall not be able to save them in the day of the wrath of the LORD. These [things] cannot satisfy their soul nor fill their stomachs, for they have become their stumbling block *and* source of sin. [Prov 11:4; Zeph 1:18]

²⁰‘As for the beauty of [gold for] ornaments, they turned it to pride and from it made the images of their repulsive things

(idols) and of their vile things. Therefore I will make it an unclean thing to them.

²¹“I will give it into the hands of strangers (Babylonians) as plunder and to the wicked of the earth as spoil, and they shall profane it.

²²“I will also turn My face away from them, and they will desecrate My secret treasure (the Jerusalem temple); and robbers will enter [irreverently] into it (the Holy of Holies) and violate it.

²³“Prepare the chain [for imprisonment], for the land is full of bloody crimes [murders committed under the pretense of civil justice] and the city is full of violence.

²⁴“Therefore, I will bring the worst of the [Gentile] nations, and they will take possession of their houses [those of the people of Judah]; I will also silence their pride, and their holy places will be profaned.

²⁵“When anguish comes, they [of Judah] shall seek peace, but there will be none.

²⁶“Disaster will come upon disaster and rumor will be *heaped* on rumor; they will seek a vision from a prophet, but the law *and* guidance will be lost from the priest and [wise] counsel [will cease] from the elders. [Ps 74:9; Lam 2:9]

²⁷“The king [of Judah] will mourn and the prince (Zedekiah) will be clothed with [garments of] despair *and* anguish, and the hands of the people of the land shall tremble [in terror]. I will deal with them in accordance with their conduct, and by their judgments I will judge them. And they will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD.”

8 IT CAME about in the sixth year [of the captivity of King Jehoiachin], on the fifth day of the sixth month, as I sat in my house [near Babylon] with the elders of Judah sitting before me, that the hand of the Lord GOD fell on me there.

²Then I looked, and behold, a likeness [of a man] with the appearance of fire; from His loins downward He was like fire, and from His loins upward He had the appearance of brightness, like gleaming metal (bronze).

³He stretched out the form of a hand and took me by a lock of hair on my head; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the north gate of the inner *courtyard*, where the seat of the idol (image) of jealousy, which provokes to jealousy, was *located*. [2 Kin 16:10–16; 21:4, 5]

⁴And behold, the glory *and* brilliance of the God of Israel [who had loved and chosen them] was there, like the vision which I saw in the plain. [Ezek 1:28; 3:22, 23]

⁵Then He said to me, “Son of man, now raise your eyes toward the north.” So I looked toward the north, and behold, to the north of the altar gate was this idol (image) of jealousy at the entrance.

⁶Furthermore, He said to me, “Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great repulsive acts which the house of Israel is committing here, to drive Me far away from My sanctuary? But you will again see greater repulsive acts.”

⁷Then He brought me to the entrance of the courtyard; and when I looked, behold, [there was] a hole in the wall.

⁸He said to me, “Son of man, now dig into the wall.” And

when I had dug into the wall, behold, there was an entrance.

⁹And He said to me, “Go in and see the wicked, repulsive acts that they are committing here.”

¹⁰So I entered and looked, and saw every kind of creeping things and beasts and loathsome things, and all the idols of the house of Israel, carved all around on the wall.

¹¹Standing before these [images] were seventy elders of the house of Israel, and among them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan [the scribe], each man with his censer in his hand and a thick *and* fragrant cloud of incense was rising [as they prayed to these gods].

¹²Then He said to me, “Son of man, do you see what the elders of the house of Israel do in the dark, each man in his [secret] room of carved images? For they say, ‘The LORD does not see us; the LORD has abandoned the land.’”

¹³He also said to me, “Yet again you will see even greater repulsive acts which they are committing.”

¹⁴Then He brought me to the entrance of the north gate of the LORD’s house; and behold, women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz.

¹⁵He said to me, “Do you see this, son of man? Yet you will see still greater repulsive acts than these [that they are committing].”

¹⁶So He brought me to the inner court of the LORD’s house. And behold, at the entrance to the temple of the LORD, between the porch (vestibule, portico) and the [bronze] altar, were about twenty-five men with their backs to the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east; and they were bowing down toward the east *and* worshiping the sun.

¹⁷He said to me, “Do you see this, son of man? Is it too slight a thing for the house of Judah to commit the repulsive acts which they have committed here, that they have filled the land with violence and repeatedly provoked Me to anger? And behold, they are putting the branch to their nose.

¹⁸“Therefore, I indeed will deal in wrath. My eye will have no pity nor will I spare [them]; and though they cry loudly in My ears, yet I will not listen to them.” [Prov 1:28; Is 1:15; Jer 11:11; 14:12; Mic 3:4; Zech 7:13]

9 THEN [in my vision] I heard Him cry out with a thunderous voice, saying, “Approach now, executioners of the city, each with his weapon of destruction in his hand.”

²Behold, six men [angelic beings] came from the direction of the Upper Gate, which faces north, each with his battle-axe in his hand; and among them was a certain man clothed in linen, with a scribe’s writing case at his side. They entered and stood beside the bronze altar.

³Then the [Shekinah] glory *and* brilliance of the God of Israel (the cloud) went up from the cherubim on which it had rested, to [stand above] the threshold of the [LORD’s] temple. And the LORD called to the man clothed with linen, who had the scribe’s writing case at his side.

⁴The LORD said to him, “Go through the midst of the city, throughout all of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh [in distress] and grieve over all the repulsive acts which are being committed in it.”

⁵But to the others I heard Him say, “Follow him [the man

with the scribe's writing case] throughout the city and strike; do not let your eyes have pity and do not spare [anyone].

⁶“Utterly slay old men, young men, maidens, little children, and women; but do not touch *or* go near anyone on whom is the mark. Begin at My sanctuary.” So they began with the old men who were in front of the temple [who did not have the LORD's mark on their foreheads]. [1 Pet 4:17]

⁷And He said to the executioners, “Defile the temple and fill its courtyards with the dead. Go out!” So they went out and struck down *the people* in the city.

⁸As they were executing them and I *alone* was left, I fell face downward and cried out, “Alas, Lord GOD! Will You destroy all that is left of Israel [the whole remnant] by pouring out Your wrath *and* indignation on Jerusalem?”

⁹Then He said to me, “The wickedness (guilt) of the house of Israel and Judah is extremely great; the land is full of blood and the city is full of perversion *and* injustice; for they say, ‘The LORD has abandoned the land; the LORD does not see [what we are doing].’

¹⁰“But as for Me, My eye will have no pity, nor will I spare, but I will bring their [wicked] conduct upon their [own] heads.”

¹¹Then behold, the man clothed in linen, who had the scribe's writing case at his side, reported, “I have done just as You have commanded me.”

10 THEN I looked, and behold, in the expanse (firmament) that was over the heads of the cherubim there appeared something [glorious and brilliant] above them looking like a

[huge] sapphire stone, formed to resemble a throne.

²And the LORD spoke to the man (seventh angel) clothed in linen and said, “Go between the whirling wheels under the cherubim; fill your hands with coals of fire from between the cherubim and scatter them over the city.” And he entered as I watched. [Rev 8:5]

³Now the cherubim were standing on the right side of the temple when the man entered; and a cloud [the Shekinah glory of God] filled the inner courtyard.

⁴Then the glory *and* brilliance of the LORD moved upward from the cherubim to [rest over] the threshold of the temple; and the temple was filled with the cloud and the courtyard was filled with the brightness of the LORD’s glory. [1 Kin 8:10, 11; Ezek 43:5]

⁵And the sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard [even] as far as the outer courtyard, like the voice of God Almighty when He speaks. [Ps 29:3, 4]

⁶It came about when He commanded the man clothed in linen, saying, “Take fire from between the whirling wheels, from between the cherubim,” the man entered and stood beside a wheel.

⁷Then a cherub stretched out his hand from between the cherubim to the fire that was between [the four of] them, and took some [of it] and put it into the hands of the man clothed in linen, who took it and departed.

⁸Beneath their wings the cherubim seemed to have [something in] the form of a man’s hand.

⁹Then I looked and behold, [there were] four wheels beside the cherubim, one wheel beside one cherub and another wheel

beside each other cherub; and the appearance of the wheels was like a sparkling Tarshish stone (beryl).

¹⁰As for their appearance, all four looked alike, as if one wheel were within another wheel.

¹¹When they moved, they went in any of their four directions without turning as they went; but they followed in the direction which they faced, without turning as they went.

¹²Their whole body, their backs, their hands, their wings, and the wheels were full of eyes all around, even the wheels belonging to all four of them.

¹³Regarding the wheels [attached to them], I heard them called, “the whirling (rolling, revolving) wheels.”

¹⁴And each one had four faces: the first face was the face of the cherub, the second the face of a man, the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.

¹⁵Then the cherubim rose upward. They are the [same four] living beings [regarded as one] that I saw by the River Chebar [in Babylonia]. [Ezek 1:5]

¹⁶Now when the cherubim moved, the wheels would go beside them; and when the cherubim lifted up their wings to rise from the earth, the wheels would remain beside them.

¹⁷When the cherubim stood still, the wheels would stand still; and when they rose upward, the wheels would rise with them, for the spirit of the living beings was in these [wheels]. [Ezek 1:21]

¹⁸Then the [Shekinah] glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the temple and rested over the cherubim.

¹⁹As I looked at them, the cherubim lifted up their wings and rose up from the earth, they departed with the wheels

beside them; and they stood still at the entrance of the east gate of the house of the LORD, and the glory *and* brilliance of the God of Israel hovered over them.

²⁰These are the living beings that I saw beneath the God of Israel by the River Chebar; and I knew that they were cherubim.

²¹Each one had four faces and each one had four wings, and beneath their wings was the form of human hands.

²²As for the likeness of their faces, they were the same faces whose appearance I had seen by the River Chebar. Each one went straight forward.

11 MOREOVER, THE Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the gate of the LORD's house, which faced eastward. And behold, at the entrance of the gate *there were* twenty-five men; and I saw among them Jaazaniah the son of Azzur and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people.

²Then the Spirit said to me, "Son of man, these are the men who devise evil and give wicked advice in this city,

³who say, 'Is not *the time* near to build houses? This *city* is [secure just like] the pot and we are the meat [in it].'

⁴"Therefore, prophesy against them; prophesy, son of man!"

⁵Then the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and He said to me, "Say, 'Thus says the LORD, "This is what you think, house of Israel, for I know your thoughts.

⁶"You have multiplied your slain in this city, and you have filled its streets with the corpses [of righteous men]."

⁷Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, “Your dead whom you have laid in the midst of your city are the meat and this city is the pot; but I shall force you out of [the security of] it.

⁸“You have feared the sword; so I will bring a sword upon you,” says the Lord GOD.

⁹“And I will bring you out of the midst of the city and hand you over to strangers and execute judgment against you.

¹⁰“You will fall by the sword; I will judge *and* punish you [in front of your neighbors] at the border of [the land of] Israel; and you will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD.

¹¹“This *city* will not be a pot for you, nor will you be meat [safe] in it, but I will judge you at the border of Israel.

¹²“And you will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD; for you have not walked in My statutes nor have you executed My ordinances, but you have acted in accordance with the ordinances of the nations around you.””

¹³Now it came about while I was prophesying, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died. Then I fell face downward and cried out loudly, “Alas, Lord GOD! Will You bring the remnant of Israel to a complete end?”

¹⁴Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

¹⁵“Son of man, your brothers, your relatives, your fellow exiles and the whole house of Israel, all of them, are those to whom the [present] inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, ‘Go far away from the LORD; this land has been given to us as a possession.’

¹⁶“Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Though I had removed Israel far away among the nations and though I had

scattered them among the countries, yet I have been a sanctuary for them for a little while in the countries to which they had gone.” ’

POWERPOINT

Though I don't believe we can ever do everything perfectly, I do think we can have a perfect heart toward God. That means we can love Him wholeheartedly and want to please Him and do what is right. When we receive Jesus as the perfect sacrifice for our sins, He gives us a new heart and places His Spirit within us. I like to say He gives us a new "want to," a fresh desire to please Him. A new heart gives us right desires, and the Spirit within us empowers us to accomplish them.



KEYS to a Victorious Life

A New Heart

In Ezekiel 11:19, God promises to give His people a new heart to replace the stony, hardened heart that is in them. This new heart will be sensitive and responsive to Him. This promise is repeated in Ezekiel 36:26, when the Lord says, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you, and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”

Through the new birth, or spiritual birth, we receive Jesus into our heart. This places us “into Christ,” and therefore into a new way of thinking, speaking, and acting. But even after the new birth experience, Ephesians 4:23 says that we are to be continually renewed in the spirit of our mind, having a fresh mental and spiritual attitude. This new mental and spiritual attitude is part of a new, softened heart that is sensitive to God.

¹⁷“Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give [back] to you the land of Israel.” ’

¹⁸“When they return there, they will remove from it all [traces of] its detestable things and all its repulsive things (remnants of paganism).

¹⁹“And I will give them one heart [a new heart], and put a new spirit within them. I will take from them the heart of stone, and will give them a heart of flesh [that is responsive to My touch], [Ezek 18:31; 36:26; 2 Cor 3:3]

²⁰that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God.

²¹“But as for those whose heart longs for *and* follows after their detestable things and their repulsive things [associated with idolatry], on their own head I will repay [them in full for] their [vile] conduct,” says the Lord GOD.

Speak God's Word

*Lord, I will walk in
obedience to Your statutes
and ordinances because I
belong to You and You
belong to me.*

| adapted from EZEKIEL 11:20 |

²²Then the cherubim lifted up their wings with the wheels beside them, and the [Shekinah] glory of the God of Israel hovered over them.

²³Then the glory *and* brilliance of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and paused over the mountain, [the Mount of Olives] which is east of the city.

²⁴And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God to the exiles in Chaldea (Babylonia). Then the vision that I had seen left me.

²⁵Then I told the exiles everything that the LORD had shown me.

12 THE WORD of the LORD also came to me, saying,

²“Son of man, you live among a rebellious house, who have

eyes to see but do not see, who have ears to hear but do not hear; for they are a rebellious people. [Mark 8:18]

³“Therefore, son of man, prepare your belongings for exile, and move into exile during the day when they will see you; even go into exile from your place to another place as they watch. Perhaps they will understand even though they are a rebellious people.

⁴“Bring your provisions *and* supplies out during the day as they watch, as provisions *and* supplies for [going into] exile. Then you shall go out at evening as they watch, as those going into exile.

⁵“Dig through the wall as they watch and go out through the hole.

⁶“As they look on, load *the provisions and supplies* on your shoulder and carry it out in the dark. You shall cover your face so that you cannot see the land, for I have set you as a sign to the house of Israel.”

⁷I did as I had been commanded. I brought out my provisions *and* supplies during the day, like the provisions *and* supplies of an exile, and in the evening I dug through the wall with my hands. I brought out *my provisions and supplies* in the dark, carrying it on my shoulder as they watched.

⁸In the morning the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

⁹“Son of man, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, asked you, ‘What you are doing?’

¹⁰“Say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “This oracle (a burden to be carried) concerns the prince (Zedekiah) in Jerusalem as well as all the house of Israel who are there.” ’

¹¹“Say, ‘I am a sign to you. As I have done, so it will be

done to them; they will go into exile, into captivity.’

¹²“The prince who is among them will load *his provisions and supplies* on his shoulder in the dark and go out. They will dig a hole through the wall to go out. He will cover his face so that he cannot see the land with his eyes.

¹³“I will also spread My net over him, and he will be caught in My snare. And I will bring him to Babylon, to the land of the Chaldeans; yet he will not see it, though he will die there. [2 Kin 25:1–7; Jer 39:5; 52:7–11]

¹⁴“I will scatter to every wind all who are around him, his helpers and all his troops; and I will draw out a sword after them.

¹⁵“So they will know *and* understand fully that I am the LORD when I scatter them among the nations and disperse them among the [pagan] countries.

¹⁶“But I will leave a few [survivors] who will escape the sword, the famine, and the virulent disease, that they may confess all their repulsive (idolatrous) acts among the nations where they go, and may know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD.”

¹⁷Moreover, the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

¹⁸“Son of man, eat your bread with anxiety, and drink your water with trembling and with fear.

¹⁹“Then say to the people of the land, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD concerning the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the land of Israel, “They will eat their bread with anxiety and drink their water with horror, because their land will be stripped *and* looted of its fullness because of the violence of all those who live in it.

20“‘The cities that are inhabited will be in ruins and the land will be deserted; and you will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD.’”

21Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

22“Son of man, what is this proverb that you have in the land of Israel, saying, ‘The days are long and every vision fails’?

23“‘Therefore tell them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “I will put an end to this proverb, and they will no longer use it as a proverb in Israel.” But say to them, “The days draw near as well as the fulfillment of every vision.

24“‘For there will no longer be any false *and* empty vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel.

25“‘For I the LORD will speak, and whatever word I speak will be accomplished. It will no longer be delayed, for in your days, O rebellious house, I will speak the word and I will fulfill it,” says the Lord GOD.’”

26Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

27“Son of man, behold, the house of Israel is saying, ‘The vision that Ezekiel sees is for many years *from now*, and he prophesies of the times that are far off.’

28“‘Therefore say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “None of My words will be delayed any longer. Whatever word I speak will be fulfilled completely,’” says the Lord God.

13 AND THE word of the LORD came to me saying,

2“Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who

prophecy, and say to those who prophesy from their own inspiration, 'Hear the word of the LORD!

³"Thus says the Lord GOD, "Woe (judgment is coming) to the foolish prophets who are following their own spirit [claiming to have seen things] but have [in fact] seen nothing.

⁴"O Israel, your prophets have been like foxes among the ruins.

⁵"You have not gone up into the gaps *or* breaches, nor built the wall around the house of Israel that it might stand in the battle on the day of the LORD.

⁶"They have seen falsehood and lying divination, saying, 'The LORD says,' but the LORD has not sent them. Yet they hope *and* make men to hope for the confirmation of their word.

⁷"Did you not see (make up) a false vision and speak a lying divination when you said, 'The LORD declares,' but it is not I who have spoken?""

⁸Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, "Because you have spoken empty *and* delusive words and have seen lies, therefore behold, I am against you," says the Lord God.

⁹"So My hand will be against the [counterfeit] prophets who see (make up) empty *and* delusive visions and who give lying prophecies. They will have no place in the [secret] council of My people, nor will they be recorded in the register of the house of Israel, nor will they enter into the land of Israel, that you may know [without any doubt] that I am the Lord GOD.

¹⁰"It is definitely because they have seduced My people, saying, 'Peace,' when there is no peace, and because when one builds a [flimsy] wall, behold, these [lying] prophets plaster it over with whitewash;

¹¹so tell those who plaster it with whitewash, that it will fall!
A flooding rain [of judgment] will come, and you, O [great]
hailstones, will fall; and a violent wind will tear the wall apart.

¹²“Behold, when the wall has fallen, will you not be asked,
‘Where is the coating with which you [prophets] plastered it?’”

Speak God's Word

*I will not speak empty and
delusive words, because the
Lord God is with me.*

| *adapted from* EZEKIEL 13:8 |

¹³Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, “I will make a violent wind break out in My wrath, and there will be in My anger an overwhelming rain and great hailstones to destroy [that wall] in wrath.

¹⁴“So I will tear down the wall which you have plastered with whitewash and bring it down to the ground, so that its foundations will be exposed; when it falls, you will perish in its midst. And you shall know *and* understand fully that I am the LORD.

¹⁵“Thus I will expend My wrath on the wall and on those who have plastered it with whitewash and I will say to you, ‘The wall is gone and its plasterers are gone,

¹⁶*along with* the [false] prophets of Israel who prophesy [deceitfully] to Jerusalem, and who see [false] visions of peace for her when there is no peace,’ says the Lord GOD.

¹⁷“Now you, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people who are prophesying out of [the

wishful thinking of] their own mind (inspiration). Prophecy against them

¹⁸and say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Woe to the women who fasten *magic* (protective) charms on all wrists and make veils for the heads of those of every stature to capture [human] lives! Will you capture the lives of My people but keep your own?”

¹⁹“You have profaned Me among My people [in payment] for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, killing people who should not die and giving [a guarantee of] life to those who should not live, because of your lies to My people who pay attention to lies.””

²⁰Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I am against your *magic* bands [and veils] by which you hunt [human] lives as birds and I will tear them from your arms; and I will let the lives you hunt go free, even those lives whom you hunt as birds.

²¹“I will also tear off your [pagan] veils and rescue My people from your hands, and they will no longer be in your grip to be hunted *and* trapped. Then you will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD.

²²“Because you disheartened the righteous with falsehood when I did not cause him grief, but have encouraged the wicked not to turn from his wicked way and preserve his life,

²³therefore, you women will no longer see false visions or practice divinations, and I will rescue My people from your hand. Then you will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD.”

14 THEN CERTAIN of the elders of Israel came to me [seeking an oracle from God] and sat down before me.

²And the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

³“Son of man, these men have set up [and honored] their idols in their hearts and have put right before their faces the [vile] stumbling block of their wickedness *and* guilt; should I [permit Myself to] be consulted by them at all?

⁴“Therefore speak to them and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Any man of the house of Israel who takes his idols [of rebellion] into his heart, and puts the [vile] stumbling block of his wickedness *and* guilt [images of silver and gold] before his face, and yet comes to the prophet [to ask of him], I the LORD will answer him, [but I will answer him] in accordance with the number of his idols,

⁵in order that I may take hold of the heart (mind) of the house of Israel who are all estranged from Me because of their idols.” ’

⁶“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Repent and turn away from your idols and turn your faces away from all your disgusting *and* vile acts.

⁷“For anyone of the house of Israel or among the strangers who immigrate to Israel who separates himself from Me, taking his idols into his heart, and puts right before his face the [vile] stumbling block of his wickedness *and* guilt, and [then] comes to the prophet to ask of Me for himself, I the LORD will answer him Myself.

⁸“I will set My face against that man [that hypocrite] and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from

among My people; and you will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD.

⁹“But if the prophet [who speaks without My authority] is enticed to speak a word [of his own], it is I the LORD who have caused that prophet [to speak falsely to please the inquirer, thus allowing himself to be a party to the inquirer’s sin], and I will stretch out My hand against him and destroy him from among My people Israel.

POWERPOINT

When we read that God called Israel to turn away from their idols and vile acts (see Ezek. 14:6), we need to keep in mind that an idol is anything we worship by giving it too much attention or anything that is more important to us than God. An idol can be social status, money, a job, a house, or a family. Ask God to help you put Him in first place in your life. He will gladly do it!



¹⁰“They [both] will bear *the punishment* of their wickedness; the sin of the [counterfeit] prophet will be the same as the sin of the [hypocritical] inquirer,

¹¹so that the house of Israel may no longer drift away from Me and no longer defile themselves with all their transgressions, but they will be My people, and I will be their God,” ’ says the Lord GOD.”

¹²The word of the LORD came [again] to me, saying,

¹³“Son of man, if a land sins against Me by committing unfaithfulness, and I stretch out My hand against it and destroy its source of bread and send famine on it and cut off from it both man and animal,

¹⁴even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in that land, by their own righteousness (right standing with God) they could only save (deliver) themselves,” says the Lord GOD.

¹⁵“If I were to cause predatory beasts to pass through the land and they ravaged it *and* depopulated it of children, and it became desolate so that no one would pass through because of the predators,

¹⁶*though* these three men were in the land, as I live,” says the Lord GOD, “they could not save either their sons or their daughters. They alone would be saved, but the land would be desolate (ruined, deserted).

¹⁷“Or if I were to bring a sword on that land and say, ‘Let a sword go through the land and cut off man and animal from it,’

¹⁸even *though* these three men were in the land, as I live,” says the Lord GOD, “they could not save either their sons or their daughters, but they alone would be saved.

¹⁹“Or if I should send a virulent disease into that land and pour out My wrath in blood on it to cut off man and animal from it,

²⁰even though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in the land, as I live,” says the Lord GOD, “they could not save either their son or their daughter; they would save only themselves by their righteousness [that is, their right-standing with God—their moral and spiritual integrity].”

²¹For thus says the Lord GOD, “How much more when I send My four severe judgments against Jerusalem—sword, famine, predatory beasts, and virulent disease—to cut off man and animal from it! [Lev 26:21–33]

²²“Yet, behold, survivors will be left in it [escaping the judgments], both sons and daughters. Listen carefully, they are going to come out to you [in Babylon] and you will see their [wicked] conduct and [despicable] actions; then you will be at peace in regard to the disaster which I have brought against Jerusalem for everything which I have brought on it [has been deserved].

²³“Then they will reassure you [in regard to the appropriateness of the judgments] when you see their [heinous] conduct and actions, for you will know that I have not done without cause whatever I did to it,” declares the Lord GOD.

15 AND THE word of the LORD came to me, saying,

²“Son of man, how is the wood of the grapevine (Israel) better than any wood of a branch which is among the trees of the forest? [Ps 80:8–13; Jer 2:21]

³“Can wood be taken from it to make any object? Or can men take a peg from it on which to hang any vessel?

⁴“If it has been thrown into the fire for fuel, and the fire has consumed both of its ends and the middle section has been charred, is it suitable *or* useful for anything?

⁵“Notice this, even when it was complete, it was not useful *and* was not made into anything. How much less, after the fire

has burned [part of] it and [the remainder of] it is charred, can it still be made into anything?

⁶“Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Like the wood of the grapevine among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so have I given up the people of Jerusalem;

⁷and I set My face against them. *Though* they have come out of the fire, yet the fire will consume them. Then you will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD, when I set My face against them.

⁸‘I will make the land desolate (ruined, deserted), because they have acted unfaithfully [through their idolatry],’ says the Lord GOD.”

16 AGAIN THE word of the LORD came to me, saying,

²“Son of man, make Jerusalem understand [the heinous and vile nature of] her repulsive (idolatrous) acts

³and say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem (all of Israel), “Your [spiritual] origin and your birth are from the land of the Canaanite; your [spiritual] father was an Amorite and your [spiritual] mother a Hittite. [Ezek 16:45; John 8:44]

⁴“And as for your birth, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water for cleansing, nor were you rubbed with salt or even wrapped in cloths.

⁵“No eye looked with pity on you to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you; but you were thrown out in the open field, for you were loathed on the day that you were born.

⁶“When I passed by you and saw you squirming in your [newborn] blood, I said to you while you were there in your blood, ‘Live!’ Yes, I said to you while you were there in your blood, ‘Live!’

⁷“I made you (Israel) multiply like plants [which grow] in the field, and you grew up and became tall and you reached the age for [wearing] fine jewelry; your breasts were formed and your hair had grown, yet you were naked and bare.

⁸“Then I passed by you [again] and looked on you; behold, you were maturing *and* at the time for love, and I spread My skirt over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore [an oath] to you and entered into a covenant with you,” says the Lord GOD, “and you became Mine.”

⁹“Then I washed you with water; yes, I [thoroughly] washed away from you the [clinging] blood and anointed you with oil.

¹⁰“I also clothed you with embroidered cloth and put sandals of porpoise skin on your feet; and I wrapped you with fine linen and covered you with silk.

¹¹“I adorned you with ornaments and I put bracelets on your wrists and a necklace around your neck.

¹²“I also put a ring in your nostril and earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown on your head.

¹³“Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your dress was [made] of fine linen and silk and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour and honey and oil; so you were extremely beautiful and you advanced *and* prospered into royalty.

¹⁴“Then your fame went out among the nations on account of your beauty, for it was perfect because of My majesty *and*

splendor which I bestowed on you,” says the Lord GOD.

¹⁵“But you trusted in *and* relied on your beauty and prostituted yourself [in idolatry and its debauched rituals] because of your fame, and you poured out your immoralities on every [willing] passer-by and your beauty was his [as you worshiped the idols of the Gentile nations].

¹⁶“You took some of your clothes and made for yourself [decorated] high places *and* shrines of various colors and prostituted yourself on them—things which should never have come about and taken place.

¹⁷“You also took your beautiful jewels *and* beautiful vessels made of My gold and My silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself images of men so that you could prostitute yourself with them;

¹⁸and you took your embroidered clothing and covered them, and offered My oil and My incense before them.

¹⁹“Also My bread which I gave you, [made from the] fine flour and oil and honey with which I fed you, you even offered it before idols [no better than cow dung] as a sweet *and* soothing aroma; so it happened,” says the Lord GOD.

²⁰“Moreover, you took your sons and your daughters whom you had borne to Me, and you destroyed them as sacrifices [to your man-made gods]. Were your gross immoralities so small a matter?

²¹“You slaughtered My children and offered them up to [worthless] idols, forcing them to pass through the [hideousness of the] fire.

²²“And in all your repulsive acts and prostitutions (idolatrous immoralities) you did not [pause to] remember the

days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, squirming in your [newborn] blood.

²³“Then it came about after all your wickedness (‘Woe, woe to you!’ says the Lord GOD),

²⁴that you built yourself an altar for prostitution and made yourself a high place [for ritual prostitution] in every square [of Jerusalem].

²⁵“At the beginning of every street you built your high place and made your beauty repulsive; and you offered your body to every passer-by and multiplied your obscene immorality.

²⁶“You also prostituted yourself with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors [by embracing their pagan rituals], and you multiplied your obscene immorality to provoke Me to anger.

²⁷“Behold now [listen very carefully], I have stretched out My hand against you, reduced your portion, and handed you over to the desire of those who hate you, the daughters of the Philistines, who are ashamed of your infamous behavior.

²⁸“You prostituted yourself with the Assyrians because you were not satisfied; you prostituted yourself with them and still were not satisfied.

²⁹“Moreover, you increased your obscene immorality with the land of tradesmen, Chaldea (Babylonia), and yet even with this you were not satisfied.””

³⁰“How weakened by longing *and* lust is your heart (mind),” says the Lord GOD, “while you do all these things, the actions of a bold *and* brazen prostitute.

³¹“When you built your shrine altar for prostitution at the beginning of every street and made your high place in every

public square, you were not like a prostitute because you refused payment.

³²“You adulterous wife, who welcomes *and* receives strangers instead of her husband!

³³“Men give gifts to all prostitutes, but you give your gifts to all your lovers, bribing the pagan nations to come to you [as allies] from every direction for your obscene immoralities.

³⁴“And you are different from other [unfaithful] women in your promiscuity, in that no one follows you to lure you into prostitution, and because you give money and no money is given you; in this way you are different.”

³⁵Therefore, O prostitute [Israel], hear the word of the LORD.

³⁶Thus says the Lord GOD, “Because your lewdness was poured out and your nakedness uncovered through your obscene immoralities with your lovers (pagan allies), and with all your [repulsive] idols, and because of the blood of your sons that you gave to them,

³⁷therefore, listen, I will gather all your lovers (pagan allies) with whom you took pleasure, and all those whom you loved with all those whom you hated; I will even gather them against you from every direction and will expose your nakedness to them that they may see all your nakedness [making you, Israel, an object of loathing and of mockery, a spectacle among the nations].

³⁸“And I [the Lord GOD] will judge you like women who commit adultery or shed blood are judged; and I will bring on you the blood of wrath and jealousy. [Num 5:18]

³⁹“I will also hand you over to your lovers, and they will

tear down your shrines, demolish your high places, strip you of your clothing, take away your jewels, and they will leave you naked and bare.

40“They will also incite a crowd against you and they will stone you and slaughter you with their swords.

41“They will burn down your houses with fire and execute judgments on you in the sight of many women (Gentile nations). Then I will make you cease your prostitution, and you will no longer hire your lovers.

42“So I will calm My wrath toward you and My jealousy [resulting from being denied what is rightfully and uniquely mine] will turn away from you; I will be pacified and no longer angry.

43“Because you have not remembered the days of your youth but have enraged Me with all these things, therefore, I in turn will bring your conduct down on your own head,” says the Lord GOD, “so that you will not commit this lewdness on top of all your other repulsive acts.

44“Behold, everyone who uses proverbs will use this proverb against you: ‘Like mother, like daughter.’

45“You are the daughter of your mother, who loathed her husband and her children. You are the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and their children. Your [spiritual] mother was a Hittite and your [spiritual] father an Amorite.

46“Now your older sister is Samaria, she with her daughters (outlying cities) who live north of you; and your younger sister is Sodom, she with her daughters who live south of you.

47“Yet you have not merely walked in their ways or behaved in accordance with their pagan practices; but, as if

that were too little, you [soon] acted more corruptly in all your ways than they. [Matt 11:20–24]

⁴⁸“As I live,” says the Lord GOD, “Sodom, your sister and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done.

⁴⁹“Behold, this was the sin of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters (outlying cities) had arrogance, abundant food, and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy.

⁵⁰“They were haughty and committed repulsive acts before Me; therefore I removed them when I saw it. [Gen 13:13; 18:20; 19:5]

⁵¹“Furthermore, Samaria did not commit half of your sins, but you have greatly increased your repulsive acts more than they. So you have made your [wicked] sisters [Samaria and Sodom] appear righteous *and* justified by [comparison to] all the disgusting things which you have done.

⁵²“Also bear your disgrace [as punishment], having made judgment favorable for your sisters, for [you virtually absolved them] because of your sins in which you behaved more repulsively than they; they are more in the right than you. Yes, be ashamed and bear your disgrace, for you made your [pagan] sisters seem righteous.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Overcoming a Shame-Based Nature

Ezekiel 16:61–63 mentions shame. One battle many people fight in their minds is the battle against shame. Shame is more than a feeling that they've done something wrong; it's a feeling that there is something basically wrong about them. A common characteristic of people with a shame-based nature is that they do not like themselves.

If you can learn to like yourself, you'll position yourself for victory in the way you think about yourself. When you start to like yourself, other people begin to like you too. Liking yourself doesn't mean you're full of pride; it simply means you accept yourself as the person God created you to be. We all need changes in our behavior, but accepting ourselves as God's creation is vital to becoming emotionally healthy. If we can master this one thing—liking ourselves—it will work wonders in helping us to overcome a shame-based nature. Let me explain what I mean by sharing a personal story.

For a long time I didn't like my personality, and since my personality is who I am, I didn't like me. I didn't want to be as bold, straightforward, and blunt as I am. I wanted to be like my friend who was sweet, kind, and gentle. What I didn't realize is that she was born that way—and I wasn't. Because I didn't like who I was, I tried to change myself to be like someone else. It didn't work.

I had to learn to accept myself the way I was and let go of the idea of being like someone else. I began to realize that, although I did need to change in some areas of my life, who I am will never change.

A shame-based nature becomes the source of many complex inner problems, such as depression, loneliness, isolation and alienation, workaholism, and perfectionism. All kinds of compulsive disorders are rooted in shame: drug, alcohol, and other chemical addictions; eating disorders, such as bulimia, anorexia, and obesity; financial addictions, such as stinginess and gambling; sexual perversions—the list is endless.

To overcome a shame-based nature, it's necessary to separate your “do” (what you do) from your “who” (who you really are). You're a unique and special individual, with God-given talents and skills. Though you may have made mistakes in the past, it's time to move on and learn to like yourself!

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord God, I believe that You have created me to be special and unique. Help me to overcome a shame-based nature and learn to like myself. In Jesus' name. Amen.

⁵³“Nevertheless, I will restore them [again] from their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters (outlying cities), the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, and along with them [I will restore you from] your own captivity [in the day of the Lord GOD], [Is 1:9]

⁵⁴so that you [Judah] will bear your humiliation *and* disgrace, and be [thoroughly] ashamed for all [the wickedness] that you have done to console *and* comfort them.

⁵⁵“Your sisters, Sodom and her daughters and Samaria and her daughters will return to their former state; and you and your daughters will return to your former state.

⁵⁶“For [the name of] your sister Sodom was not mentioned by you [except as a byword] in the day of your pride [when David ruled],

⁵⁷before your [own] wickedness was uncovered. Now you have become an object of reproach *and* a byword for the daughters of Aram *and* of Edom and all who are around her, and for the daughters of the Philistines—those surrounding you who despise you.

⁵⁸“You have borne [the penalty of] your lewdness and your repulsive acts,” says the LORD.

⁵⁹Yes, thus says the Lord GOD, “I will also deal with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath by breaking the covenant.

⁶⁰“Nevertheless, I will remember [with compassion] My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you. [Ps 106:45]

⁶¹“Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you receive your sisters, both your older and your younger; I will give them to you as daughters, but not because of your covenant [with Me]. [John 10:16]

⁶²“And I will establish My covenant with you, and you will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD, [Hos 2:19, 20]

⁶³so that you may remember [in detail] and be ashamed and never open your mouth again because of your humiliation, when I have forgiven you for all that you have done,” says the Lord GOD.

17 NOW THE word of the LORD came to me, saying,

²“Son of man, ask a riddle and tell a parable to the house of Israel,

³saying, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “A great eagle (Nebuchadnezzar) with great wings, long pinions and a rich plumage of many colors came to Lebanon (Jerusalem) and took away the top of the cedar (Judah).

⁴“He broke off the topmost of its young twigs (young King Jehoiachin) and carried it to a land of traders (Babylonia); he set it in a city of merchants (Babylon).

⁵“He also took some of the seed of the land (Zedekiah, of the royal family) and planted it in fertile soil *and* a fruitful field; he placed it beside abundant waters and set it like a willow tree.

⁶“Then it sprouted *and* grew and became a low, spreading vine whose branches turned [in submission] toward him, but its roots remained under it. So it became a vine and yielded shoots and sent out branches.

⁷“There was [also] another great eagle with great wings and many feathers; and behold, this vine (Zedekiah) bent its roots toward him and sent out its branches toward him, away from the beds where it was planted, for him to water.

⁸“It was planted in good soil where water was plentiful for it to produce leaves *and* branches and to bear fruit, so that it might become a splendid vine.” ’

⁹“Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Ask, “Will it thrive? Will he (Nebuchadnezzar) not uproot it and strip off its fruit so that all its sprouting leaves will wither? It will not take a strong arm or many people to uproot it [ending Israel’s national existence]. [2 Kin 25:1–7]

¹⁰“Though it is planted, will it thrive *and* grow? Will it not completely wither when the east wind touches it? It will wither in the beds where it grew.”” [Hos 13:9–12, 15]

¹¹Moreover, the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

¹²“Say now to the rebellious house, ‘Do you not know (realize) what these things *mean*?’ Tell them, ‘Hear this, the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and took its king [Jehoiachin] and its princes and brought them with him to Babylon. [2 Kin 24:11–16]

¹³‘And he took a member of the royal family [the king’s uncle, Zedekiah] and made a covenant with him, putting him under oath. He also took the important leaders of the land, [2 Kin 24:17]

¹⁴so that the kingdom would be in subjection, unable to restore itself *and* rise again, but that by keeping his covenant it might continue.

¹⁵‘But Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar by

sending his ambassadors to Egypt so that they might give him horses and many troops. Will he succeed? Will he who does such things escape? Can he indeed break the covenant [with Babylon] and [still] escape?

¹⁶“As I live,” says the Lord GOD, “surely in the country of the king (Nebuchadnezzar) who made Zedekiah [the vassal] king, whose oath he despised and whose covenant he broke, in Babylon Zedekiah shall die.

¹⁷“Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company will not help him in the war, when they (the Babylonians) put up ramps and build siege walls to destroy many lives.

¹⁸“Now Zedekiah dishonored the oath by breaking the covenant, and behold, he gave his hand *and* pledged his allegiance, yet did all these things; he shall not escape.”

¹⁹Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, “As I live, I will bring down on his own head My oath [made on My behalf by Nebuchadnezzar] which Zedekiah dishonored and My covenant which he broke.

²⁰“I will spread My net over him, and he will be caught in My snare; and I will bring him to Babylon and will enter into judgment with him there for his treason which he has committed against Me.

²¹“All the choice men [from Judah] in all his troops will fall by the sword, and those that survive will be scattered to every wind; and you will know [without any doubt] that I the LORD have spoken.”

²²Thus says the Lord GOD, “I Myself will take *a twig* from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out; I will crop off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one and I will plant it

on a high and lofty mountain. [Is 11:1, 10; 53:2; Jer 23:5; Zech 3:8]

²³“I will plant it on the mountain heights of Israel, that it may grow boughs and bear fruit and be a noble *and* stately cedar. And birds of every kind will live under it; they will nest [securely] in the shade of its branches.

²⁴“All the trees of the field will know that I the LORD bring down the tall tree, exalt the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will fulfill it.”

18 THE WORD of the LORD came to me again, saying,

²“What do you mean by using this proverb concerning the land of Israel,

‘The fathers eat sour grapes [they sin],
But the children’s teeth are set on edge’?”

³“As I live,” says the Lord GOD, “you are certainly not going to use this proverb [as an excuse] in Israel anymore.

⁴“Behold (pay close attention), all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die. [Rom 6:23]

⁵“But if a man is righteous (keeps the law) and practices justice and righteousness,

⁶and does not eat [at the pagan shrines] on the mountains or raise his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, or defile his neighbor’s wife or approach a woman during her [monthly] time of impurity—

⁷if a man does not oppress anyone, but restores to the debtor his pledge, does not commit robbery, but gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with clothing,

⁸if he does not charge interest or take *a percentage of* increase [on what he lends in compassion], if he keeps his hand from sin and executes true justice between man and man,

⁹if he walks in My statutes and [keeps] My ordinances so as to act with integrity; [then] he is [truly] righteous and shall certainly live,” says the Lord GOD. [Ezek 20:11; Amos 5:4]

¹⁰“If he is the father of a violent son who sheds blood, and who does any of these things to a brother

¹¹(though the father did not do any of these things), that is, the son even eats [the food set before idols] at the mountain *shrines*, and defiles his neighbor’s wife,

¹²oppresses the poor and needy, commits robbery, does not restore [to the debtor] his pledge, but raises his eyes to the idols, and commits repulsive acts,

¹³and charges interest and takes [a percentage of] increase on what he has loaned; will he then live? He will not live! He has done all these disgusting things, he shall surely be put to death; his blood will be on his own head.

¹⁴“Now behold, if this [wicked] man has a son who has observed all the sins which his father committed, and considers [thoughtfully what he has observed] and does not do like his father:

KEYS to a Victorious Life

You Can Do Something About Your Thoughts

In Ezekiel 18:2–3, the Lord told His people to stop using the excuse that because the fathers sinned and had problems, the children would do the same. As you begin to change the things in your life that are unfruitful and causing you trouble, the enemy will offer you many excuses to stay the way you are. One of the lies you can expect to hear in your mind is, I can't help what I think—the thoughts just come whether I want them to or not. I can't help it!

While it is true that thoughts come without being invited, it is not true that you cannot do anything about them. God's Word teaches us to cast down, or refute, wrong thoughts (see 2 Cor. 10:5). That simply means you shouldn't allow them to stay in your mind. You can get rid of any thought you don't want simply by deciding to think on something else.

¹⁵“He does not eat [food set before idols] at the mountain shrines or raise his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, or defile his neighbor's wife,

¹⁶or oppress anyone, or take anything in pledge, or commit robbery, but he gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with clothing,

¹⁷he keeps his hand from [oppressing] the poor, does not receive interest or increase [from the needy], but executes My

ordinances and walks in My statutes; he shall not die for the sin (guilt) of his father; he shall certainly live.

¹⁸“As for his father, because he practiced extortion, robbed his brother, and did that which is not good among his people, behold, he shall die for his sin.

¹⁹“Yet do you say, ‘Why should the son not bear the punishment for the father’s sin?’ When the son has practiced justice and righteousness and has kept all My statutes and has done them, he shall certainly live.

²⁰“The person who sins [is the one that] will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the sin of the father, nor will the father bear the punishment for the sin of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be on himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be on himself.

²¹“But if the wicked man turns [away] from all his sins which he has committed and keeps all My statutes and practices justice and righteousness, he shall certainly live; he shall not die.

²²“All of his transgressions which he has committed will not be remembered against him; because of his righteousness which he has practiced [for his moral and spiritual integrity in every area and relationship], he will live.

²³“Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked,” says the Lord GOD, “rather than that he should turn [away] from his [malevolent] acts and live?

²⁴“But when the righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits sin and acts in accordance with all the repulsive things that the wicked man does, will he live? All of his righteous deeds which he has done will not be

remembered because of the treachery that he has committed and for his sin which he has committed; for them he shall die.

²⁵“Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not right.’ Hear now, O house of Israel! Is My way not right? Is it not your ways that are not right?

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*I praise You, Lord, because
Your ways are right.*

• adapted from Ezekiel 18:29

²⁶“When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, and commits sin and dies because of it, it is for his sin which he has committed that he dies.

²⁷“Again, when a wicked man turns away from his wickedness which he has committed and practices justice and righteousness, he will save his life.

²⁸“Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions which he had committed, he shall certainly live; he shall not die.

²⁹“Yet the house of Israel says, ‘The way of the Lord is not right!’ O house of Israel, are My ways not right? Is it not your ways that are not right?

³⁰“Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, each one in accordance with his conduct,” says the Lord GOD. “Repent (change your way of thinking) and turn away from all your transgressions, so that sin may not become a stumbling block to you. [Matt 3:2; Rev 2:5]

³¹“Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed [against Me], and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why should you die, O house of Israel? [Eph 4:22, 23]

³²“For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,” says the Lord GOD. “Therefore, repent and live!”

19 “AS FOR you, take up a dirge (funeral poem to be sung) for the princes of Israel

²and say,

‘What was your mother [Jerusalem and Judah]?

A lioness among lions!

She lay down among young lions,

She reared her cubs.

³‘When she [the royal mother-city] brought up [Jehoahaz] one of her cubs,

He became a [young] lion,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Repent Sincerely and Move On

The Amplified Bible describes repentance as changing your way of thinking (see Ezek. 18:30). True repentance is not saying, “I’m sorry I got caught in sin”; true repentance says, “I’m going to change my mind. I’m going to turn away from that kind of behavior, and I’m going to seek a new life in Christ.” Repentance means “to turn and go in another direction.” It means to turn away from sin and turn toward God.

When you need to repent of something, don’t put it off. Go ahead and do it. Then receive God’s forgiveness and refuse to waste your time in guilt and condemnation. God understands our nature and He is patient with us, but we also have to be patient with ourselves. Spiritually immature people beat themselves up every time they make a mistake. Spiritually mature people know they aren’t going to be perfect, and they know what to do when they do make mistakes—repent, commit to thinking differently, receive God’s forgiveness, and move forward.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Right Action Follows Right Thinking

There is a dynamic principle shown throughout God's Word, and understanding it and putting it into practice will help us to walk in victory: *Right action follows right thinking*. We won't change our behavior until we change our way of thinking.

Too many people want to change their actions but not their thoughts. They want to be free from anger, gossip, lust, dishonesty, or lying, but they don't want to change their bad thinking.

A woman once told me that she was a gossip. She felt compelled to be the first person to know anything and then to pass it on as quickly as possible. She tried to but couldn't hold back. She asked me to pray for her deliverance.

I replied, "It doesn't work that way. Until you change your way of thinking, you won't be free. You need deliverance in your mind; then your words and actions will change."

She resisted my words, but she did ask me to pray for her, which I did. When I finished, she began to cry. "As you prayed, I understood. God showed me how insignificant and unimportant I feel. When I'm the first to pass on information, it makes me feel good and important—at least for a while." She had to shift her thinking and learn to accept that she was

worthwhile and loved by God just for being who she is. Once she learned to change her way of thinking, she no longer had a problem with her tongue.

It's impossible to change wrong behavior to right behavior without an attitude adjustment, which requires us to change the way we think. That is really what repentance is all about. God says, "Repent (change your way of thinking) and turn away from all your transgressions, so that sin may not become a stumbling block to you" (Ezek. 18:30).

The apostle Paul said that we need to put off our old self and be "*continually* renewed in the spirit of your mind [having a fresh, untarnished mental and spiritual attitude], and put on the new self [the regenerated and renewed nature], created in God's image, [godlike] in the righteousness and holiness of the truth" (Eph. 4:23–24).

Let the Holy Spirit change your way of thinking. That's the key to making permanent changes in your life.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Holy Spirit, thank You for Your ability to help me change my thinking. Help me learn to think in new ways so that You can work in me to make me more like Jesus Christ. In His name, I pray. Amen.

- And he learned to catch *and* tear the prey;
He devoured men. [2 Kin 23:30, 32]
- 4^cThe nations heard about him;
He was captured in their pit,
And they brought him with hooks
To the land of Egypt. [2 Chr 36:1, 4]
- 5^cWhen she saw, as she waited,
That her hope was lost,
She took another of her cubs
And made him a young lion. [2 Kin 23:34; 24:1, 6]
- 6^cAnd he moved among the lions;
He became a young lion,
He learned to tear the prey;
He devoured men.
- 7^cHe destroyed their palaces
And he flattened their cities;
And the land and all who were in it were appalled
By the sound of his roaring.
- 8^cThen the nations set against him (the king)
On every side from the provinces,
And they spread their net over him;
He was captured in their pit. [2 Kin 24:8–15]
- 9^cThey put him in a cage with hooks *and* chains
And brought him to the king of Babylon;
They brought him in hunting nets
So that his voice would be heard no more

On the mountains of Israel.

¹⁰“Your mother [Jerusalem] was like a vine in your vineyard,
Planted by the waters;
It was fruitful and full of branches
Because of abundant water. [2 Kin 24:17; Ezek 17:7]

¹¹“And it had strong branches for the scepters of rulers,
And its height was raised above the thick branches *and*
into the clouds
So that it was seen [easily] in its height with the mass of its
branches.

¹²“But the vine was uprooted in [godly] wrath [by His
representative]
And it was thrown down to the ground;
The east wind dried up its fruit.
Its strong branch was broken off
So that it withered;
The fire [of God’s judgment] consumed it.

¹³“And now it is transplanted in the wilderness,
In a dry and thirsty land [of Babylon].

¹⁴“And the fire [of Zedekiah’s rebellion] has gone out from its
branch;
It has consumed the vine’s shoots and fruit,
So that it has in it no [longer a] strong branch
As a scepter to rule.”

This is a dirge (funeral poem to be sung), and has become a dirge.

20 IN THE seventh year, in the fifth *month*, on the tenth of the month [after the beginning of the exile in Babylon], certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the LORD and sat down before me. [Jer 25:11; 29:10]

²Then came the word of the LORD to me, saying,

³“Son of man, speak to the elders of Israel and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Have you come to inquire of Me? As I live,” says the Lord GOD, “I will not be inquired of by you.”’

⁴“Will you judge them, son of man, will you judge them? Then make them know [accurately] *and* understand fully the repulsive acts of their fathers; [Matt 23:29–33; Acts 7:51, 52]

⁵and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “On the day when I chose Israel and lifted up My hand *and* swore to the descendants of the house of Jacob and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, when I swore to them, saying, I am the LORD your God,

⁶on that day I swore to them to bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had selected for them, [plentiful and] flowing with milk and honey, [a land] which is an ornament *and* a glory to all lands.

⁷“Then I said to them, ‘Let every man throw away the detestable things on which he feasts his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.’

⁸“But they rebelled against Me and were not willing to listen to Me; they did not throw away the detestable things on which they feasted their eyes, nor did they give up the idols of

Egypt.

“Then I decided to pour out My wrath on them and finish My anger against them in the land of Egypt.

⁹“But I acted for My Name’s sake, that it would not be profaned in the sight of the [pagan] nations among whom they lived, in whose sight I made Myself known to them by bringing them out of the land of Egypt.

¹⁰“So I made them leave the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness.

¹¹“I gave them My statutes and explained My ordinances to them, which, if a man keeps, he will live.

¹²“Also I gave them My Sabbaths to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD who sanctifies them (separates and sets them apart).

¹³“But the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness. They did not walk in My statutes and they despised *and* rejected My ordinances, which, if a man keeps, he will live; and they greatly profaned My Sabbaths. Then I decided to pour out My wrath on them in the wilderness, to annihilate them.

¹⁴“But I acted for My Name’s sake, that it would not be profaned in the sight of the [pagan] nations in whose sight I had brought them out [of slavery].

¹⁵“I also swore to them in the wilderness that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, [a land of plenty] flowing with milk and honey, which is the ornament *and* glory of all lands,

¹⁶because they rejected My ordinances, and as for My statutes, they did not walk in them; they even profaned My

Sabbaths, for their heart continually went after their [worthless] idols.

¹⁷“Yet My eye [looked on them with compassion and] spared them instead of destroying them, and I did not annihilate them in the wilderness.

¹⁸“But I said to their children in the wilderness, ‘Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers nor observe their ordinances nor defile yourselves with their idols.

¹⁹“I am the LORD your God; walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and observe them.

²⁰“Sanctify My Sabbaths *and* keep them holy; and they shall be a sign between Me and you, that you may know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD your God.’

²¹“Yet the children rebelled against Me; they did not walk in My statutes, nor were they careful to observe My ordinances, which, if a man keeps, he will live; they profaned My Sabbaths. Then I decided to pour out My wrath on them and finish My anger against them in the wilderness.

²²“Yet I withdrew My hand and acted for My Name’s sake, that it would not be profaned in the sight of the [pagan] nations in whose sight I had brought them out [of slavery].

²³“Moreover, I swore to them in the wilderness that I would scatter them among the [Gentile] nations and disperse them among the countries,

²⁴because they had not observed My ordinances, but had [dishonored and] rejected My statutes and had profaned My Sabbaths, and set their eyes on the [man-made] idols of their fathers.

²⁵“[Therefore] I also gave them statutes that were not good

and ordinances by which they could not live; [Ps 81:12; Is 66:4; Rom 1:21–25, 28]

²⁶and I pronounced them unclean because of their offerings [to their idols], in that they made all their firstborn pass through *the fire* [as pagan sacrifices], so that I might make them desolate, in order that they might know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD.” ’ [Lev 20:2–5]

²⁷“Therefore, son of man, speak to the house of Israel and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Again in this your fathers have blasphemed Me, in that they acted faithlessly *and* treacherously against Me.

²⁸“For when I had brought them into the land which I swore to give to them, they saw every high hill and every dark *and* leafy tree [as a place for idol worship], and there they offered their sacrifices and there they presented their offering that provoked My anger; there also they made their sweet-smelling aroma and there poured out their drink offerings.

²⁹“Then I said to them, ‘What is the high place to which you go?’ So the name of it is called Bamah (High Place) to this day.” ’

³⁰“Therefore, say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Will you [exiles] defile yourselves in the same manner as your fathers? And will you prostitute yourselves before their loathsome *and* heinous things?

³¹“When you offer your gifts, when you make your sons pass through the fire, you are defiling yourselves with all your idols to this day. And shall I be asked by you [for an oracle], O house of Israel? As I live,” says the Lord GOD, “I will not be inquired of by you.

³²“What comes into your mind will never happen, when you say, ‘We will be like the [pagan] nations, like the tribes of the [Gentile] countries, serving [idols made of] wood and stone.’

³³“As I live,” says the Lord GOD, “most certainly with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be King over you.

³⁴“I will bring you out from the peoples and will gather you from the countries in which you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out;

³⁵and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you *and* contend with you face to face.

³⁶“As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment *and* contend with you,” says the Lord GOD. [Num 11; Ps 106:15; 1 Cor 10:5–10]

³⁷“I will make you pass under the rod [as the shepherd does with his sheep when he counts them, and I will count you as Mine and constrain you] and bring you into the bond of the covenant [to which you are permanently bound]. [Lev 27:32]

³⁸“And I will separate from you the rebels and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the land where they temporarily live, but they will not enter the land of Israel. Thus you will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD. [Heb 4:2, 3]

³⁹“As for you, O house of Israel,” thus says the Lord GOD, “Go, let everyone serve his idols; but later you shall most certainly listen to Me, and you shall no longer profane My

holy name with your gifts and with your idols.

⁴⁰“For on My holy mountain, on the high mountain of Israel (Zion),” says the Lord GOD, “there the whole house of Israel, all of them in the land, shall serve Me. There I will [graciously] accept them, and there I will seek (require) your offerings and the choicest of your gifts, with all your holy *and* sacred things.

POWERPOINT

God says to bring Him “the choicest of your gifts” (Ezek. 20:40), which I take to mean the best of our time and our possessions. It’s important to be honest with ourselves about what our priorities are and begin making changes that will enable us to keep God in first place. We don’t need to give God our leftovers. We need to make Him our top priority in everything we do.



⁴¹“I will accept you [graciously] as a pleasant *and* soothing aroma when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands in which you have been scattered; and I will prove Myself holy *and* manifest My holiness among you in the sight of the nations. [Eph 5:2; Phil 4:18]

⁴²“And you will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, into the land

which I swore to give to your fathers.

⁴³“There you will remember your ways and all your deeds with which you have defiled yourselves; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight because of all your evil deeds which you have done.

⁴⁴“And you will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD when I have dealt with you for My Name’s sake, not in accordance with your evil ways nor with your corrupt conduct, O house of Israel,” says the Lord GOD.”

⁴⁵Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

⁴⁶“Son of man, set your face toward Teman, and speak out against the south and prophesy against the forest land of the Negev (the South),

⁴⁷and say to the forest of the Negev, ‘Hear the word of the LORD: thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I am about to kindle a fire in you, and it will devour every one of your green trees, as well as every one of your dry trees. The blazing flame will not be quenched and the whole surface from the south to the north will be burned by it.

⁴⁸“All flesh will see that I the LORD have kindled it; it will not be quenched.””

⁴⁹Then I said, “Ah, Lord GOD! They are saying of me, ‘Is he not [just] speaking in parables *and* making allegories?’”

21 AND THE word of the LORD came to me, saying,

²“Son of man, set your face toward Jerusalem, and direct your [prophetic] word against the sanctuaries; prophesy

against the land of Israel

³and say to the land of Israel, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Behold, I am against you and will draw My sword out of its sheath and I will cut off from you both the righteous and the wicked.

⁴“Because I will cut off from you both the righteous and the wicked, therefore My sword will go from its sheath against all flesh from south to north,

⁵and all living will know [without any doubt] that I the LORD have drawn My sword out of its sheath; it will not be sheathed again.” ’

⁶“As for you, son of man, groan with breaking heart and bitter grief, groan in their sight.

⁷“And when they say to you, ‘Why do you sigh *and* groan?’ you shall answer, ‘Because of the news that is coming; and every heart will melt and all hands will be frail, and every spirit will faint and all knees will be weak as water. Behold, it comes and it will happen,’ says the Lord GOD.”

⁸Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

⁹“Son of man, prophesy and say, ‘Thus says the LORD.’ Say,

‘A sword, a sword [from Babylon] is sharpened
And also polished!

¹⁰‘It is sharpened to make a slaughter,
Polished to flash *and* glimmer like lightning!’

Shall we then rejoice [when such a disaster approaches]? But it rejects *and* views with contempt the scepter of My son [Judah]. [Gen 49:9, 10; 2 Sam 7:23]

¹¹“The sword [of Babylon] is ready to be polished so that it may be handled *and* put to use; the sword is sharpened and polished to be put in the hand of the slayer (Nebuchadnezzar).

¹²“Cry out and wail, son of man, for it is against My people; it is against all the princes of Israel. They are thrown to the sword along with My [terrified] people. Therefore strike your thigh *and* strike your chest [in grief].

¹³“For this sword has been tested [on others]; and what if it views with contempt the scepter [of Judah]? The scepter shall be no more [but shall be swept away],” says the Lord GOD.

¹⁴“Therefore, son of man, prophesy and strike your hands together; and let the sword be doubled the third time [in intensity], the sword for the slain. It is the sword for the great slaughter which surrounds them [so that no one can escape, even by hiding in their inner rooms],

¹⁵so that hearts may melt, and many will fall at their gates. I have given the glittering sword. Ah! It is made [to flash] like lightning; it is pointed *and* sharpened for slaughter.

¹⁶“Turn O sword and cut right or cut left, whichever way you thirst for blood *and* your edge direct you.

¹⁷“I will also strike My hands together, and I will cause My wrath to rest. I the LORD have spoken.”

¹⁸The word of the LORD came to me, saying,

¹⁹“As for you, son of man, mark out two ways for the sword of the king of Babylon to come, both starting from the same land. And make a signpost; place it at the head of the way to the city.

²⁰“You shall point out a way for the [Babylonian] sword to come to Rabbah [the capital] of the sons of Ammon, and to Judah into fortified Jerusalem.

²¹“For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the way, at the fork of the two ways, to use divination. He shakes the arrows, he consults the teraphim (household idols), he looks at the liver [of an animal for an omen].

²²“In his right hand is the lot marked for Jerusalem: to set battering rams, to open the mouth calling for destruction, to lift up the voice with a war cry, to set battering rams against the gates, to put up assault ramps, and to build siege walls.

²³“It will seem like a false divination in their eyes, those who have sworn solemn oaths [of allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar]. But he will remind them of their guilt [by rebelling and violating their oath], that they may be caught. [2 Chr 36:10, 13; Ezek 17:15, 18–21]

²⁴“Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Because you have caused your guilt to be remembered, in that your rebellion is uncovered, so that your sins appear in everything that you do—because you have come to mind, you will be seized with the hand [of the enemy].

²⁵‘And you, O dishonored and wicked one [Zedekiah], the prince of Israel, whose day has come, whose time of final punishment is here,’

²⁶thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Remove the turban and take off the crown; things shall not remain as they have been. Exalt that which is low and abase the high.

²⁷‘A ruin, a ruin, I will make it a ruin! It shall no longer exist until He comes whose right it is [to reign], and I will give it to

Him. ' [Gen 49:10; Is 9:6, 7; 11:1–4; Dan 7:14; Luke 1:31–33]

²⁸“And you, son of man, prophesy and say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD concerning the sons of Ammon and concerning their reproach (disgrace),’ and say: ‘A sword, a sword is drawn for the slaughter; it is sharpened *and* polished to put an end [to everything], and to flash like lightning,

²⁹while they (Ammonite prophets) see false visions [of peace] for you, while they divine lies [of escape] for you—to place you [of Ammon] on the headless bodies of the wicked who are slain, whose day has come, whose time of the final punishment is here.

³⁰‘Return the sword to its sheath. In the place where you were created, in the land of your origin (birth), I will judge you.

³¹‘I will pour out My indignation on you [sons of Ammon]; I will blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and I will place you in the hand of brutal men, skilled in destruction.

³²‘You will be fuel for the fire; your blood will be in the midst of the land. You will not be remembered, for I the LORD have spoken.’” [Jer 49:1–6; Ezek 25:1–7; Amos 1:13–15; Zeph 2:8–11]

22 THEN THE word of the LORD came to me, saying,

²“And you, son of man [Ezekiel], will you judge, will you judge the city of bloodshed? Then make her recognize all her repulsive acts.

³“You shall say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “A city that sheds blood in her midst, so that her time [of doom] will come, and makes idols to defile her, contrary to her *interest*!

4“You have become guilty by the blood which you have shed, and you are defiled by the idols which you have made. Thus you have caused your day [of judgment and punishment] to approach and have arrived at [the completion of] your years; therefore, I have made you an object of scorn to the [pagan] nations and a thing to be mocked by all countries.

5“Those who are near and those who are far from you will mock you, you [infamous one] of ill repute, full of turmoil.

6“Behold, the princes of Israel, every one according to his power, have been intending to shed blood in you.

7“In you they have treated father and mother lightly. They have oppressed the stranger among you; and in your presence they have wronged the fatherless and the widow.

8“You have despised *and* scorned My sacred things and have profaned My Sabbaths.

9“In you are men who slander for the purpose of shedding blood, and in your presence they have eaten [food offered to idols] at the mountain shrines; in your midst they have committed acts of lewdness.

10“In you men have uncovered their fathers’ nakedness [the nakedness of mother or stepmother]; in you they have violated women who are [set apart as ceremonially] unclean during their menstrual impurity [or after childbirth].

11“In you one has committed a shameful act with his neighbor’s wife, another has lewdly defiled his daughter-in-law, and another has violated his sister, his father’s daughter.

12“In you they have accepted bribes to shed blood; you have taken [forbidden] interest and [a percentage of] profits, and you have injured your neighbors for gain by oppression

and extortion, and you have forgotten Me,” says the Lord GOD.

¹³“Behold, therefore, I strike My hands [together] at your dishonest gain which you have acquired and at the bloodshed which is among you.

¹⁴“Can your heart (courage) endure, or can your hands be strong in the days that I will deal with you? I the LORD have spoken, and will act.

¹⁵“I will scatter you among the nations and disperse you through the countries, and I will destroy your filthiness.

¹⁶“You will defile yourself in the sight of the [Gentile] nations, and you will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD.””

¹⁷And the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

¹⁸“Son of man, the house of Israel has become dross (metallic waste) to Me. All of them are (useless) bronze, tin, iron, and lead in the furnace; they are the dross of silver.

¹⁹“Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Because you have all become dross, therefore, behold, I will gather you [O Israel] into the midst of Jerusalem.

²⁰‘As they gather silver and bronze and iron and lead and tin into the furnace to blow fire on it in order to melt it, so I will gather you in My anger and in My wrath, and I will put you there and melt you.

²¹‘I will gather you and blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and you will be melted in the midst of it.

²²‘As silver is melted in the furnace, so will you be melted in the midst of it; and you will know [without any doubt] that I the LORD have poured out My wrath on you [O Israel].”

23 And the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

24“Son of man, say to her, ‘You [Israel] are a land that is not pronounced clean or rained on in the day of indignation.’

25“There is a conspiracy of her [false] prophets in her midst, like a roaring lion tearing the prey. They have devoured [human] life; they have taken [in their greed] treasure and precious things; they have made many widows among her.

26“Her priests have done violence to My law and have profaned My holy things. They have made no distinction between the holy (sacred) and the profane (secular), they have not taught [people] the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they hide their eyes from My Sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

POWERPOINT

Just as God was doing in Ezekiel's day, today He is also looking for people who will "stand in the gap" for others through intercessory prayer (see Ezek. 22:30). We are often tempted to judge others, which only holds us in bondage and keeps us from interceding for them. Give people prayer instead of judgment, and stand in the gap for them as often and as fervently as you possibly can.



²⁷“Her princes within her are like wolves tearing *and* devouring the prey, shedding blood and destroying lives in order to get dishonest gain.

²⁸“Her prophets have smeared whitewash for them, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD’—when the LORD has not spoken.

²⁹“The people of the land have practiced oppression *and* extortion and have committed robbery; they have wronged the poor and needy and they have oppressed the stranger without justice.

³⁰“I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for [the sake of] the land, that I would not destroy it, but I found no one [not even one].

³¹“Therefore I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; I have repaid their way [by bringing it] upon their own heads,” says the Lord GOD.

23 THE WORD of the LORD came to me again, saying,

²“Son of man, there were two women (Israel and Judah), the daughters of one mother (the united kingdom);

³and they prostituted themselves in Egypt. From their youth they were grossly immoral; in that place their breasts were embraced and their virgin bosom was grasped.

⁴“Their names were Oholah the elder and Oholibah her sister, and they became Mine and they gave birth to sons and daughters. And as for [the identity of] their names, Oholah is Samaria (capital city of Israel) and Oholibah is Jerusalem (capital city of Judah).

⁵“Oholah played the prostitute while she was Mine; and she adored *and* lusted after her lovers (allies), the Assyrians, her neighbors,

⁶who were clothed in purple, governors and officials, all of

them attractive young men, horsemen riding on horses.

⁷“She bestowed [freely] her immoralities on them, the choicest men of Assyria, all of them; and with all whom she adored *and* lusted after, she defiled herself with their idols.

⁸“She did not give up the acts of prostitution that originated *during her time in* Egypt; for in her youth men had lain with her, and they handled her virgin bosom and poured out their depravity on her.

⁹“Therefore, I placed her in the hand of her lovers (allies), into the hand of the Assyrians whom she adored.

¹⁰“They uncovered her nakedness; they took her sons and her daughters and they killed her with the sword. So she became notorious among women, and they executed judgments on her.

¹¹“Now her sister Oholibah saw this, yet she was more corrupt in her lust than she, and her acts of prostitution were more [wanton] than the immoralities of her sister.

¹²“She lusted after the Assyrians—governors and officials, her neighbors, magnificently clothed, horsemen riding on horses, all of them desirable young men.

¹³“I saw that she had defiled herself; they both *behaved* the same way.

¹⁴“But Oholibah carried her depravity further, for she saw men pictured on the wall, the images of the Chaldeans (Babylonians) sketched *and* portrayed in vermilion (bright red pigment),

¹⁵girded with belts on their loins, with flowing turbans on their heads, all of them looking like officers, like the Babylonian men whose native land was Chaldea.

¹⁶“When she saw [the sketches of] them, she lusted after them and sent messengers to them in Chaldea.

¹⁷“The Babylonians came to her to the bed of love and they defiled her with their evil desire; and when she had been defiled by them, she (Jerusalem) broke the relationship *and* pushed them away from her in disgust.

¹⁸“So she flaunted her acts of prostitution and exposed her nakedness; then I became disgusted with her [and turned away], as I had become disgusted with her sister [and turned away].

¹⁹“Yet she multiplied her depravities, remembering the days of her youth, when she was actively immoral in the land of Egypt.

²⁰“For she lusted after her lovers [there], whose flesh is like the flesh of donkeys and whose issue is like the issue of horses.

²¹“Thus you longed for the lewdness *and* vulgarity of your youth, when the Egyptians handled your bosom on account of the breasts of your youth.

²²“Therefore, O Oholibah, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I will stir up your lovers (allies) against you, from whom you turned away in disgust, and I will bring them against you from every side:

²³the Babylonians and all the Chaldeans, Pekod and Shoa and Koa, and all the Assyrians with them, desirable young men, governors and officials all of them, princes, officers and men of renown, all of them riding on horses.

²⁴“They will come against you with weapons, chariots, and wagons, and with a company of people (infantry) who will

array themselves against you on every side with large shield and small, and helmet; and I will commit the judgment *and* the punishment to them, and they will judge *and* punish you in accordance with their [pagan] customs.

²⁵‘I will set My jealous indignation against you [demanding what is rightfully and uniquely mine], and they will deal with you in fury. They will remove your nose and your ears, and your survivors will fall by the sword. They will take your sons and your daughters; and the survivors will be devoured by the fire.

²⁶‘They will also strip you (Judah) of your clothes and take away your beautiful jewels.

²⁷‘Thus I will put an end to your lewdness and your prostitution *brought* from the land of Egypt, so that you will not lift up your eyes to them or remember Egypt [with longing] anymore.’

²⁸‘For thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I will place you into the hands of those whom you hate, into the hands of those from whom you turned away in disgust.

²⁹‘They will deal with you in hatred, take all your property, and leave you naked and bare. And the nakedness of your depravity will be uncovered, both your lewdness and your obscene practices.

³⁰‘These things will be done to you because you have prostituted yourself with the [Gentile] nations, because you have defiled yourself with their idols.

³¹‘You have walked in the way of your sister (Samaria); therefore I will give her cup [of judgment] into your hand.’

³²‘Thus says the Lord GOD,

‘You will drink your sister’s cup,
Which is deep and wide [and filled to the brim].
You shall be laughed at and derided;
It contains much [too much to endure].

³³‘You shall be filled with drunkenness and sorrow,
With the cup of horror and desolation,
With the cup of your sister Samaria.

³⁴‘You will drink it and drain it,
Then you will gnaw its fragments
And tear your breasts;

for I have spoken,’ says the Lord GOD.

³⁵“Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Because you have forgotten Me and cast Me behind your back, therefore bear now [the consequences of] your lewdness and prostitution.’”

³⁶Moreover, the LORD said to me, “Son of man, will you judge Oholah (Samaria, capital of Israel) and Oholibah (Jerusalem, capital of Judah)? Then inform them of their atrocities [the detestable and vile things they do].

³⁷“For they have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands. They have committed adultery [against Me] with their idols and have even forced their sons, whom they bore to Me, to pass through the fire as [an offering of] food to them (idols).

³⁸“Moreover, they have done this to Me: they have defiled My sanctuary on the same day [of their idolatries] and have profaned My Sabbaths.

³⁹“For when they had killed their children [as offerings] to their idols, then they came the same day to My sanctuary to profane it [by daring to offer a sacrifice there also]. And

behold, this they did within My house.

⁴⁰“Furthermore, you have even sent a messenger for men to come from far away; and behold, they came—those for whom you bathed, painted your eyes, and decorated yourself with ornaments;

⁴¹and you sat on a splendid couch with a table arranged before it on which you had set My incense and My oil.

⁴²“The sound of a carefree crowd was with her; and drunkards were brought from the wilderness with men of a common sort, who put bracelets on the hands of the women (both sisters) and beautiful crowns on their heads.

⁴³“Then I said concerning the one (Oholah) worn out by adulteries, ‘Will they now commit adultery with her when she is like this?’

⁴⁴“But they committed adultery with her as they would with a prostitute. So they went in to Oholah (Israel) and to Oholibah (Judah), the lewd women.

⁴⁵“And they, righteous men, will judge *and* condemn them with the judgment (punishment) of adulteresses and with the judgment of women who shed blood, because they are adulteresses and blood is on their hands.

⁴⁶“For thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Bring up a horde (mob) against them and hand them over to terror and plunder.

⁴⁷‘And the horde will stone them with stones and cut them down with their swords; they will kill their sons and their daughters and burn down their houses with fire.

⁴⁸“Thus I will make lewdness cease from the land, that all women may be admonished *and* taught not to commit immoral acts as you have done.

⁴⁹“Thus your lewdness will be repaid to you, and you will suffer the penalty for your [sinful] idolatry; and you will know [without any doubt] that I am the Lord GOD.”

24 AGAIN IN the ninth year [of King Jehoiachin’s captivity by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon], in the tenth month, on the tenth [day] of the month, the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

²“Son of man, record the name of the day, this very day. The king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this very day.

³“Speak a parable against the rebellious house [of Judah] and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD,

“Put on a pot; put it on and also pour water into it;

⁴“Put in it the pieces [of meat],

Every good piece (the people of Jerusalem), the thigh and the shoulder;

Fill it with choice bones.

⁵“Take the choicest of the flock,

And also pile wood under the pot.

Make it boil vigorously

And boil its bones in the pot.”

⁶“Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD,

“Woe (judgment is coming) to the bloody city,

To the pot in which there is rust

And whose rust has not gone out of it!

Take out of it piece by piece,

Without making any choice.

7“For her blood [that she has shed] remains in her midst;
She put it on the bare rock;
She did not pour it on the ground
To cover it with dust.

8“That it may cause wrath to come up to take vengeance,
I have put her blood [guilt for her children sacrificed to
Molech] on the bare rock,
That it may not be covered.”

9“Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD,
“Woe to the bloody city!
I will also make the pile [of wood] high.

10“Heap on wood, kindle the fire,
Boil the meat well [done]
And mix in the spices,
And let the bones be burned.

11“Then set the empty pot (Jerusalem) back on the coals
So that it may be hot
And its bronze may glow
And its filthiness may be melted
And its rust (scum) may be consumed.

12“She has wearied Me with toil,
Yet her great rust has not left her;
Her thick rust *and* filth will not be burned away by fire [no
matter how hot the flame].

13“In your filthiness are lewdness *and* outrage.
Therefore I *would* have cleansed you,

Yet you were not [willing to be] cleansed,
You will not be cleansed from your filthiness again
Until I have satisfied My wrath against you.

¹⁴“I the LORD have spoken; it is coming and I will act. I will not relent, and I will not have compassion and I will not be sorry; in accordance with your ways and in accordance with your deeds I will judge *and* punish you,” says the Lord GOD.”

¹⁵Also the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

¹⁶“Son of man, listen carefully, I am about to take away from you the desire of your eyes [your wife] with a single stroke. Yet you shall not mourn and you shall not weep, and your tears shall not flow.

¹⁷“Sigh *and* groan in silence; do not mourn for the dead. Bind on your turban and put your sandals on your feet, and do not cover your mustache or eat the bread of [mourners furnished by other] men.”

¹⁸So I spoke to the people in the morning, and in the evening my wife died. And the next morning I did as I was commanded.

¹⁹The people said to me, “These things that you are doing—tell us, what do they mean for us?”

²⁰Then I answered them, “The word of the LORD came to me, saying,

²¹“Speak to the house of Israel, “Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I will profane My sanctuary, the pride of your strength, the desire of your eyes, and the delight of your soul; and your sons and your daughters whom you have left behind

[in Jerusalem] will fall by the sword.

²²“You will do as I [Ezekiel] have done; you shall not cover your mustache nor eat the bread of [mourning brought to you by other] men.

²³“Your turbans will be on your heads and your sandals on your feet. You will not mourn or weep, but you will rot away in your sins and you will groan to one another. [Lev 26:39]

²⁴“So Ezekiel will be a sign to you; in accordance with all that he has done you will do. And when this [destruction of the temple] comes, then you will know [without any doubt] that I am the Lord GOD.”

²⁵“As for you, son of man, on the day when I take their strength *and* their stronghold from them, their joy and their glory, the desire of their eyes and their heart’s [chief] delight (the temple), and I also take their sons and their daughters,

²⁶that on that day a survivor will come to you to let you hear [of the destruction of Jerusalem] with your [own] ears.

²⁷“On that day your mouth will be opened to him who escaped, and you will speak and no longer be mute. In this way you shall be a sign to them, and they will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD.”

25 THE WORD of the LORD came to me again, saying,

²“Son of man, set your face toward the Ammonites and prophesy against them.

³“And say to the Ammonites, ‘Hear the word of the Lord GOD, for thus says the Lord GOD, “Because you said, ‘Aha!’ against My sanctuary when it was profaned and against the

land of Israel when it was made desolate and against the house of Judah when they went into exile,

⁴therefore, behold, I am going to give you to the people of the East as a possession, and they will set their encampments among you and make their dwellings among you; they will eat your fruit and drink your milk.

⁵“I will make Rabbah [your chief city] a pasture for camels and [the cities of] the Ammonites a resting place for flocks [of sheep]. And you will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD.”

⁶For thus says the Lord GOD, “Because you have clapped your hands and stamped your feet and rejoiced with all the contempt, *and* malice, *and* spite of your soul against the land of Israel,

⁷therefore, behold, I have stretched out My hand against you and will hand you over as prey *and* spoil to the nations. And I will cut you off from the peoples and will cause you to perish from the countries; I will destroy you. Then you shall know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD.” [Jer 49:1–6; Ezek 21:28–32; Amos 1:13–15; Zeph 2:8–11]

⁸Thus says the Lord GOD, “Because Moab and Seir (Edom) say, ‘Behold, the house of Judah is like all the [pagan] nations,’

⁹therefore, behold, I will deprive the flank of Moab of its cities which are on its frontiers, the glory of the land, Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon and Kiriathaim.

¹⁰“I will give it, along with the children of Ammon, to the people of the East as a possession, so that the children of Ammon will not be remembered among the nations [any longer].

¹¹“Thus I will execute judgment *and* punishment on Moab, and they will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD.” [Is 15, 16; Jer 48; Amos 2:1–3; Zeph 2:8–11]

¹²“Thus says the Lord GOD, “Because Edom has acted against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and has greatly offended *and* has incurred grievous guilt by taking revenge on them,”

¹³therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “I will also stretch out My hand against Edom and I will cut off *and* destroy man and beast. I will make it desolate; from Teman even to Dedan they will fall by the sword.

¹⁴“I will take My vengeance on Edom by the hand of My people Israel. Therefore, they will act in Edom in accordance with My anger and My wrath, and they will know *and* experience My vengeance,” says the Lord GOD. [Is 34; Ezek 35; Amos 1:11, 12; Obad]

¹⁵“Thus says the Lord GOD, “Because the Philistines have acted revengefully and have taken vengeance [contemptuously] with malice in their hearts to destroy with everlasting hostility *and* hatred,”

¹⁶therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I will stretch out My hand against the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethites and destroy the remnant of the seacoast.

¹⁷“I will execute great vengeance on them with wrathful rebukes *and* chastisements and they will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD when I lay My vengeance on them.”” [Is 14:29–31; Jer 47; Amos 1:6–8; Zeph 2:4–7; Zech 9:5–7]

26 NOW IN the eleventh year, on the first [day] of the month [after the capture of King Jehoiachin], the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

²“Son of man, because Tyre has said against Jerusalem, ‘Aha! The gateway of the people is broken; she is open to me. I will be filled, *now that* she is a desolate waste,’

³therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and I will cause many nations to come up against you, as the sea makes its waves crest.

⁴‘They will destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers; and I will scrape her dust *and* debris from her and make her as bare as [the top of] a rock.

⁵‘Her island in the midst of the sea will become a dry place to spread nets, for I have spoken,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘and she will become a prey *and* a spoil for the nations.

⁶‘Also Tyre’s daughters (towns, villages) on the mainland will be killed by the sword, and they will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD.’”

⁷For thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I will bring upon Tyre from the north Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, king of kings, with horses and chariots and with horsemen and a great army.

⁸“He will kill your daughters on the mainland with the sword, and he shall make siege walls against you and build a siege ramp against you and raise [a roof of] large shields [as a defense] against you.

⁹“He will direct the [shocking] blow of his battering rams against your walls, and he will tear down your towers with his

crowbars.

¹⁰“Because of the great number of his horses, their dust will cover you; your walls [O Tyre] will shake from the noise of the horsemen and the wagons and the chariots when he enters your gates as men enter a city that is breached.

¹¹“With the hoofs of his horses Nebuchadnezzar will trample all your streets; with the sword he will kill your people, and your strong pillars (obelisks) will fall to the ground.

¹²“Also they will take your riches as spoil and plunder your merchandise, and tear down your walls and your pleasant houses, and throw your stones and your timber and the debris [from your city] out in the water.

¹³“So I will silence your songs, and the sound of your lyres will no longer be heard.

¹⁴“I will make you [Tyre] a bare rock; you will be a dry place on which to spread nets. You will never be rebuilt, for I the LORD have spoken,” says the Lord GOD.

¹⁵Thus says the Lord GOD to Tyre, “Shall not the coastlands shake at the sound of your fall when the wounded groan, when the slaughter occurs in your midst?

¹⁶“Then all the princes of the sea will go down from their thrones and remove their robes and take off their embroidered garments. They will clothe themselves with trembling; they will sit on the ground, tremble again and again, and be appalled at you.

¹⁷“They will take up a dirge (funeral poem to be sung) for you and say to you,

‘How you have perished *and* vanished, O renowned city,
From the seas, O renowned city,

Which was mighty on the sea,
She and her inhabitants,
Who imposed her terror
On all who lived there!

¹⁸“Now the coastlands will tremble
On the day of your fall;
Yes, the coastlands which are by the sea
Will be terrified at your departure.”

¹⁹For thus says the Lord GOD, “When I make you a desolate city, like the cities which are not inhabited, when I bring up the deep over you and great waters cover you,

²⁰then I will bring you down with those who descend into the pit (the place of the dead), to the people of old, and I will make you [Tyre] live in the depths of the earth, like the ancient ruins, with those who go down to the pit, so that you will not be inhabited; but I will set glory *and* splendor in the land of the living.

²¹“I will bring terrors on you and you will be no more. Though you will be sought, yet you will never be found again,” says the Lord GOD.

27 THE WORD of the LORD came to me again, saying,

²“Now you, son of man, take up a dirge (funeral poem to be sung) for Tyre,

³and say to Tyre, who lives at the entrance to the sea, merchant of the peoples to many coastlands, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD,

“O Tyre, you have said, ‘I am perfect in beauty.’

4“Your borders are in the heart of the seas;
Your builders have perfected your beauty.

5“They have made all your planks of fir trees from Senir;
They have taken a cedar from Lebanon to make a mast for
you.

6“Of the oaks of Bashan they have made your oars;
They have made your deck of boxwood from the coastlands
of Cyprus, inlaid with ivory.

7“Your sail was of fine embroidered linen from Egypt
So that it became your distinguishing mark (insignia);
Your [ship’s] awning [which covered you] was blue and
purple from the coasts of Elishah [of Asia Minor].

8“The inhabitants of Sidon and [the island] of Arvad were
your oarsmen;
Your skilled *and* wise men, O Tyre, were with you; they were
your pilots.

9“The elders of Gebal and its skilled *and* wise men were with
you, repairing your leaks;
All the ships of the sea with their mariners were with you to
deal in your merchandise.

10“Persia and Lud and Put (Libya) were in your army as
your men of war. They hung the shield and the helmet on you;
they gave you splendor.

11“The men of Arvad with your army were upon your walls,
all around, and the Gammadim (men of valor) were in your
towers. They hung their shields on your walls, all around; they

perfected your beauty.

¹²“Tarshish [in Spain] was your customer *and* traded with you because of the abundance of your riches of all kinds; with silver, iron, tin, and lead they paid for your wares.

¹³“Javan (Greece), Tubal and Meshech (Asia Minor) traded with you; with the lives of men [taken as slaves] and vessels of bronze they paid for your merchandise.

¹⁴“Those from Beth-togarmah (Armenia) traded for your wares with [chariot] horses, war horses, and mules.

¹⁵“The men of Dedan were your traders. Many coastlands were your markets; ivory tusks and ebony they brought to you in payment *or* as gifts.

¹⁶“Aram traded with you because of the abundance of the goods you made. They paid for your merchandise with emeralds, purple, embroidered work, fine linen, coral, and rubies.

¹⁷“Judah and the land of Israel, they were your traders; with the wheat of Minnith [in Ammon], cakes, honey, oil, and balm they paid for your goods.

¹⁸“Damascus traded with you because of the abundance of your handiworks and the immense wealth of every kind, with the wine of Helbon [Aleppo] and the white wool [of Sachar in Syria].

¹⁹“Dedan and Javan traded with yarn from Uzal [in Arabia] for your wares; wrought iron, cassia, and sweet cane were among your merchandise.

²⁰“Dedan traded with you in saddle blankets for riding.

²¹“Arabia and all the princes of Kedar, they were your customers for lambs, rams, and goats [favored by you]; for

these they were your customers.

22“The merchants of Sheba and Raamah [in Arabia], they traded with you; they paid for your wares with the choicest of all kinds of spices and all kinds of precious stones and gold.

23“Haran and Canneh and Eden [in Mesopotamia], the merchants of Sheba [on the Euphrates], Asshur and Chilmad traded with you.

24“They traded with you in choice fabrics *and* garments, in clothes of blue *or* violet and embroidered work, and in [treasures of] multi-colored damask *and* knotted carpets bound with tightly wound cords, *which were* among your merchandise.

25“The ships of Tarshish were the caravans for your merchandise,

And you [Tyre] were replenished and very glorious [heavily laden with an imposing fleet]

In the heart of the seas.

26“Your rowers have brought you
Into great *and* deep waters;
The east wind has broken *and* shipwrecked you
In the heart of the seas.

27“Your riches, your wares, your merchandise
Your oarsmen and your pilots,
Your caulkers, your dealers in merchandise,
And all your men of war who are with you,
With all your company that is in your midst,
Will sink in the heart of the seas
On the day of your ruin.

- 28“The pasture lands *and* the countryside will shake
At the [piercing] sound of the [hopeless, wailing] cry of
your pilots.
- 29“All who handle the oar,
The mariners and all the pilots of the sea
Will come down from their ships;
They will stand on the shore,
- 30And they will make their voice heard [as they wail loudly]
over you
And they will cry bitterly.
They will throw dust on their heads;
They will wallow in ashes.
- 31“And they will make themselves [completely] bald for you
And wrap themselves in sackcloth;
And in bitterness of soul they will weep for you
With bitter mourning *and* wailing.
- 32“In their wailing they will take up a dirge (funeral poem to be
sung) for you
And sing a dirge for you:
‘Who is like Tyre,
Like her who is silent [destroyed] in the midst of the sea?’
- 33“When your wares went out to the sea,
You met the desire, *and* the demand, *and* the necessities of
many people;
You enriched the kings of the earth
With your abundant wealth and merchandise.
- 34“Now you are shattered by the seas
In the depths of the waters;

Your merchandise and all your crew
Have gone down with you.

³⁵‘All the inhabitants of the coastlands
Are aghast *and* appalled at you,
And their kings are horribly frightened *and* shudder;
Their faces twitch *and* pale.

³⁶‘The merchants among the people hiss at you [with
malicious joy];
You have become a horror *and* a source of terrors.
You will cease to be forever.’”””

28 THE WORD of the LORD came again to me, saying,

²“Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, ‘Thus says the
Lord GOD,

“Because your heart is lifted up
And you have said *and* thought, ‘I am a god,
I sit in the seat of the gods
In the heart of the seas’;
Yet you are [only] a man [weak, feeble, made of earth] and
not God,
Though you [imagine yourself to be more than mortal and]
think your mind is as [wise as] the mind of God—

³Behold, you are [imagining yourself] wiser than Daniel;
There is no secret [you think] that is hidden from you;

⁴With your [own] wisdom and with your [own]
understanding
You have acquired your riches *and* power

And have brought gold and silver into your treasuries;

⁵By your great wisdom and by your trade

You have increased your riches *and* power,

And your heart is proud *and* arrogant because of your wealth;

⁶Therefore thus says the Lord GOD,

‘Because you have imagined your mind [to be]

Like the mind of God [having thoughts and plans like God Himself], [Obad 3]

⁷Therefore, behold, I will bring strangers (Babylonians) upon you,

The most ruthless *and* violent of the nations.

And they will draw their swords

Against the beauty of your wisdom [O Tyre]

And defile your splendor.

⁸‘They will bring you down to the pit [of destruction],

And you will die the death of all those who die

In the heart of the seas.

⁹‘Will you still say, “I am a god,”

In the presence of him who kills you?

But you are [only] a man [made of earth] and not God,

In the hands of those who wound *and* profane you.

¹⁰‘You will die the death of the uncircumcised [barbarian]

By the hand of strangers,

For I have spoken!’ says the Lord GOD.””

¹¹Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

¹²“Son of man, take up a dirge (funeral poem to be sung)

for the king of Tyre and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD,

“You had the full measure of perfection *and* the finishing touch [of completeness],

Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

¹³“You were in Eden, the garden of God;

Every precious stone was your covering:

The ruby, the topaz, and the diamond;

The beryl, the onyx, and the jasper;

The lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald;

And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and your sockets,

Was in you.

They were prepared

On the day that you were created. [Gen 3:14, 15; Is 14:12–15; Matt 16:23]

¹⁴“You were the anointed cherub who covers *and* protects, And I placed you there.

You were on the holy mountain of God;

You walked in the midst of the stones of fire [sparkling jewels]. [Ex 24:10]

¹⁵“You were blameless in your ways

From the day you were created

Until unrighteousness *and* evil were found in you.

¹⁶“Through the abundance of your commerce

You were internally filled with lawlessness *and* violence,

And you sinned;

Therefore I have cast you out as a profane *and* unholy thing

From the mountain of God.
And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub,
From the midst of the stones of fire.

¹⁷“Your heart was proud *and* arrogant because of your
beauty;

You destroyed your wisdom for the sake of your splendor.
I cast you to the ground;
I lay you before kings,
That they might look at you.

¹⁸“You profaned your sanctuaries
By the great quantity of your sins *and* the enormity of your
guilt,
By the unrighteousness of your trade.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Pride Leads to Problems

We often have problems in our relationships because our minds are full of pride. We may think more highly of ourselves than we do of other people when the Bible tells us we should always think more highly of other people than we do of ourselves (see Phil. 2:3). That doesn't mean we should have a bad attitude about ourselves; it means we shouldn't think we are better than other people.

Satan's "heart was proud and arrogant" (Ezek. 28:17): All he said was "I, I, I, I." But the Bible says we are to have the "selfless humility" of Christ (see Phil. 2:5), who even though He was the Son of God did not think Himself too good to serve others. God exalts the humble, but the proud He brings down (see 1 Pet. 5:5). Take authority over prideful thoughts, and let God help you maintain a humble attitude.

Therefore I have brought forth a fire from your midst;
It has consumed you,
And I have reduced you to ashes on the earth
In the sight of all who look at you.

¹⁹“All the peoples (nations) who knew you
Are appalled at you;
You have come to a horrible *and* terrifying end
And will forever cease to be.”” [Is 23; Joel 3:4–8; Amos 1:9,

10; Zech 9:3, 4]

²⁰Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

²¹“Son of man, set your face toward Sidon, and prophesy against her

²²and say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD,

“Behold, I am against you, O Sidon,

And I will show My glory *and* be glorified in your midst.

Then they will know [by personal experience] that I am the

LORD when I bring judgment *and* punishment on her,

And I will manifest My holiness in her.

²³“For I will send virulent disease to her

And blood into her streets,

And the wounded will fall in her midst

By the sword upon her from every side,

And they shall know [without any doubt] that I am the

LORD.

²⁴“And there will no longer be a briar or a painful thorn to prick the house of Israel from all those around them who treated them with contempt; then they will know [with clarity] that I am the Lord GOD.”

²⁵‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “When I gather the house of Israel from the nations among whom they are scattered, and I manifest my Holiness in them in the sight of the nations, then they will live in their own land which I gave to My servant Jacob.

²⁶“They shall live in it securely; and they will build houses, plant vineyards and live securely when I execute judgment on

all those around them who despise them. Then they will know [with clarity and confidence] that I am the LORD their God.””

29 IN THE tenth year [of the captivity of King Jehoiachin by the king of Babylon], in the tenth *month*, on the twelfth of the month, the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

²“Son of man, set your face toward Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him and against all Egypt.

³“Speak and say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD,

‘Behold, I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt,
The great monster that lies in the midst of his rivers,
[Boastfully] declaring, ‘My Nile is my own, and I have made it for myself.’

⁴“I will put hooks in your jaws
And [I will] make the fish of your rivers stick to your scales.
And I will pull you up from the midst of your rivers,
And all the fish of your rivers will stick to your scales.

⁵“I will abandon you to the wilderness, you and all the fish of your rivers;
You will fall on the open field; and you will not be gathered up or buried.
I have given you as food to the [wild] animals of the earth and the birds of the sky.

⁶“And all the inhabitants of Egypt will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD,
Because they have been [only] a staff made of [fragile] reeds to the house of Israel.

⁷“When they (Israel) grasped you (Egypt) by the hand,
You broke and tore apart their hands;
When they leaned on you,
You broke and strained their backs.”

⁸“Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I am going to bring a sword on you and cut off (destroy) both man and animal,

⁹and the land of Egypt will be a desolation and a wasteland. And they will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD.

“Because you said, ‘The Nile is mine and I have made it,’

¹⁰behold (hear this), therefore, I am against you and against your rivers (the Nile, its tributaries), and I will make the land of Egypt a complete waste and a desolation, from [northern] Migdol to [southern] Syene, even as far as the border of Ethiopia (Cush).

¹¹“No man’s foot will pass through it, no animal’s foot will pass through it, and it will not be inhabited for forty years.

¹²“So I will make the land of Egypt a desolation [plundered and ruined] among desolated lands; and her cities, among cities that are laid waste, will be desolate forty years. I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and [I will] disperse them through the lands.”

¹³“For thus says the Lord GOD, “At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the nations among whom they were scattered. [Jer 46:25, 26]

¹⁴“I will reverse the fortunes of Egypt [as I will that of Israel] and cause them to return to the land of Pathros, the land of their origin, and there they will be a lowly kingdom.

¹⁵“It will be the lowliest of the kingdoms, and it will never again exalt itself above the nations; I will diminish the Egyptians so they will never again rule over the nations.

¹⁶“And Egypt will never again have the confidence of the house of Israel; their wickedness will be remembered whenever Israel looks toward them [for help]. Then they will know [without any doubt] that I am the Lord GOD.””

¹⁷In the twenty-seventh year [after King Jehoiachin was taken to Babylon], in the first *month*, on the first of the month, the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

¹⁸“Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made his army work hard [at My command] against Tyre; every [soldier’s] head became bald and every shoulder was worn *and* peeled [from carrying loads of dirt and stones for siege works]. Yet he had no wages from Tyre [in proportion to the time and labor expended during the siege], either for himself or his army, for the work that he had done against it [for Me].”

¹⁹Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I will give the land of Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. And he will carry off her wealth and capture her spoil and seize her plunder; and it shall be the wages for his army.

²⁰“I have given him the land of Egypt for the hard work which he did [against Tyre], because they did it for Me,” says the Lord GOD.

²¹“In that day I will make a horn sprout for the house of Israel, and I will open your mouth among them, and they will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD [when I renew their strength].”

30 THE WORD of the LORD came again to me, saying,

2“Son of man, prophesy and say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD,
“Wail, ‘Alas for the day!’

3“For the day is near,
Even the day of the LORD is near,
It will be a cloudy day;
A time *of doom* for the nations.

4“A sword will come upon Egypt,
And anguish *and* trembling will be in Ethiopia (Cush),
When the slain fall in Egypt
And they [of Babylon] carry away her great mass of people
and her riches
And her foundations are torn down.

5“Ethiopia (Cush), Put, Lud, all Arabia, Libya (Cub) and the
people of the land of the covenant [the Jews who had taken
refuge in Egypt] will fall with the Egyptians by the sword.”

6“Thus says the LORD,
“Those who uphold *and* support Egypt will fall
And the pride of her power will come down;
From Migdol [in the north] to Syene [in the south]
They will fall within her by the sword,”
Says the Lord GOD.

7“And they will be desolate
In the midst of countries that are desolated;
And her cities will be
Among cities that are devastated [by plunder and slavery].

8“And they will know [without any doubt] that I am the
LORD,
When I have set a fire in Egypt
And all her helpers are shattered *and* destroyed.

9“On that day [swift] messengers will go from Me in ships to
frighten the careless *and* unsuspecting Ethiopians, and there
will be anguish *and* trembling in them as in the day of
[judgment for] Egypt; for behold, it is coming!”

10“Thus says the Lord GOD,

“I will also make the great people of Egypt cease
By the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.

11“He and his people with him,
The most violent *and* ruthless of the nations,
Will be brought in to destroy the land,
And they will draw their swords against Egypt
And fill the land with the slain.

12“And I will make the rivers [of the Nile delta] dry
And sell the land into the hands of evil men;
I will make the land desolate
And all that is in it,
By the hand of strangers. I the LORD have spoken.”

13“Thus says the Lord GOD,
“I will also destroy the idols
And I will put an end to the images in Memphis;
There will no longer be a prince of the land of Egypt.
And I will put fear in the land of Egypt.

14“I will make Pathros desolate,
Set fire to Zoan
And execute judgments *and* punishments on Thebes.

15“I will pour out My wrath on Pelusium,
The stronghold of Egypt,
And I will cut off (destroy) the population of Thebes.

16“I will set fire to Egypt;
Pelusium will writhe in [great] anguish,
Thebes shall be torn open
And Memphis shall be in daily distress.

17“The young men of On (Aven) and of Pi-beseth
Will fall by the sword,
And the women [and children] will go into captivity.

18“In Tehaphnehes the day will be dark
When I break the yoke bars *and* dominion of Egypt there.
Then the pride of her power will come to an end;
A cloud [of disasters] will cover her,
And her daughters will go into captivity.

19“In this way I will bring judgment *and* punishment on
Egypt.
Then they shall know [without any doubt] that I am the
LORD.”””

20In the eleventh year [after King Jehoiachin was taken to Babylon], in the first *month*, on the seventh of the month, the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

21“Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and behold, it has not been bound up to heal or

wrapped with a bandage, so that it may be strong to hold *and* wield the sword.

²²“Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt and will break his arms, both the strong one and the broken, and I will make the sword fall from his hand.

²³‘I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and will disperse them throughout the lands.

²⁴‘I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon and put My sword in his hand; but I will break Pharaoh’s arms and he will groan before him (Nebuchadnezzar) with the groanings of a [mortally] wounded man.

²⁵‘But I will strengthen *and* hold up the arms of the king of Babylon and the arms of Pharaoh will fall down. Then the people [of Egypt] will know that I am the LORD, when I put My sword into the hand of the king of Babylon and he stretches it out against the land of Egypt.

²⁶‘When I scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them through the lands, then they will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD.’”

31 IN THE eleventh year [after King Jehoiachin was taken captive to Babylon], in the third *month*, on the first of the month, the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

²“Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his hordes,

‘Whom are you like in your greatness?’

- ³Behold (listen carefully), Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon
With beautiful branches and with forest shade,
And of high stature,
With its top among the clouds.
- ⁴The waters nourished it, the deep [underground waters]
made it grow tall.
Its rivers ran all around the place where it was planted,
Sending out its streams to all the trees (other nations) of the
field.
- ⁵Therefore it towered higher than all the trees of the forest
And its boughs multiplied and its branches grew long;
Because there was so much water they spread outward.
- ⁶All the birds of the sky made their nests in its twigs,
And under its branches all the animals of the field gave
birth [to their young],
And all of the great nations lived under its shadow.
- ⁷So it was beautiful in its greatness, in the length of its
branches;
For its roots extended [downward] to great waters.
- ⁸The cedars in the garden of God could not hide *or* rival it;
The cypress trees did not have boughs like it,
And the plane trees did not have branches like it.
No tree in the garden of God was like it in its beauty.
- ⁹I made it beautiful with the great mass of its branches,
So that all the trees of Eden which were in the garden of
God were jealous of it (Assyria).
- ¹⁰Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Because it is high in

stature and has set its top among the thick boughs *and* the clouds, and its heart is proud of its height, [2 Kin 18:31–35]

¹¹I will hand it over to a mighty one *and* a mighty one of the nations; he will most certainly deal with it. I have driven it away in accordance with its wickedness.

¹²“Alien tyrants of the nations have cut it down and left it; its foliage has fallen on the mountains and in all the valleys and its branches have been broken in all the ravines of the land. And all the nations of the earth have come from under its shade and have left it.

¹³“All the birds of the sky will nest in its ruins, and all the animals of the field will rest on its *fallen* branches

¹⁴so that none of the trees by the waters may exalt themselves because of their height, nor set their top among the clouds, nor their well-watered mighty ones stand [arrogantly] in their height. For they have all been handed over to death, to the earth beneath, among the sons of men, with those who go down to the pit (the grave).”

¹⁵Thus says the Lord GOD, “On the day when Assyria went down to Sheol (the place of the dead) I caused mourning; I closed the deep [subterranean waters] over it and restrained its rivers. And the many waters [that contributed to its prosperity] were held back; and I made [the heart of] Lebanon mourn for it, and all the trees of the field wilted away because of it.

¹⁶“I made the nations quake at the sound of its fall when I cast it down to Sheol with those who descend into the pit; and all the well-watered trees of Eden, the choicest and the best of Lebanon, will be comforted in the earth beneath [at Assyria’s downfall].

¹⁷“They also went down to Sheol with it to those who were slain by the sword; those who were its strength lived under its shade among the nations.

¹⁸“Which among the trees of Eden do you equal in glory and in greatness [O Egypt]? Yet you [also] will be brought down with the trees of Eden to the earth beneath (nether world). You will lie among the uncircumcised (the barbaric, the boorish, the crude) with those who were slain by the sword. This is *how it shall be* with Pharaoh and all his hordes!” ’ says the Lord GOD.” [Ezek 28:10; 32:19]

32 IN THE twelfth year [after King Jehoiachin of Judah was taken into exile by the king of Babylon], in the twelfth month, on the first of the month, the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

²“Son of man, take up a dirge (funeral poem to be sung) over Pharaoh king of Egypt and say to him,

‘You have compared yourself to a young lion among the nations,

But you are like a monster in the seas;

You burst into your rivers

And disturbed *and* muddied the waters with your feet

And fouled their rivers [the source of their prosperity].”

³Thus says the Lord GOD,

“I will spread out My net over you

With a company of many nations,

And they will bring you up in My net.

4“Then I will leave you (Egypt) on the land;
I will hurl you on the open field.
And I will make all the birds of the sky dwell on you,
And I will satisfy the animals of all the earth with you.

5“And I will scatter your flesh on the mountains
And fill the valleys with your debris [your corpses and their
worms].

6“I will also water the land with your flowing blood
As far as the mountains,
And the ravines will be full of you.

7“And when I extinguish you,
I will cover the heavens [of Egypt] and darken their stars;
I will cover the sun with a cloud
And the moon will not give its light.

8“All the bright lights in the heavens
I will darken over you
And I will place darkness on your land,”
Says the Lord GOD.

9“I will also put fear into the hearts of many peoples when I
bring your destruction [and captivity] among the nations,
into countries which you have not known.

10“I will make many peoples appalled at you [at your
judgment and your defeat], and their kings will be horribly
afraid of you when I brandish My sword [of judgment] before
them; they will tremble *and* shudder every moment, every man
for his own life, on the day of your downfall.”

11For thus says the Lord GOD, “The sword of the king of

Babylon will come on you.

¹²“I will make your horde [of people] fall by the swords of the mighty—all of them are tyrants among the nations,

And they will devastate the pride *and* presumption of Egypt,

And all its hordes will be destroyed.

¹³“I will also destroy all its cattle from beside its great waters;

And the foot of man will not muddy them anymore

Nor will the hoofs of the animals muddy them.

¹⁴“Then I will make their waters quiet *and* clear;

I will make their rivers run [slowly and smoothly] like oil,”

Says the Lord GOD.

¹⁵“When I make the land of Egypt desolate,

And the country is stripped *and* deprived of all that which filled it,

When I strike all those who live in it,

Then they will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD.

¹⁶“This is the dirge (funeral poem to be sung) and they shall sing it [for her]. The daughters of the nations shall sing it; for Egypt and for all her hordes they shall sing it,” says the Lord GOD.

¹⁷In the twelfth year [after King Jehoiachin of Judah was taken into exile], on the fifteenth of the month, the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

¹⁸“Son of man, wail over the hordes of Egypt and cast them down, both her and the daughters of the powerful *and* majestic

nations, to the nether world (the place of the dead), with those who go down to the pit;

19“Whom [among them] do you surpass in beauty?

Go down and make your bed with the uncircumcised (the barbaric, the boorish, the crude).’

20“They will fall among those who are slain by the sword. She (Egypt) is handed over to the sword; they have drawn her and all her hordes away [to judgment].

21“‘The strong among the mighty rulers will say of him (Pharaoh) and his allies from the midst of Sheol, ‘They have gone down [defeated]; they lie still, the uncircumcised, slain by the sword.’

22“Assyria is there with all her warriors; their graves are all around her. All of them are slain, fallen by the sword,

23whose graves are set in the remotest parts of the pit and her army is all around her grave. All of them are slain, fallen by the sword, who spread terror in the land of the living.

24“Elam [a conquest of Assyria] is there and all her hordes around her grave; all of them slain, fallen by the sword, who have gone down uncircumcised to the lower parts of the earth, who made their terror spread in the land of the living and bore their shame *and* defeat with those who went down to the pit.

25“‘They have made a bed for her among the slain with all her hordes. Her graves are around it; they are all uncircumcised (barbaric, boorish, crude), slain by the sword (for their terror had been spread in the land of the living), and they bore their disgrace with those who go down to the pit; they were laid among the slain.

²⁶“Meshech, Tubal, and all their hordes are there; their graves surround them. All of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword, for they spread their terror in the land of the living.

²⁷“Nor do they lie beside the fallen heroes of the uncircumcised, who went down to Sheol with their weapons of war, whose swords were laid [with honors] under their heads. The punishment for their sins rested on their bones, for the terror of these heroes *was once* in the land of the living.

²⁸“But you will be broken in the midst of the uncircumcised and you will lie [without honors] with those who are slain by the sword.

²⁹“Edom is there also, her kings and all her princes, who for all their power *and* strength are laid with those who were slain by the sword; they will lie [in shame and defeat] with the uncircumcised and with those who go down to the pit.

³⁰“The princes of the north are there also, all of them, and all the Sidonians, who in spite of the terror resulting from their power, have gone down in shame with the slain. So they lay down uncircumcised with those slain by the sword and bore their disgrace with those who go down to the pit.

³¹“Pharaoh will see them, and he will be comforted for all his hordes slain by the sword—Pharaoh and all his army,” says the Lord GOD.

³²“Though I instilled a terror of him in the land of the living, yet he will be made to lie down among the uncircumcised along with those slain by the sword, even Pharaoh and all his hordes,” says the Lord GOD. [Is 19; Jer 46; Zech 14:18, 19]

33 AND THE word of the LORD came to me, saying,

²“Son of man, speak to the sons of your people [who are exiled in Babylon] and say to them, ‘If I bring a sword on a land, and the people of the land take one man from among them and make him their watchman,

³and he sees the sword coming on the land, and he blows the trumpet and warns the people,

⁴then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, and a sword comes and takes him away, his blood will be on his [own] head.

⁵‘He heard the sound of the trumpet but did not take warning; his blood shall be on himself. But if he had taken warning, he would have saved his life.

⁶‘But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any one of them, he is taken away because of his corruption *and* sin; but I will require his blood from the watchman’s hand.’

⁷“Now as for you, son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so you shall hear a message from My mouth and give them a warning from Me.

⁸“When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you will certainly die,’ and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man will die because of his sin; but I will require his blood from your hand.

⁹“But if you on your part warn the wicked man to turn from his [evil] way and he does not turn from his [evil] way, he will die in his sin; but you have saved your life.

¹⁰“Now as for you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus you have said, “Truly our transgressions and our sins are on us, and we are rotting away because of them; how then can we live?”’

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, You take no pleasure in
the death of the wicked, but
Your desire is for the wicked
to turn from their ways and
live.*

• adapted from Ezekiel 33:11

¹¹“Say to them, ‘As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back (change your way of thinking), turn back [in repentance] from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?’

¹²“And you, son of man, say to the sons of your people, ‘The righteousness of the righteous man will not save him in

the day of his transgression; and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he will not stagger because of it in the day that he turns from his wickedness, whereas a righteous man will not be able to live because of his [previous acts of] righteousness on the day when he commits sin.’

¹³“When I say to the righteous that he will most certainly live, and he trusts in his [previous acts of] righteousness [to save him] and commits injustice, none of his righteous deeds will be remembered; but he will die for his injustice that he committed.

¹⁴“But when I say to the wicked, ‘You will certainly die,’ and he turns from his sin and practices that which is just (fair) and right—

¹⁵if a wicked man returns [what he took as] a pledge, pays back what he had taken by robbery, walks in the statutes which ensure life, without committing injustice, he will certainly live; he will not die.

¹⁶“None of his sins that he has committed will be remembered against him. He has practiced that which is just (fair) and right; he will most certainly live.

¹⁷“Yet your people [who are in exile in Babylon] say, ‘The way of the Lord is not right;’ but as for them, it is their own way that is not right.

¹⁸“When the righteous turns back from his righteousness and commits injustice, he will also die because of it.

¹⁹“But when a wicked man turns back from his wickedness and practices what is just (fair) and right, he will live because of it.

²⁰“Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not right.’ O house

of Israel, I will judge you, every one [of you] in accordance with his own ways!”

²¹In the twelfth year of our exile [in Babylon], on the fifth of the tenth month, a survivor from Jerusalem came to me, saying, “The city has been captured.”

²²Now the hand of the LORD had been upon me in the evening, before the survivor came. And He opened my mouth at the time he came to me in the morning; so my mouth was opened [in readiness] and I was no longer mute.

²³Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

²⁴“Son of man, those [back in Palestine] who inhabit these ruins in the land of Israel are saying, ‘Abraham was [only] one man and he took possession of the land, but we are many; the land has [most certainly] been given to us [to possess] as property.’

²⁵“Therefore say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “You eat meat with the blood *in it* and raise your eyes to your idols and shed blood. Should you take possession of the land? [Gen 9:4; Lev 3:17; 7:27; Acts 15:28, 29]

²⁶“You rely on your sword [as your security]; you commit outrageous *and* disgraceful acts and each of you defiles his neighbor’s wife. Should you then take possession of the land?” ’

²⁷“You shall say this to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “As I live, those who are in the ruins certainly will fall by the sword, and I will give whoever is in the open field to the [predatory] animals to be devoured, and those who are in strongholds and in caves will die of virulent diseases.

²⁸“And I will make the land [of Israel] a desolation and a

ruin, and her pride in her power will be brought to an end; and the mountains of Israel will be so deserted that no one will pass through.

²⁹“Then they will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD, when I make the land a desolation and a ruin because of all the atrocities which they have committed.” ’

³⁰“But as for you, son of man, your people who talk about you by the walls and in the doorways of the houses say one to another, every one to his brother, ‘Come now and hear what the message is that comes from the LORD.’

³¹“They come to you as people come, and they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not practice them; for with their mouth they *express* loving devotion, but their heart goes after their (unlawful) gain.

³²“Behold, you are to them like a love song by one who has a pleasant voice and plays well on a stringed instrument [merely to entertain them]; for they hear your words but do not practice them.

³³“So when it comes to pass—as it most certainly will—then they will know [without any doubt] that a prophet has been among them.”

34 AND THE word of the LORD came to me, saying,

²“Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to them, the [spiritual] shepherds, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Woe (judgment is coming) to the [spiritual] shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock?’

³“You eat the fat [the choicest of meat], and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the best of the livestock, but you do not feed the flock.

⁴“You have not strengthened those who are weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bandaged the crippled, you have not brought back those gone astray, you have not looked for the lost; but you have ruled them with force and violence.

⁵“They were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the predators of the field.

⁶“My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill; My flock was scattered over all the face of the earth and no one searched or sought them.”” [Matt 9:36]

⁷Therefore, you [spiritual] shepherds, hear the word of the LORD:

⁸“As I live,” says the Lord GOD, “certainly because My flock has become prey, My flock has even become food for every predator of the field for lack of a shepherd, and My shepherds did not search for My flock, but *rather* the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock;

⁹therefore, you [spiritual] shepherds, hear the word of the LORD:

¹⁰“Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will demand My flock from them and make them stop tending the flock, so that the shepherds cannot feed themselves anymore. I will rescue My flock from their mouth, so that they will not be food for them.””

¹¹For thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I Myself will search

for My flock and seek them out.

¹²“As a shepherd cares for his sheep on the day that he is among his scattered flock, so I will care for My sheep; and I will rescue them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day.

¹³“I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land.

¹⁴“I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.

¹⁵“I will feed My flock and I will let them lie down [to rest],” says the Lord GOD.

¹⁶“I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bandage the crippled, and strengthen the weak *and* the sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong [who have become hard-hearted and perverse]. I will feed them with judgment *and* punishment. [Luke 19:10]

¹⁷“And as for you, My flock, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I judge between one sheep and another, between the rams and the male goats [between the righteous and the unrighteous].

¹⁸‘Is it too little a thing for you that you [unrighteous ones who are well-fed] feed in the best pasture, yet you must trample down with your feet [of wickedness] the rest of your pastures? Or that you drink clear [still] water, yet you must muddy with your feet [of wickedness] the rest [of the water]?’

¹⁹“As for My flock (the righteous), they must feed on what you trample with your feet and drink what you muddy with your feet!”

²⁰Therefore thus says the Lord GOD to them, “Behold, I Myself will judge between the [well-fed] fat sheep and the lean sheep.

²¹“Because you push with side and shoulder, and gore with your horns all those that have become weak *and* sick until you have scattered them away,

²²therefore, I will rescue My flock, and they shall no longer be prey; and I will judge between one sheep [ungodly] and another [godly].

²³“Then I will appoint over them one shepherd and he will feed them, [a ruler like] My servant David; he will feed them and be their shepherd. [Ezek 37:24; John 10:14–18]

²⁴“And I the LORD will be their God, and My servant David will be a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken.

²⁵“I will make a covenant of peace with them and will eliminate the predatory animals from the land so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep [safely] in the woods. [Ps 127:2; Is 11:6–9; John 14:27; 16:33]

²⁶“I will make them and the places around My hill (Jerusalem, Zion) a blessing. And I will make showers come down in their season; there will be [abundant] showers of blessing (divine favor).

²⁷“Also the tree of the field will yield its fruit and the earth will yield its produce; and My people will be secure on their land. Then they will know [with confidence] that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bars of their yoke and have rescued

them from the hand of those who made them slaves.

²⁸“They will no longer be prey to the nations, and the predators of the earth will not devour them; but they will live safely, and no one will make them afraid [in the day of the Messiah’s reign]. [Is 60:21; 61:3]

²⁹“I will prepare for them a place renowned for planting [crops], and they will not again be victims of famine in the land, and they will not endure the insults of the nations any longer.

³⁰“Then they will know [with assurance] that I the LORD their God, am with them and that they, the house of Israel, are My people,” says the Lord GOD.

³¹“As for you, My flock, the flock of My pasture, you are men, and I am your God,” says the Lord GOD.

35 MOREOVER, THE word of the LORD came to me, saying,

²“Son of man, set your face against Mount Seir (Edom), and prophesy against it

³and say to it, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD,

“Behold, Mount Seir, I am against you,
And I will stretch out My hand against you
And make you completely desolate.

⁴“I will destroy your cities

And you will become a wasteland.

Then you shall know [without any doubt] that I am the
LORD.

⁵“Because you [descendants of Esau] have had an

everlasting hatred [for Jacob (Israel)] and you handed over the sons of Israel to the power of the sword at the time of their tragedy, at the time of their final punishment [the Babylonian conquest], [Ezek 25:12–14; 36:5]

⁶“therefore, as I live,” says the Lord GOD, “I will hand you over to bloodshed, and bloodshed will pursue you since you have not hated bloodshed, bloodshed will pursue you.

⁷“I will make Mount Seir (Edom) a ruin and a desolate wasteland and I will cut off from it the one who passes through it and the one who returns.

⁸“I will fill its mountains with its slain; those killed by the sword will fall on your hills, and in your valleys, and in all your ravines.

⁹“I will make you an everlasting desolation and your cities will not be inhabited. Then you will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD.

¹⁰“Because you [descendants of Esau] have said, ‘These two nations [Israel and Judah] and these two lands shall be mine, and we will take possession of them,’ although the LORD was there,

¹¹“therefore, as I live,” says the Lord GOD, “I will deal with you in accordance with the anger and envy you showed because of your hatred for them; and I will make Myself known among them [as Judge] when I judge *and* punish you.

¹²“Then you will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD, and that I have heard all your scornful speeches which you have spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying, ‘They have been made a wasteland; they have been given to us as food.’

¹³“So you have boasted *and* spoken arrogantly against Me, and have multiplied your words against Me; I have heard it.”

¹⁴“Thus says the Lord GOD, “While the whole earth rejoices, I will make you a wasteland.

¹⁵“As you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel because it was desolate, so I will do to you; you will be a desolate waste, O Mount Seir, and all Edom, all of it. Then they will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD.” ’

36 “AND YOU, son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel and say, ‘You mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD.

²‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Because the enemy has said of you, ‘Aha!’ and, ‘The ancient heights have become our property,’

³therefore prophesy and say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “For good reason they have made you a desolation, and they crushed you from every side so that you would become a possession of the rest of the nations and you have become the talk and the whispering of the people.”’”

⁴‘Therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD. Thus says the Lord GOD to the mountains and to the hills, to the ravines and to the valleys, to the desolate ruins and to the deserted cities which have become prey and a mockery to the rest of the nations which surround you,

⁵therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “Most certainly in the fire of My jealousy (love for that which is Mine) I have spoken

against the rest of the nations and against all Edom, who appropriated My land for themselves as a possession with wholehearted joy and with uttermost contempt, so that they might empty it out [and possess it] as prey.”

⁶“Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel and say to the mountains and to the hills, to the ravines and to the valleys, “Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I have spoken in My jealousy (love for that which is Mine) and in My wrath because you have endured the [shameful] insults of the nations.’

⁷“Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, ‘I have lifted up My hand *and* sworn [an oath] that the nations that are around you will themselves endure their [shameful] insults.

⁸‘But you, O mountains of Israel, will put out your branches and bear your fruit to My people Israel; for they will soon come [home].

⁹‘For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you [in favor], and you shall be cultivated and sown.

¹⁰‘I will multiply people on you, all the house of Israel, [indeed] all of it; the cities shall be inhabited and the ruins will be rebuilt.

¹¹‘I will multiply on you man and animal; and they will increase and be fruitful. And I will cause you to be inhabited as you were formerly, and I will do better [things] for you than at your beginning. Then you will know [with great confidence] that I am the LORD.

¹²‘Yes, [O mountains of Israel] I will cause men—My people Israel—to walk on you and take possession of you, so that you will become their inheritance and never again bereave

them of children.’

¹³“Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Because they say to you, “You [O land] are a devourer of people and have bereaved your nation of children,”

¹⁴therefore you will no longer devour people, and no longer bereave your nation of children,’ says the Lord GOD.

¹⁵“I will not let you hear insults from the nations anymore, nor will you bear disgrace from the peoples any longer, nor will you cause your nation to stumble [through idolatry] any longer,” says the Lord GOD.”

¹⁶Moreover, the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

¹⁷“Son of man, when the house of Israel was living in their own land, they defiled it by their [own] behavior and by their [idolatrous] actions. Their conduct before Me was like the uncleanness of a woman during her [physical] impurity.

¹⁸“So I poured out My wrath on them for the blood which they had shed on the land and because they had defiled it with their idols.

¹⁹“Also I scattered them among the nations and they were dispersed throughout the countries. I judged *and* punished them in accordance with their conduct and their [idolatrous] behavior.

²⁰“When they came to the nations wherever they went, they profaned My holy name, because it was said of them, ‘These are the people of the LORD; yet they have come out of His land.’

²¹“But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they went.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Good Times with God

God has made us sensitive to His touch by giving us a heart of flesh (see Ezek. 36:26). He wants to lead us into doing things that are good for us, such as spending time with Him. But He doesn't want us to turn our devotional time into a law by thinking we have to pray for fifteen minutes, read the Word for twenty minutes, confess the Word for ten minutes each day, or make other legalistic commitments in order to please Him.

As soon as we view as laws and rules those activities that are to help us grow spiritually, the joy drains out of them and they become works of the flesh. Let God lead you in your time spent with Him, and you will always enjoy it. The Holy Spirit is creative, and He will help you keep your time with God fresh and exciting.

²²“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went.

²³“I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD,” says the Lord GOD, “when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.

24“For I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land.

25“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your uncleanness and from all your idols.

26“Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you, and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

27“I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My ordinances and do them.

28“ You will live in the land that I gave to your fathers; and you will be My people, and I will be your God.

29“ I will also save you from all your uncleanness, and I will call for the grain and make it abundant, and I will not bring famine on you.

30“ I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, so that you will not suffer again the disgrace of famine among the nations.

31“ Then you will remember [clearly] your [own] evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your sins and for your outrageous atrocities.

32“ I am not doing this for your sake,” says the Lord GOD. “Let that be known to you. Be ashamed and humiliated for your [wicked] ways, O house of Israel!”

33“ Thus says the Lord GOD, “On the day that I cleanse you from all your sins I will also cause the cities [of Israel] to be inhabited, and the ruins will be rebuilt.

³⁴“The desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation in the sight of everyone who passes by.

³⁵“Then they will say, ‘This land that was deserted *and* desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, desolate, and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.’

³⁶“Then the nations that are left around you will know that I the LORD have rebuilt the ruined places and planted that which was desolate. I the LORD have spoken, and will do it.”

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

A New Heart, a New Spirit

Paul writes that “we have the mind of Christ [to be guided by His thoughts and purposes]” (1 Cor. 2:16). He is not saying we’re perfect or that we will never fail; he is telling us that, as believers in Jesus, we have been given the mind of Christ. This means we can think spiritual thoughts because Christ is alive within us. We no longer have to think the way we did before we entered into a personal relationship with the Lord. We can learn to think as Jesus thinks.

Another way to look at this is to point to the promise God spoke to the Jewish exiles in Babylon: “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you... I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes... and you will be My people, and I will be your God” (Ezek. 36:26–28). Although the people had failed God in every conceivable way, He promised He would change them. He would give them a new spirit—His Holy Spirit.

When we have the Holy Spirit living and active within us, the mind of Christ is in action. The mind of Christ is given to us

to direct us in the right way. If we are operating in His mind, which is also called the mind of the Spirit (see Rom. 8:6), we will be thinking positive thoughts, because He is always positive. When we become negative about something, we should instantly discern that we are not operating in the mind of Christ. God wants us to be lifted up. It's the enemy of our soul who wants us pressed down or depressed. We don't have to accept those negative thoughts. They may be offered to us, but they don't need to become ours.

Each situation offers us the opportunity to make a choice, and we should think about what the result of our choice will be. Choose to think as Jesus would, and you will always be happy with the outcome. As God promised the Jews through Ezekiel's prophecy, He will give us a new heart and a new spirit, but we still have the power to choose which mind we want to follow.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord, I truly want to think with the mind of Christ in my life all the time. Help me to open myself only to Your will and to push away old thinking that will lead me down the wrong path. Amen.

³⁷“Thus says the Lord GOD, “This too I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them: I will increase their people like a flock.

³⁸“Like the flock for sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed feasts, so will the desolate cities be filled with flocks of people. Then they will know [with confident assurance] that I am the LORD.””

37 THE HAND of the LORD was upon me, and He brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones.

²He caused me to pass all around them, and behold, *there were* very many [human bones] in the open valley; and lo, *they were* very dry.

³And He said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord GOD, You know.” [1 Cor 15:35]

⁴Again He said to me, “Prophecy to these bones and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.’ [John 5:28]

⁵“Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones, ‘Behold, I will make ^{*}breath enter you so that you may come to life.

⁶‘I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin, and I will put breath in you so that you may come alive; and you will know that I am the LORD.’”

⁷So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a [thundering] noise, and behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone.

⁸And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on the bones, and flesh grew and skin covered them; but there was no breath in them.

⁹Then He said to me, “Prophesy to the breath, son of man, and say to the breath, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.’””

¹⁰So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they came to life and stood up on their feet, an exceedingly great army. [Rev 11:11]

¹¹Then He said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope is lost. We are completely cut off.’

¹²“Therefore prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I will open your graves and make you come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you [back home] to the land of Israel. [Hos 13:14]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Speak with Boldness and Authority

Ezekiel was told, “Prophecy to these bones and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD,’” and when he spoke the Word, the bones miraculously came to life (Ezek. 37:4). The prophet Isaiah also said that the Word coming out of God’s mouth (which I believe can also be our mouth if we are dedicated to Him and continue speaking His Word) will not return void, without accomplishing what it was sent to do. The Word of God is seed, and when we release it in the earth, we will see good results (see Isa. 55:10–11).

We are God’s representatives on the earth, His mouthpieces, and the apostle Paul instructs us to imitate Him (see Eph. 5:1). As His representative, you can speak His Word just the same as He would. Speak it boldly, with authority, believing it has power to change your life and your circumstances.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

The Seemingly Impossible Is Possible

When we feel discouraged or hopeless, the enemy often whispers to us: *You might as well give up. This will never change.* If we believe these lies, we may stop praying about the situation or even come to believe our confession of God's Word does not matter anymore.

Are there things in your life that you think are hopeless, things you have given up on? If so, I am asking you to stir up your faith again and begin to speak life to those dead dreams and circumstances that need a resurrection.

Ezekiel 37 provides a perfect example of how speaking God's Word over seemingly impossible situations works miracles. The Lord showed Ezekiel a valley full of dead, dry bones (see vv. 1–2). No matter where Ezekiel looked, he saw hopelessness—no sign of life at all.

When God asked Ezekiel if the bones could live again, he left the door open for God to work by saying that only God

knew the answer (see v. 3). God showed Ezekiel the answer by telling him to prophesy to the bones, saying, “O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD’ (v. 4).

Ezekiel had previously seen marvelous things happen as a result of obeying God, but surely obeying Him in this situation must have required radical faith. Just imagine prophesying to a valley of dry bones! Yet as he spoke the Word of the Lord to the bones, they began to come together and take on sinew and flesh (see v. 8). That was amazing, of course, but the bone structures still had no life or spirit in them.

At God’s instruction, Ezekiel prophesied breath and spirit into the bones, “and they came to life and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army” (v. 10). When Ezekiel saw that sight, I am sure he was thrilled that he had obeyed God.

Any situation that seems dead—a lifeless marriage, longtime illness, ongoing financial problems and debt—can be revived to become an area of strength, not weakness. Merely speaking the Word of the Lord to circumstances is not all you’ll need to do. Obedience to everything God instructs along the way to your breakthrough is also needed. And keeping your mouth filled with life-giving words about what God has promised you instead of what you currently have is a vital component of your ultimate victory.

APRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord of Life, when everything around me looks dead, dry, and hopeless, help me to not give up, but to speak Your word and obey You as You lead me to victory. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

¹³“Then you will know [with confidence] that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves and made you come up out of your graves, My people.

¹⁴“I will put My ^{*}Spirit in you and you will come to life, and I will place you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and fulfilled it,” says the LORD.”

¹⁵The word of the LORD came again to me, saying,

¹⁶“And you, son of man, take a stick and write on it, ‘For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions’; then take another stick and write on it, ‘For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions.’

¹⁷Then join them together into one stick, so that they may become one in your hand.

¹⁸“When your people say to you, ‘Will you not tell us what you mean by these?’

¹⁹say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I am going to take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will join the stick of Judah with it and make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand.” ’

²⁰“The sticks on which you write shall be in your hand before their eyes.

²¹“Say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I am going to take the children of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land;

²²and I will make them one nation in the land, on the

mountains of Israel; and one king will be king over all of them; and they will no longer be two nations, and will no longer be divided into two kingdoms. [Jer 50:4]

²³“They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will save them from all their transgressions in which they have sinned, and I will cleanse them. So they will be My people, and I will be their God.

²⁴“My servant David will be king over them, and they all will have one shepherd. They will also walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them.

²⁵“They will live in the land where your fathers lived, [the land] that I gave to My servant Jacob, and they will live there, they and their children and their children’s children, forever; and My servant David will be their leader forever. [Is 60:21; Joel 3:20; Amos 9:15]

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that I can
live in peace because You
have made an everlasting*

covenant of peace with me.

• adapted from Ezekiel 37:26

²⁶“I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will put My sanctuary in their midst forever.

²⁷“My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.

²⁸“Then the nations will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD who sets apart *and* sanctifies Israel [for holy use], when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.””

38 AND THE word of the LORD came to me, saying,

²“Son of man, set your face against Gog of the land of Magog, the chief ruler of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him,

³and say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I am against you, O Gog, chief ruler of Meshech and Tubal.

⁴“I will turn you around and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them magnificently clothed in full armor, a great horde with buckler (small shield) and [large] shield, all of them wielding swords;

⁵Persia (Iran), Cush (Ethiopia), and Put (Libya, N. Africa) with them, all of them with shield and helmet;

⁶Gomer and all its troops; Beth-togarmah from the remote parts of the north and all its troops—many peoples with you.

⁷“You [Gog] be prepared; prepare yourself, you and all your hordes that are assembled around you, and be a guard *and* a lookout for them.

⁸“After many days you will be summoned [for service]; in the latter years you shall come into the land that is restored from [the ravages of] the sword, *where people* have been gathered out of many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had been a continual wasteland; but its people were brought out of the nations, and they are living securely, all of them. [Is 24:22]

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Five Ways To Practice Peace

Ezekiel 37:26 talks about the peace that God gives His people. One key to maintaining peace in your life is to take small steps toward peace every day. Here are a few tips for having a more peaceful lifestyle.

1. *Be selective about how you spend your time.* You may be trying to do too many things and end up doing none of them well. Hurrying is trying to do more than the Holy Spirit is leading you to do. Be led by the Spirit and ask God to show you new ways to save time and trouble.

2. *Be prepared to say no nicely.* Sometimes we take on things we know we shouldn't because we're uncomfortable saying no. If you feel this pressure, ask God to give you loving words to speak that will take away the unnecessary awkwardness of saying no.

3. *Resist procrastination.* Procrastination is the attitude that says I'm going to sit here and wait until I feel like doing what I need to do. But God's Word tells us to exercise self-discipline. Do what you need to do now so you can fully enjoy

your times of rest.

4. *Eliminate key distractions.* If you know you are easily distracted, set some guidelines for yourself. Perhaps, in order to finish a project, you should turn off your phone for a few hours and don't check your email or social media account. Don't let things that can wait distract you from the things that need to be done now.

5. *Listen for the Holy Spirit.* If you can see that your plan is not producing peace, go back to God; be willing to change your plan and pray for peace and for wisdom to make changes that will benefit your life.

Learning to trust God each day and receive His grace as you need it will enable you to become a truly peaceful person.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Father God, thank You that I can take small steps toward peace every day. I ask You to give me wisdom to do only what You want me to do and to enable me to become a truly peaceful person. In Jesus' name. Amen.

⁹“You will go up [against them], you will come like a storm; you shall be like a cloud covering the land, you and all your troops, and many peoples with you.”

¹⁰“Thus says the Lord GOD, “It will come about on that day that thoughts will come into your mind, and you will devise an evil plan,

¹¹and you will say, ‘I will go up against an open country; I will come against those who are at rest *and* peaceful, who live securely, all of them living without walls and having neither bars nor gates,

¹²to take spoil and seize plunder, to turn your hand against the ruins which are now inhabited, and against the people who are gathered from the nations, who have acquired cattle and goods, who live at the center of the world [Israel].’

¹³“Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish (southern Spain), with all its young lions (villages) will say to you, ‘Have you come to take spoil? Have you assembled your hordes [of fighting men] to seize plunder, to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take great spoil?’”

¹⁴“Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to Gog, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “On that day when My people Israel live securely, will you not become aware of it [and become active]?’

¹⁵“You will come from your place in the remote parts of the north, you and many nations with you, all of them riding horses, a great horde, and a mighty army;

¹⁶and you will go up against My people Israel like a cloud to cover the land. In the last days it will come about that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me

when I show Myself holy through you before their eyes, O Gog.”

¹⁷“Thus says the Lord GOD, “Are you the one of whom I spoke in former days through My servants, the prophets of Israel, who prophesied in those days for many years that I would bring you (Gog) against them?”

¹⁸“It will come about on that day, when Gog comes against the land of Israel,” says the Lord GOD, “that My wrath will rise and show on My face.

¹⁹“In My zeal and in My blazing rage I declare that on that day there will most certainly be a great earthquake in the land of Israel,

²⁰so that the fishes of the sea, the birds of the sky, the animals of the field, all the creatures that crawl on the earth, and all the men that are on the face of the earth will tremble *and* shake at My presence; the mountains will crumble, the steep places will fall, and every wall will fall to the ground.

²¹“I will call for a sword against Gog throughout all My mountains,” says the Lord GOD. “Every man’s (invading soldier’s) sword will be against his brother (ally) [in panic and confusion].

²²“With pestilence and with bloodshed I will enter into judgment with Gog; and I will rain on him torrents of rain with [great] hailstones, fire and brimstone on his hordes and on the many nations that are with him. [Ps 11:6]

²³“Thus I shall magnify Myself *and* demonstrate My greatness and sanctify Myself, and I will be recognized *and* will make Myself known in the sight of many nations; they will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD.” ’

39 “AND YOU, son of man, prophesy against Gog, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince (ruler) of Meshech and Tubal;

²and I will turn you around and lead you along, and bring you up from the remotest parts of the north, and I will bring you against the mountains of Israel.

³“I will strike your bow from your left hand and make your arrows to fall out of your right hand.

⁴“You will fall [dead] on the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the nations who are with you. I will give you to every kind of predatory bird and animal of the field as food.

⁵“You will fall in the open field, for I have spoken,” says the Lord GOD.

⁶“I will also send fire on Magog and on those who live securely in the coastlands; and they will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD.

⁷“I will make My holy name known in the midst of My people Israel, and I will not let them profane My holy name anymore; and the nations will know that I am the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.

⁸“Behold, it is coming and it will be done,” says the Lord GOD. “That is the day of which I have spoken.

⁹“And [when you, Gog, no longer exist] those who live in the cities of Israel will go out and make fires with the weapons and burn them, both the [large] shields and the bucklers (small shields), the bows and the arrows, the war clubs and the spears; and for seven years they will burn them.

¹⁰“They will not take any wood from the field or cut down

and gather [any] firewood from the forests, because they will make their fires using the weapons. And they will take the spoil from those who despoiled them and seize the plunder of those who plundered them,” says the Lord GOD.

¹¹“And on that day I will give Gog a place for burial there in Israel, the valley of those who pass through east of the sea, and it will block the way of those who would pass through. So they will bury Gog there with all his hordes, and they will call it the Valley of Hamon-gog (the multitude of Gog).

¹²“For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them in order to cleanse the land.

¹³“Yes, all the people of the land will bury them; and it will be to their renown on the day that I appear in My glory *and* brilliance,” says the Lord GOD.

¹⁴“They will elect men who will constantly go through the land, [men commissioned] to bury those who were passing through, those bodies that lie unburied on the surface of the ground, in order to cleanse it. At the end of seven months they will do a search.

¹⁵“As those who pass through the land pass through and anyone sees a human bone, he will set up a marker beside it, until the buriers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon-gog.

¹⁶“And even the name of the city will be Hamonah. In this manner they shall cleanse the land.” ’

¹⁷“As for you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Say to every kind of bird and to every animal of the field, “Assemble and come, gather from every side to My sacrifice that I am slaughtering for you, as a great sacrificial feast on the mountains of Israel, and you will eat flesh and drink blood.

¹⁸“You will eat the flesh of mighty men and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, *as though they were* rams, lambs, goats, and bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan [east of the Jordan].

¹⁹“So you will eat fat until you are filled and drink blood till you are drunk, at the sacrificial feast which I have prepared for you.

²⁰“You will eat your fill at My table with horses and riders, with mighty men, and with all the men of war,” says the Lord GOD.

²¹“And I will bring [and manifest] My glory among the nations; and all the nations will see My judgment *and* justice [in the punishment] which I have executed and My hand which I have laid on them.

²²“So the house of Israel will know [with absolute confidence] that I am the LORD their God from that day forward.

²³“And the nations will know [without any doubt] that the house of Israel went into exile for their great sin, because they acted treacherously against Me; and I hid My face (favor, blessing) from them. So I gave them into the hand of their enemies, and they all fell [into captivity or were killed] by [the power of] the sword. [Deut 31:17]

²⁴“I dealt with them in accordance with their uncleanness and their transgressions, and I hid My face from them.””

²⁵Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob (Israel) and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name [demanding what is rightfully and uniquely mine].

²⁶“They will forget their disgrace and all their treachery

(unfaithfulness) which they perpetuated against Me, when they live securely in their own land and there is no one who makes them afraid.

²⁷“When I bring them back from the nations and gather them out of their enemies’ lands, then I shall show Myself holy [and My justice and holiness will be vindicated] through them in the sight of many nations.

²⁸“Then they will know [without any doubt] that I am the LORD their God because I made them go into exile among the nations, and then gathered them to their own land. I will leave none of them there [among the nations] any longer.

²⁹“I will not hide My face from them any longer, because I will have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,” says the Lord GOD.

40 IN THE twenty-fifth year of our exile [in Babylon], in the beginning of the year, on the tenth [day] of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city [of Jerusalem] was taken, on that [very] same day the hand of the LORD was upon me and He brought me there.

²In the visions of God He brought me to the land of Israel and set me down on a very high mountain, on the south side of which *there was* what seemed to be a structure of a city.

³So He brought me there; and behold, there was a man [an angel] whose appearance was like bronze, with a line of flax and a measuring rod in his hand; and he was standing in the gateway.

⁴The man said to me, “Son of man, look with your eyes and

hear with your ears and set your heart on all that I am going to show you; for you have been brought here that I may show it to you. Declare to the house of Israel all that you see.”

⁵And behold, there was a wall all around the outside [area] of the temple (house) [of the LORD], and in the man’s hand a measuring rod six cubits long (10.2 ft.), each cubit being longer than the standard one by a hand width. So he measured the thickness of the wall, one rod; and the height, one rod.

⁶Then he went to the gate which faced the east and went up its [seven] steps and measured the threshold of the gate, one rod in width; and the other threshold [of the gate inside the thick wall] was one rod in width.

⁷The guardroom was one rod long and one rod wide, and [the space] between the guardrooms was five cubits. And the threshold of the gate by the porch (portico) of the gate facing inward was one rod.

⁸He also measured the porch of the gate facing inward [toward the temple of the LORD], one rod.

⁹Then he measured the porch of the gate, eight cubits, and its side pillars, two cubits. The porch of the gate faced inward [toward the temple of the LORD].

¹⁰There were three guardrooms on each side of the gate toward the east; the three were the same size, and the side pillars on each side measured the same.

¹¹And he measured the width of the gateway, ten cubits, and the length of the gate, thirteen cubits.

¹²On each side a border (barrier wall) one cubit wide stood in front of the guardrooms on each side; and the guardrooms were six cubits *square* on each side.

¹³He measured the gate from the roof of one guardroom to the roof of the other, a width of twenty-five cubits from one door to the opposite door.

¹⁴He made [the measurement of] the side pillars sixty cubits *high*; the gate *extended* all around to the side pillar of the courtyard.

¹⁵From the front of the entrance gate [on the outside] to the front of the inner porch (portico) of the gate [the distance] was fifty cubits.

¹⁶*There were* shuttered windows *looking* toward the guardrooms, and toward their side pillars within the gate all around, and likewise for the porches. And windows were all around inside; and palm tree decorations were on each side pillar.

¹⁷Then he brought me into the outer courtyard, and behold, *there were* chambers and a pavement made for the courtyard all around; thirty chambers faced the pavement.

¹⁸The pavement (*that is*, the lower pavement) was by the side of the gates, corresponding to the length of the gates.

¹⁹Then he measured the width from the front of the lower gate to the front of the exterior of the inner court, a hundred cubits [both] on the east and on the north.

²⁰And as for the gate of the outer courtyard which faced the north he measured [both] its length and its width.

²¹Its guardrooms, three on each side, and its side pillars and its porches had the same measurement as the first gate. Its length was fifty cubits and the width was twenty-five cubits.

²²Its windows and its porches and its palm tree decorations had the same measurements as the gate that faced toward the

east. It was reached by going up seven steps, and its porch was in front of them.

²³The inner courtyard had a gate opposite the gate on the north as well as *the gate* on the east; and he measured a hundred cubits from gate to gate.

²⁴Then he led me toward the south, and behold, there was a gate toward the south; and he measured its side pillars and its porches, and they measured the same as the others.

²⁵The gate and its porches had windows all around like those windows [in the other gateways]; the length was fifty cubits and the width was twenty-five cubits.

²⁶*There were* seven steps going up to the gate, and its porches were in front of them; and it had palm tree decorations [carved] on its side pillars, one on each side.

²⁷The inner courtyard had a gate toward the south; and he measured from gate to gate toward the south, a hundred cubits.

²⁸Then the man (angel) brought me to the inner courtyard by the south gate; and he measured the south gate according to those same measurements.

²⁹Its guardrooms also, its side pillars and its porches measured the same as the others. And the gate and its porches had windows all around; the length was fifty cubits and the width was twenty-five cubits.

³⁰*There were* porches all around, twenty-five cubits long and five cubits wide.

³¹Its porches faced the outer courtyard; and palm tree decorations were [carved] on its side pillars, and its stairway had eight steps.

³²He brought me into the inner courtyard toward the east,

and he measured the gate; it measured the same as the others.

³³Its guardrooms also, its side pillars and its porches measured the same as the others. The gate and its porches had windows all around; it was fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide.

³⁴Its porches faced the outer courtyard; and palm tree decorations were [carved] on either side of its side pillars, and its stairway had eight steps.

³⁵Then he brought me to the north gate and he measured it; the measurements were the same as those of the other gates,

³⁶with its guardrooms, its side pillars, its porches; and the gate had windows all around. The length was fifty cubits and the width was twenty-five cubits.

³⁷Its side pillars faced the outer courtyard, and palm tree decorations were [carved] on them on either side. And its stairway had eight steps.

³⁸A chamber with its doorway was by the side pillars of the gates; there the burnt offering was to be washed.

³⁹In the porch (portico) of the gate were two tables on each side, on which to slaughter the burnt offering, the sin offering and the guilt offering.

⁴⁰On the outer side, as one went up to the gateway toward the north, were two tables; and on the other side of the porch of the gate were two tables.

⁴¹Four tables were on each side next to the gate; [a total of] eight tables on which they slaughter *sacrifices*.

⁴²Moreover, *there were* four tables of hewn stone (ashlar) for the burnt offering, a cubit and a half long, a cubit and a half wide, and one cubit high, on which they lay the instruments

with which they slaughter the burnt offering and the sacrifice.

⁴³The double hooks, one hand width in length were installed in the house all around. The meat of the offering was [to be placed] on the tables.

⁴⁴From the outside to the inner gate were chambers for the singers in the inner courtyard, *one of* which was beside the north gate, with its front toward the south, and one beside the south gate facing toward the north.

⁴⁵He [who was guiding me] said to me, “This is the chamber which faces toward the south; it is for the priests who have the responsibility *and* take care of the temple;

⁴⁶but the chamber which faces toward the north is for the priests who have the responsibility *and* take care of the altar. These are the sons of Zadok, who [alone] from the sons of Levi come near to the LORD to minister to Him.”

⁴⁷He measured the courtyard, a hundred cubits long and a hundred cubits wide, a *perfect* square; and the altar was in front of the temple.

⁴⁸Then he brought me to the porch of the temple, and he measured each side pillar of the porch, five cubits on each side; and the width of the gate was three cubits on each side.

⁴⁹The length of the porch was twenty cubits and the width eleven cubits; and at the stairway by which it was ascended, there were [two] columns beside the side pillars, one on each side [of the entrance].

41 THEN HE (the angel) brought me to the nave (outer sanctuary) and measured the side pillars; six cubits wide on

each side was the width of the side pillar.

²The width of the entrance was ten cubits and the sides of the entrance were five cubits on each side; and he measured its length, forty cubits, and its width, twenty cubits.

³Then he went inside [the inner sanctuary] and measured each side pillar of the doorway, two cubits, and the doorway, six cubits [high], and the width of the doorway, seven cubits. [Heb 9:6, 7; 10:19–25]

⁴He measured the length [of the interior of the inner sanctuary], twenty cubits, and the width, twenty cubits, opposite the nave (outer sanctuary); and he said to me, “This is the Most Holy Place.”

⁵Then he measured the wall of the temple, six cubits [thick, to accommodate side chambers]; and the width of every side chamber, four cubits, all around the temple on every side.

⁶The side chambers were three stories [high], one above another, and thirty chambers in each story; and the side chambers extended to the wall which stood on their inward side all around, so that they would be attached, but not attached to the wall of the temple *itself*.

⁷The side chambers became wider at each successive level as they encompassed the temple. Because the structure surrounding the temple went higher by stages on all sides of the temple, for that reason the width of the temple *increased* as it went higher; and thus one went up from the lowest *story* to the highest one by way of the second *story*.

⁸I also saw that the temple (house) had a raised platform all around it; the foundations of the side chambers *measured* a full rod of six long cubits *in height*.

⁹The thickness of the outer wall of the side chambers was five cubits. But the free space between the side chambers belonging to the temple

¹⁰and the *outer* chambers was a width of twenty cubits all around the temple on every side.

¹¹The doorways of the side chambers toward the free space were one doorway toward the north and another doorway toward the south; and the width of the free space was five cubits all around.

¹²The building that was in front of the separate area on the side toward the west was seventy cubits wide; and the wall of the building was five cubits thick all around, and its length was ninety cubits.

¹³Then he measured the temple, a hundred cubits long; the separate area and the building with its walls were also a hundred cubits long.

¹⁴Also the width of the front of the temple and the separate areas along the east *side totaled* a hundred cubits.

¹⁵He (the angel) measured the length of the building along the front of the separate area behind it, with a gallery on each side, a hundred cubits; he also *measured* the inner sanctuary and the porches (porticoes) of the courtyard.

¹⁶The thresholds, the latticed windows, and the galleries all around their three stories, opposite the threshold, were paneled with wood all around, and from the ground to the windows (but the windows were covered),

¹⁷over the entrance, and to the inner room, and on the outside, and on all the wall all around inside and outside, by measurement.

¹⁸It was carved with [figures of] cherubim and palm trees; so that a palm decoration was between cherub and cherub, and every cherub had two faces,

¹⁹so that the face of a man was toward the palm decoration on the one side, and the face of a young lion toward the palm decoration on the other side. It was carved [this way] on the entire house (temple) all around.

²⁰From the floor to [the space] above the entrance cherubim and palm decorations were carved, and also on the wall of the nave [the Holy Place].

²¹The doorposts of the nave were square; as for the front of the sanctuary, the appearance of one doorpost was like that of the other.

²²The altar was of wood, three cubits high and two cubits long; and its corners, its base, and its sides were wood. And he said to me, "This is the table that is before the LORD."

²³The nave (Holy Place) and the sanctuary (Holy of Holies) each had a double door.

²⁴Each of the doors had two leaves, two swinging (folding) leaves; two *leaves* for the one door and two leaves for the other.

²⁵And there were carved on them, on the doors of the nave, cherubim and palm decorations like those carved on the walls; and *there was* a threshold of wood on the front of the porch outside.

²⁶*There were* latticed windows and palm decorations on one side and on the other, on the sides of the porch. Thus were the side chambers and the thresholds of the house.

42 THEN HE (the angel) brought me out into the outer courtyard, toward the north; and he led me to the [attached] chamber which was opposite the separate area and opposite the building to the north.

²Along the length, one hundred cubits, was the north door; and the width was fifty cubits.

³Opposite the twenty *cubits* which belonged to the inner courtyard, and opposite the pavement which belonged to the outer courtyard, was gallery (balcony) corresponding to gallery in three stories.

⁴In front of the [attached] chambers was an inner walkway ten cubits wide and one *hundred* cubits long; and their entrances were on the north.

⁵Now the upper chambers were smaller because the galleries took away more *space* from them than from the chambers on the lower and middle stories of the building;

⁶for they were in three stories and did not have pillars like the pillars of the [outer] courtyards; therefore *the upper chambers* were set back from the ground more than the lower and the middle ones.

⁷And the outer wall, by the side of the chambers, toward the outer courtyard facing the chambers, was fifty cubits long.

⁸For the length of the chambers which were in the outer courtyard was fifty cubits, while *the length of* those facing the temple was a hundred cubits.

⁹Below these chambers was the entrance on the east side, as one enters them from the outer courtyard.

¹⁰In the width of the wall of the courtyard toward the east,

facing the separate area and facing the building, were chambers;

¹¹and a passage in front of them was like the appearance of the [attached] chambers on the north, *and* they had the same length and width, and all their exits were like both their arrangements and their entrances.

¹²And like the entrances of the chambers that were toward the south there was an entrance at the head of the walkway, the walkway in front of the dividing wall toward the east, as one enters them.

¹³Then he (the angel) said to me, “The north chambers and the south chambers, which are opposite the separate area, are the holy chambers where the priests who are close to the LORD shall eat the most holy *offerings*. There they shall place the most holy things—the grain offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering—for the place is holy.

¹⁴“When the priests enter [the Holy Place], they shall not go out from the sanctuary into the outer court unless they lay there their garments in which they minister, for these are holy (set apart). They shall put on other garments before they approach that which is for the people.”

¹⁵Now when he had finished measuring the inner temple, he brought me out toward the gate which faced east and measured the outer area all around.

¹⁶He measured the east side with the measuring rod, five hundred rods by the measuring rod.

¹⁷He measured the north side, five hundred rods by the measuring rod.

¹⁸He measured the south side, five hundred rods by the

measuring rod.

¹⁹He turned about to the west side and measured five hundred rods by the measuring rod.

²⁰He measured it on the four sides; it had a wall all around, the length five hundred and the width five hundred, to make a separation between that which was holy [the temple proper] and that which was common [the outer area].

43 THEN HE (the angel) led me to the gate, the gate that faces toward the east.

²And behold, the glory *and* brilliance of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east; and His voice was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with His glory. [Rev 1:15; 14:2]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Live To Glorify God

Ezekiel spoke often about the glory of God, but do we understand what God's glory is? Glory is the manifestation of all the excellence of God, and we glorify Him when we become excellent people, with excellent character, living excellent lives. God has called us by and to His own excellence and glory (see 2 Pet. 1:3). This means that we are to manifest His character as we go through life. I believe an excellent life begins with forming a habit of thinking excellent thoughts.

To be an excellent person, we make the decision to do the best we can do in every situation. We think our best, speak our best, have the best attitude we can have, do the best job we can do, and treat people the absolute best that we can. To compromise means to go a little bit below what we know to be the best, and we should not compromise in any area of life.

People who compromise are never fully satisfied with their lives. They know deep in their heart that they are not the best they can be, and it causes a dissatisfaction that nothing can alter except making a decision to change with God's help.

Ask the Lord to help you be excellent in all your ways. Be excellent in little and big things, be excellent when people are watching and when nobody is watching, be excellent for the glory of God!

³And it was like the appearance of the vision which I saw, like the vision I saw when He came to destroy the city. And the visions were like the vision I saw beside the River Chebar [near Babylon]; and I fell face downward. [Ezek 1:4; 3:23; 10:15, 22]

⁴And the glory *and* brilliance of the LORD entered the temple by way of the gate facing toward the east.

⁵Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner courtyard; and behold, the glory *and* brilliance of the LORD filled the temple.

⁶And I heard One speaking to me from the temple, while a man was standing beside me.

⁷And He [the LORD] said to me, “Son of man, *this is* the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the sons (descendants) of Israel forever. And the house of Israel will not again defile My holy name, neither they nor their kings, by their [idolatrous] prostitution and by the corpses *and* monuments of their kings in their graves,

⁸by setting their threshold by My threshold and their doorpost beside My doorpost, with [only] the wall between Me and them. They have defiled *and* desecrated My holy name by the vile atrocities which they have committed. So I have consumed them in My anger.

⁹“Now let them put far away from Me their [idolatrous] prostitution and the corpses *and* monuments of their kings, and I will dwell in their midst forever.

¹⁰“As for you, son of man, describe the temple to the house of Israel, so that they will be ashamed of their sins; and let them measure its plan [in detail].

¹¹“If they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the design of the temple (house), its layout, its exits, its entrances, all its designs, all its statutes, and all its laws. And write it down in their sight, so that they may keep its whole design and all its statutes and do them.

¹²“This is the law of the temple: Its entire area all around on the top of the mountain (Mount Moriah) *shall be* most holy. Behold, this is the law of the temple.

¹³“And these are the measurements of the altar [of burnt offering] in cubits (the cubit being a [long] cubit [the length of a forearm] and a hand width): the base *shall be* a cubit [long] and a cubit wide, with its border on its edge all around it of a span [in width]. And this *shall be the height of* the base of the altar.

¹⁴“From the base on the ground to the lower ledge *shall be* two cubits and the width one cubit; and from the smaller ledge to the larger ledge *shall be* four cubits and the width one cubit.

¹⁵“The altar hearth *shall be* four cubits high, and from the altar hearth shall extend upwards four horns [one from each corner, each one cubit high].

¹⁶“Now the altar hearth *shall be* twelve cubits long by twelve wide, square in its four sides.

¹⁷“The ledge *shall be* fourteen cubits long by fourteen wide on its four sides, and the border around it *shall be* half a cubit; and its base *shall be* a cubit all around, and its steps shall face the east.” [Ex 20:26]

¹⁸And He [the LORD] said to me, “Son of man, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘These are the statutes *and* regulations for [the use of] the altar on the day that it is built, to offer burnt

offerings on it and to sprinkle blood on it.

¹⁹‘You shall give to the priests, the Levites who are from the descendants of Zadok, who are close to Me to minister to Me,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘a young bull for a sin offering [as a memorial to Christ’s sacrifice].

²⁰‘And you shall take some of its blood and put it on the four horns [of the altar of burnt offering] and on the four corners of the ledge and on the border all around; thus you shall cleanse it (from sin) and make atonement for it.

²¹‘You shall also take the bull for the sin offering, and it shall be burned in the appointed place of the temple, outside the sanctuary. [Heb 13:11]

²²‘On the second day you shall offer a male goat without blemish for a sin offering, and they shall cleanse the altar as they cleansed it with the bull.

²³‘When you have finished cleansing it, you shall offer a young bull without blemish and a ram from the flock without blemish.

²⁴‘You shall present them before the LORD, and the priests shall throw salt on them, and they shall offer them up as a burnt offering to the LORD.

²⁵‘For seven days you shall prepare daily a goat for a sin offering; also a young bull and a ram from the flock, without blemish, shall be prepared.

²⁶‘For seven days they shall make atonement for the altar and purify it; so the priests shall consecrate it [to receive offerings]. [Ex 29:37]

²⁷‘When they have completed these days, on the eighth day and from then onward, the priests shall offer your burnt

offerings on the altar, and your peace offerings; and I will accept you,' says the Lord GOD." [Rom 12:1; 1 Pet 2:5]

44 THEN HE brought me back by the way of the outer gate of the sanctuary, which faces the east; and it was shut.

²Then the LORD said to me, "This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it, for the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut.

³"As for the prince, he shall sit in it as prince to eat bread before the LORD; he shall enter by way of the porch (portico) of the gate and shall go out the same way."

⁴Then He brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the house; I looked, and behold, the glory *and* brilliance of the LORD filled the house of the LORD, and I fell face downward. [Rev 15:8]

⁵The LORD said to me, "Son of man, pay careful attention, see with your eyes and hear with your ears all that I say to you concerning all the statutes of the house of the LORD and all its laws; and pay careful attention to the entering of the house [by people], with all the departures *from* the sanctuary [of people, those who are allowed to enter the temple and all those who are excluded from the sanctuary].

⁶"You shall say to the rebellious ones, to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Enough of all your repulsive acts, O house of Israel!

⁷"In that you brought in foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in My sanctuary to pollute *and* profane it—My house—when you offered My bread, the

fat, and the blood; and they made My covenant void—*this* in addition to all your *other* repulsive acts.

8“*And you have not kept charge of My holy things yourselves, but you have chosen foreigners [to please yourselves] and have set them in charge of My sanctuary.*”

9“*Thus says the Lord GOD, “No foreigner uncircumcised in heart and flesh, of all the foreigners who are among the sons of Israel, shall enter My sanctuary.*

10“*But the Levites who went far away from Me when Israel went astray, who went astray from Me after their idols, they shall bear the punishment for their sin and guilt.*

11“*Yet they shall minister in My sanctuary, having oversight [as guards] at the gates of the temple and ministering in the temple. They shall slaughter the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister to them.*

12“*Because the priests ministered to them before their idols and became a stumbling block of sin to the house of Israel, therefore I have lifted up My hand and have sworn [an oath] against them,” says the Lord GOD, “that they shall bear the punishment for their sin and guilt.*

13“*And they shall not come near to Me to serve as priests to Me, nor come near to any of My holy things, to the things that are most holy; but they shall bear their shame and their disgrace and [the consequences of] their repulsive acts which they have committed.*

14“*Yet I will appoint them as caretakers of the temple, for all its service and for all that shall be done in it.*

15“*But the Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who*

performed the duty of My sanctuary when the children (descendants) of Israel went astray from Me, shall come near to Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer to Me the fat and the blood,” declares the Lord GOD.

¹⁶“They shall enter into My sanctuary; and they shall come near to My table to minister to Me and they shall perform [the priestly] duty to me.

¹⁷“It shall be that when they enter the gates of the inner courtyard, they shall be clothed in linen garments; no wool shall be on them while they minister at the gates of the inner courtyard and within the temple (house).

¹⁸“They shall have linen turbans on their heads and linen undergarments on their loins; they shall not dress themselves with *anything which makes them sweat*.

¹⁹“When they go out into the outer court, into the outer courtyard to the people, they shall take off the garments in which they have been ministering and leave them in the holy chambers; then they shall put on other clothing so that they will not transmit holiness to the people with their [ceremonial] garments.

²⁰“Also they shall not shave their heads, yet they shall not allow their hair to grow long; they shall only cut short *or* trim their hair.

²¹“Nor shall any priest drink wine when he enters the inner courtyard.

²²“And they shall not marry a widow or a divorced woman; but they shall marry virgins of the descendants of the house of Israel, or a widow who was previously married to a priest.

²³“The priests shall teach My people *the difference*

between the holy and the common, and teach them to distinguish between the (ceremonially) unclean and the clean.

²⁴“In a controversy they shall take their stand to act as judges; they shall judge it in accordance with My ordinances. They shall also keep My laws and My statutes in all My appointed feasts and sanctify My Sabbaths.

²⁵“They shall not go to a dead person to defile *themselves*; except for father or for mother, for son or for daughter, for brother or for sister who has had no husband; they may defile themselves. [Lev 21:1, 2]

²⁶“After he is cleansed [from the defilement of a corpse], seven days more shall elapse for him [before returning to the temple].

²⁷“On the day that he goes into the sanctuary, into the inner courtyard to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his sin offering,” says the Lord GOD.

²⁸“It [their ministry to Me] shall be as an inheritance to them, for I am their inheritance; and you shall give them no property (land) in Israel, for I am their possession. [Josh 13:14, 33]

²⁹“They shall eat the grain offering, the sin offering and the guilt offering; and every devoted thing (offering) in Israel [dedicated by a solemn vow to God] shall be theirs.

³⁰“The first of all the first fruits of every kind, and every contribution *and* offering of every kind, from all your contributions *and* offerings, shall belong to the priests. You shall also give to the priest the first of your coarse meal *and* bread dough, so that a blessing may rest on your house.

³¹“The priests shall not eat any bird or animal that has died

a natural death or has been torn to pieces.

45 “MOREOVER, WHEN you divide the land by lot for inheritance, you shall [set apart and] offer an allotment (contribution) to the LORD, a holy portion of the land [to be used for sacred purposes]. The length shall be 25,000 *cubits*, and the width shall be 20,000 *cubits*. It shall be holy (set apart for sacred use) within its every area. [Ezek 48:9, 12, 13]

²“Of this there shall be a square plot five hundred by five hundred *cubits* in perimeter for the holy place, and fifty cubits for the open space around it.

³“And in this area you shall measure off a portion 25,000 *cubits* in length and 10,000 *cubits* in width. And in it shall be the sanctuary which is most holy.

⁴“It shall be the holy portion of the land; it shall be for the priests, the ministers of the sanctuary, who come near to minister to the LORD, and it shall be a place for their houses and a holy place for the sanctuary.

⁵“And *another portion of land* 25,000 *cubits* long and 10,000 cubits wide shall be for the Levites, the ministers of the temple (house), and they shall possess it as a place in which to live.

⁶“You shall give the city possession of *an area* 5,000 *cubits* wide and 25,000 *cubits* long, alongside the portion set aside as a holy section. It shall belong to the whole house of Israel.

⁷“The prince shall have *land* on either side of the portion set aside as a holy section and the property of the city, adjacent to the holy section and the property of the city, on the

west side toward the west and on the east side toward the east, and in length comparable to one of the portions, from the west border to the east border.

⁸“This shall be his land for a possession in Israel; so My princes shall no longer oppress My people, but they shall give *the rest of* the land to the house of Israel according to their tribes.”

⁹“Thus says the Lord GOD, “Enough, O princes of Israel! Put away violence and destruction, and practice justice and righteousness. Stop your forceful seizure of property from My people,” says the Lord GOD.

¹⁰“You shall have just balances *and* weights [on your scales and just measures], a just ephah [dry volume measure] and a just bath [liquid measure].

¹¹“The ephah and the bath [measures] shall be the same quantity, the bath containing one tenth of a homer and the ephah one tenth of a homer; their standard [measure] shall be according to the homer.

¹²“The shekel shall be twenty gerahs; twenty shekels, twenty-five shekels, and fifteen shekels [added together, a total of sixty] shall be your maneh (mina).

¹³“This is the offering that you shall offer: a sixth of an ephah from a homer of wheat; a sixth of an ephah from a homer of barley;

¹⁴and the prescribed portion of oil, (*namely*, the bath of oil), a tenth part of a bath [of oil] from *each* kor (*which is* ten baths or a homer, for ten baths make a homer);

¹⁵and [you shall offer] one sheep out of every flock of two hundred from the watering places of Israel—for a grain

offering, for a burnt offering, and for peace offerings to make atonement for [those who brought] them,” says the Lord GOD.

¹⁶“All the people of the land shall give to this offering for the prince in Israel.

¹⁷“It shall be the prince’s *responsibility to provide* the burnt offerings, the grain offerings, and the drink offerings at the feasts, on the New Moons and on the Sabbaths, at all the appointed feasts of the house of Israel. He shall prepare *and* provide the sin offering, the grain offering, the burnt offering and the peace offerings, to make atonement for the house of Israel.”

¹⁸“Thus says the Lord GOD, “In the first *month*, on the first of the month, you shall take a young bull without blemish and cleanse the sanctuary (from sin).

¹⁹“The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering and put it on the door posts of the temple, on the four corners of the ledge of the altar, and on the posts of the gate of the inner courtyard.

²⁰“You shall do this on the seventh [day] of the month for everyone who goes astray [and sins through error or ignorance] and for him who is naive; so shall you make atonement for the temple (house).

²¹“In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month, you shall have the Passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten.

²²“On that day the prince shall provide for himself and for all the people of the land a bull for a sin offering.

²³“And for the seven days of the feast he shall provide as a burnt offering to the LORD seven bulls and seven rams

without blemish on every day for the seven days, and a male goat daily for a sin offering.

²⁴“He shall provide as a grain offering [to be offered] with each bull an ephah [of grain], an ephah with each ram, and a hin of oil with each ephah [of grain].

²⁵“In the seventh *month*, on the fifteenth day of the month at the feast, he shall provide [offerings] like these for the seven days, as the sin offering, the burnt offering, the grain offering, and the oil.”

46 ‘THUS SAYS the Lord GOD, “The gate of the inner courtyard that faces east shall be shut during the six working days, but it shall be opened on the Sabbath day and opened on the day of the New Moon.

²“The prince shall enter by the porch (portico) of the gate from outside and stand by the post of the gate. The priests shall prepare *and* provide his burnt offering and his peace offerings, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate and then go out; but the gate shall not be shut until evening.

³“The people of the land shall also worship at the entrance of that gate before the LORD on the Sabbaths and on the New Moons.

⁴“The burnt offering which the prince shall offer to the LORD on the Sabbath day shall be six lambs without blemish and a ram without blemish.

⁵“The grain offering shall be an ephah with the ram, and the grain offering with the lambs as much as he is able to give, and a hin of oil with an ephah.

6“On the day of the New Moon *he shall offer* a young bull without blemish, also six lambs and a ram, without blemish.

7“And he shall provide a grain offering, an ephah with the bull and an ephah with the ram, and with the lambs as much as he is able, and a hin of oil with an ephah.

8“When the prince enters, he shall enter by way of the porch of the gate and go out by the same way.

9“But when the people of the land come before the LORD at the appointed feasts, he who enters by way of the north gate to worship shall go out by way of the south gate. And he who enters by way of the south gate shall go out by way of the north gate. No one shall return by way of the gate through which he entered, but shall go out straight ahead [through the opposite gate]. [Phil 3:13]

10“When they go in, the prince shall go in among them; and when they go out, he shall go out.

11“At the feasts and the appointed festivals the grain offering shall be an ephah with a bull and an ephah with a ram, and with the lambs as much as one is able to give, and a hin of oil with an ephah.

12“When the prince provides a freewill offering, a burnt offering, or peace offerings voluntarily to the LORD, the gate that faces east shall be opened for him, and he shall provide his burnt offering and his peace offerings as he does on the Sabbath day. Then he shall go out, and after he goes out the gate shall be shut.

13“And you [priests] shall provide a lamb a year old without blemish as a burnt offering to the LORD each day; morning by morning you shall provide it.

¹⁴“Also you shall provide a grain offering with it morning by morning, one-sixth of an ephah with one-third of a hin of oil to sprinkle on the finely-milled flour. This is a perpetual ordinance for a continual grain offering to the LORD.

¹⁵“Thus they shall provide the lamb, the grain offering and the oil every morning as a continual burnt offering.”

¹⁶“Thus says the Lord GOD, “If the prince gives a gift to any of his sons from his inheritance, it shall belong to his sons [permanently]; it is their possession by inheritance.

¹⁷“But if he gives a gift from his inheritance to one of his servants, then it shall be his until the year of liberty [the Year of Jubilee]; after that it shall be returned to the prince. His inheritance *shall be* only his sons’ [permanently]; it shall belong to them.

¹⁸“Moreover, the prince shall not take from the people’s inheritance by oppression *and* by evicting them from their property; he shall give his sons an inheritance from his own possession, so that My people will not be scattered, anyone from his possession.””

¹⁹Then he [my guide] brought me through the entrance, which was at the side of the gate, into the holy chambers for the priests, which faced the north; and behold, a place was there at their extreme westward end.

²⁰He said to me, “This is the place where the priests shall boil (cook) the guilt offering and the sin offering, and where they shall bake the grain offering, so that they do not bring them out into the outer courtyard to transmit holiness to the people.”

²¹Then he brought me out into the outer courtyard and led

me across to the four corners of the courtyard; and behold, in every corner of the courtyard *there was a small* courtyard.

²²In the four corners of the courtyard *there were* enclosed courtyards, forty *cubits* long and thirty wide; these four in the corners were the same size.

²³*There was* a row of *masonry* all around inside them, around [each of] the four courtyards, and it was made with cooking hearths under the rows all around.

²⁴Then he said to me, “These are the kitchens of the cooks, where the ministers (Levites) of the temple shall boil (cook) the sacrifices of the people.”

47 THEN HE [my guide] brought me back to the door of the house [the temple of the LORD]; and behold, water was flowing from under the threshold of the house (temple) toward the east, for the front of the temple was facing east. And the water was flowing down from under, from the right side of the house, from south of the altar.

²Then he brought me out by way of the north gate and led me around on the outside to the outer gate by the way of *the gate* that faces east. And behold, water was spurting out from the south side [of the gate]. [Zech 14:8; Rev 22:1, 2]

³When the man went out toward the east with a measuring line in his hand, he measured a thousand cubits, and he led me through the water, water that was ankle-deep.

⁴Again he measured a thousand [cubits] and led me through the water, water that was knee-deep. Again he measured a thousand [cubits] and led me through *the water*;

water *reaching* the hips.

⁵Again he measured a thousand [cubits]; *and it was* a river that I could not pass through, for the water had risen, *enough* water to swim in, a river that could not be crossed [by wading].

⁶And he said to me, “Son of man, have you seen this?” Then he brought me back to the bank of the river.

⁷Now when I had returned, behold, on the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other.

⁸Then he said to me, “These waters go out toward the eastern region and go down into the Arabah (the Jordan Valley); then they go toward the sea, being made to flow into the sea, and the waters *of the Dead Sea* shall be healed *and* become fresh.

⁹“It will come about that every living creature which swarms in every place where the river goes, will live. And there will be a very great number of fish, because these waters go there so that the waters of the sea are healed *and* become fresh; so everything will live wherever the river goes.

¹⁰“And it will come about that fishermen will stand beside it [at the banks of the Dead Sea]; from Engedi to Eneglaim there will be dry places to spread nets. Their fish will be of very many kinds, like the fish of the Great [Mediterranean] Sea.

¹¹“But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh [and wholesome for animal life]; they will [as the river subsides] be left encrusted with salt.

¹²“By the river on its bank, on one side and on the other, will grow all *kinds of* trees for food. Their leaves will not wither and their fruit will not fail. They shall bear every month because their water flows from the sanctuary, and their fruit will

be for food and their leaves for healing.” [Rev 22:2]

13 Thus says the Lord GOD, “This *shall be* the boundary by which you shall divide the land as an inheritance among the twelve tribes of Israel; Joseph *shall have* two portions.

POWERPOINT

From Ezekiel 47:13 to the end of the chapter, the Lord sets boundaries for dividing the land. Geographical boundaries are certainly important, but so are boundaries in our personal lives. Set boundaries concerning your thoughts and words, your finances, balancing work with rest and play, and all other areas of your life. Boundaries protect us from enemies, and we have one enemy (Satan) who wants to tear down our boundaries so we are open to all kinds of attack in our lives. Ask God for guidance in setting healthy boundaries in all areas of your life and be firm in your decisions.



14“*You shall divide it as an inheritance, each one equally with the other. I lifted up My hand and swore to give it to your fathers, and this land shall fall to you as an inheritance.*

15“*And this shall be the boundary of the land on the north side: from the Great [Mediterranean] Sea by way of Hethlon to the entrance of Zedad,*

16*Hamath, Berothah, Sibram, which is between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath; [as far as] Hazerhatticon, which is on the border of Hauran.*

17“*So the boundary will extend from the [Mediterranean] Sea to Hazar-enan at the border of Damascus, and on the north, northward, is the border of Hamath. This is the north side.*

18“*The east side, from between Hauran, Damascus, Gilead, and the land of Israel, shall be the Jordan; from the north border to the eastern sea you shall measure. This is the east side.*

19“*The south side, southward, from Tamar [near the Dead Sea] shall extend as far as the waters of Meribath-kadesh, to the Brook of Egypt and to the Great [Mediterranean] Sea. This is the south side toward the south.*

20“*The west side shall be the Great [Mediterranean] Sea, from the south border to a point opposite Lebo-hamath [north of Mount Hermon]. This is the west side.*

21“*So you shall divide this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel.*

22“*You shall divide it by lot as an inheritance among yourselves and among the foreigners who stay among you, who give birth to sons among you. They shall be to you as the native-born [in the country] among the children (descendants)*

of Israel; they shall be allotted an inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel.

²³“In whatever tribe the foreigner resides, there shall you give him his inheritance,” says the Lord GOD.

48 “NOW THESE are the names of the tribes: from the north end, beside the way of Hethlon to Lebo-hamath, as far as Hazar-enan, which is on the northern border of Damascus, beside Hamath, and running from the east to the west, Dan, one *portion*.

²“Beside the border of Dan, from the east side to the west side, Asher, one *portion*.

³“Beside the border of Asher, from the east side to the west side, Naphtali, one *portion*.

⁴“Beside the border of Naphtali, from the east side to the west side, Manasseh, one *portion*.

⁵“Beside the border of Manasseh, from the east side to the west side, Ephraim, one *portion*.

⁶“Beside the border of Ephraim, from the east side to the west side, Reuben, one *portion*.

⁷“Beside the border of Reuben, from the east side to the west side, Judah, one *portion*.

⁸“And beside the border of Judah, from the east side to the west side, shall be the allotment *and* contribution of land which you shall set apart *and* offer, 25,000 *cubits* in width, and in length like one of the [tribal] portions, from the east side to the west side; and the sanctuary shall be in the midst of it.

⁹“The allotment [of land] that you shall set apart *and* offer

to the LORD *shall be 25,000 cubits* in length and 10,000 in width.

¹⁰“The holy allotment shall be for these, *namely* for the priests, toward the north 25,000 *cubits in length*, and toward the west 10,000 in width, and toward the east 10,000 in width, and toward the south 25,000 in length; and the sanctuary of the LORD shall be in the midst of it.

¹¹“*It shall be* for the priests who are sanctified of the sons of Zadok, who have kept My charge, and who did not go astray when the children (descendants) of Israel went astray as the [other] Levites did.

¹²“And this [land offering] shall be an allotment to them from the allotment of the land, a most holy portion beside the border of the [other] Levites.

¹³“Alongside the border of the priests, the [other] Levites *shall have 25,000 cubits* in length and 10,000 in width. The whole length *shall be 25,000 cubits* and the width 10,000.

¹⁴“And they shall not sell any of it or exchange it, or allow this choice *portion* of land to pass *to others*; for it is holy to the LORD.

¹⁵“The remaining [strip of] 5,000 *cubits* in width and 25,000 in length shall be for the city’s common (secular) use, for a place in which to live and for open country. The city shall be in the midst of it.

¹⁶“These *shall be* the measurements of it: the north side 4,500 *cubits*, the south side 4,500, the east side 4,500, and the west side 4,500. [Rev 21:16]

¹⁷“The city shall have open country: toward the north 250 *cubits*, and toward the south 250, toward the east 250, and

toward the west 250.

¹⁸“The remainder of the length alongside the holy allotment shall be 10,000 *cubits* to the east and 10,000 to the west; and it shall be beside the holy allotment. The produce from it shall be food for the workers of the city.

¹⁹“The workers of the city, from all the tribes of Israel shall cultivate it.

²⁰“The whole allotment *shall be* 25,000 by 25,000 *cubits*; you shall set apart the holy allotment, a square, with the property of the city.

²¹“The remainder, on both sides of the holy allotment and of the property possessed by the city, *shall belong* to the prince. In front of the 25,000 *cubits* of the allotment toward the east border and westward in front of the 25,000 toward the west border, alongside the [tribal] portions, *it shall be* for the prince. The holy allotment with the sanctuary of the temple shall be in the midst of it.

²²Exclusive of the property of the Levites and of the property of the city, which are in the middle of that which belongs to the prince, *everything* between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin shall be for the prince.

²³“As for the rest of the tribes: from the east side to the west side, Benjamin, one *portion*.

²⁴“Beside the border of Benjamin, from the east side to the west side, Simeon, one *portion*.

²⁵“Beside the border of Simeon, from the east side to the west side, Issachar, one *portion*.

²⁶“Beside the border of Issachar, from the east side to the west side, Zebulun, one *portion*.

27“Beside the border of Zebulun, from the east side to the west side, Gad, one *portion*.

28“And beside the border of Gad, at the south side, southward, the border shall extend from Tamar to the waters of Meribath-kadesh, to the Brook [of Egypt], to the Great [Mediterranean] Sea.

29“*This is the land which you shall divide by lot among the tribes of Israel as their inheritance, and these are their several portions,*” says the Lord GOD.

30“*These are the exits of the city: on the north side, [which is to extend] 4,500 cubits by measurement,*

31*there shall also be gates of the city, named after the names of the tribes of Israel, three gates toward the north: one gate of Reuben, one gate of Judah, one gate of Levi.*

32“*On the east side, 4,500 cubits, also three gates: one gate of Joseph, one gate of Benjamin, one gate of Dan.*

33“*On the south side, 4,500 cubits, by measurement, also three gates: one gate of Simeon, one gate of Issachar, one gate of Zebulun.*

34“*On the west side, 4,500 cubits, three gates: one gate of Gad, one gate of Asher, one gate of Naphtali.*

35“*The distance around the city shall be 18,000 (4 x 4,500) cubits; and the name of the city from that day [and ever after] shall be, ‘The LORD is There.’” [Rev 21:12, 13, 16]*

Daniel

Author: | Daniel

Date: | Late sixth
century BC

The book of Daniel tells the story of the young man who shares its name—Daniel. One of the lessons we can learn from Daniel's life is the importance of making good choices. Daniel lived as a Hebrew who was taken to Babylon to live in a foreign, godless culture. Instead of conforming to the Babylonians' ways, Daniel stayed true to his God and to the principles of his faith, even when doing so could have cost him his life.

Let the book of Daniel encourage you to also stand firm for God when people around you do not honor Him or do not respect your faith. Your loyalty to God will have its rewards!

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM DANIEL:

You can rely on God to give you wisdom and the answers to difficult problems (see Daniel 2:23).

No matter what happens, God is able to bring you through to victory. Trust and remain loyal to Him (see Daniel 3:17–18).

Like Daniel, you can have an extraordinary spirit and an attitude of excellence in all you do (see Daniel 5:12).

Be thankful to God in your trouble as you wait expectantly for breakthrough (see Daniel 12:12).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM DANIEL:

Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him. It is He who changes the times and the seasons;... He gives wisdom to the wise and [greater] knowledge to those who have understanding! | Daniel 2:20–21

It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him. | Daniel 2:22

Then the king was greatly pleased and ordered that Daniel be taken out of the den. So Daniel was taken out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on Him, because he believed in and relied on and trusted in his God. | Daniel 6:23

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

1 IN THE third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

²The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles of the house of God; and he brought them into the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and brought the articles into the treasury of his god. [2 Chr 36:5–7; Jer 27:19, 20; Dan 5:1–3]

³And the [Babylonian] king told Ashpenaz, the chief of his *officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some from the royal family and from the nobles, [2 Kin 20:17, 18]

⁴young men without blemish and handsome in appearance, skillful in all wisdom, endowed with intelligence *and* discernment, and quick to understand, competent to stand [in the presence of the king] *and* able to serve in the king's palace. He also *ordered Ashpenaz* to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.

⁵The king assigned a daily ration for them from his finest food and from the wine which he drank. They were to be educated *and* nourished this way for three years so that at the end of that time they were [prepared] to enter the king's

service.

⁶Among them from the sons of Judah were: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

⁷The commander of the officials gave them [Babylonian] names: Daniel he named Belteshazzar, Hananiah *he named* Shadrach, Mishael *he named* Meshach, and Azariah *he named* Abed-nego.

⁸But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile (taint, dishonor) himself with the king's finest food or with the wine which the king drank; so he asked the commander of the officials that he might [be excused so that he would] not defile himself. [Num 6:1-4; 1 Cor 10:21]

Speak God's Word

*I have made up my mind that
I will not defile or dishonor
myself with anything that I
know will defile me.*

| adapted from DANIEL 1:8 |

⁹Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials,

¹⁰and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, “I am afraid of my lord the king, who has prearranged your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the young men who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king.”

¹¹But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,

¹²“Please, test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink.

¹³“Then let our appearance and the appearance of the young men who eat the king’s finest food be observed *and* compared by you, and deal with your servants in accordance with what you see.”

¹⁴So the man listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days.

¹⁵At the end of ten days it seemed that they were looking better and healthier than all the young men who ate the king's finest food.

¹⁶So the overseer continued to withhold their fine food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.

¹⁷As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all *kinds of* literature and wisdom; Daniel also understood all *kinds of* visions and dreams. [Luke 21:15; James 1:5–7]

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Think About What You're Eating

Daniel knew that the first portion of the foods in Nebuchadnezzar's court would have been presented to idols, which is why those foods would have defiled him. Instead of indulging in the king's rich foods and delicacies, Daniel asked to eat vegetables and drink water (see Dan. 1:12).

Just as Daniel did, you and I need to think properly about the food we eat. God gave Adam and Eve very simple dining instructions: "You may freely (unconditionally) eat [the fruit] from every tree of the garden" (Gen. 2:16). He did not tell them to freely eat fast food, frozen pizza, donuts, barbecue, or cake and cookies. God told them to eat from the garden. Even though that was centuries ago, long before processed foods and microwaves, we would do well to follow His advice.

In the United States, we are inundated with faulty dietary information that has clouded the simple truths of healthy eating: Eat a balanced diet rich in foods that come from God, as close as possible to the way God made them. We only create problems when we corrupt our bodies by excessively eating

foods produced in laboratories and factories. Our bodies were not designed to receive nutrition in these forms or from chemicals added to them.

Eating a healthy, balanced diet is not difficult. It is actually easy, but common sense is required. It is not reasonable to think one cookie will destroy your health. Equally unreasonable is the thought that you can eat a full dessert twice every day with no consequences. Moderation is the key in all things.

Look for balance on your plate. A variety of color is a good sign that you are getting a nice mix of vitamins and antioxidants. Allow yourself some carbohydrates for energy—preferably whole grains such as brown rice, whole wheat, corn kernels, or beans—but make sure they are balanced by plenty of protein and healthy fat, such as olive oil or avocado.

We need variety and balance in what we eat. Most foods are good for you! Just don't fall into the American habit of relying too heavily on a few. Make sure God's cornucopia crosses your plate each week, and that most of it looks more or less like it did when it came from the farm. Don't eat mindlessly, without giving any thought to what you are eating. Choose wisely what you eat and how much you eat.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord God, I am thankful for the abundance of fruits, vegetables, and healthy foods that You provide in Your creation. Help me to make wise choices about the food I eat. In Jesus' name. Amen.

¹⁸At the end of the time set by the king to bring all the young men in [before him], the commander of the officials presented them to Nebuchadnezzar.

¹⁹The king spoke with them, and among them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; so they were [selected and] assigned to stand before the king *and* enter his personal service.

²⁰In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the [learned] magicians and enchanters (Magi) in his whole realm.

²¹And Daniel remained there until the first year of [the reign of] King Cyrus [over Babylon; now this was at the end of the seventy-year exile of Judah (the Southern Kingdom) in Babylonia, as foretold by Jeremiah]. [Ezra 1:1–3; Jer 25:11, 12; 29:10]

2 IN THE second year (604 B.C.) of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams which troubled *and* disturbed his spirit and [interfered with] his ability to sleep.

²Then the king gave a command to call the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king.

³The king said to them, “I had a dream, and my spirit is troubled *and* anxious to know the [content and meaning of the] dream.”

⁴Then the Chaldeans said to the king in Aramaic, “O king, live forever! Tell the dream to your servants, and we will declare the interpretation.”

⁵The king replied to the Chaldeans, “My command is firm *and* unchangeable: if you do not reveal to me the [content of the] dream along with its interpretation, you shall be cut into pieces and your houses shall be made a heap of rubbish.

⁶“But if you tell [me] the [content of the] dream along with its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. So tell me the dream and its interpretation.”

⁷They answered again, “Let the king tell the dream to his servants, and we will explain its interpretation [to you].”

⁸The king replied, “I know for certain that you are bargaining for time, because you have seen that my command [to you] is firm *and* irrevocable.

⁹“If you will not reveal to me the [content of the] dream, there is but one sentence for you; for you have [already] prepared lying and corrupt words [and you have agreed together] to speak [them] before me [hoping to delay your execution] until the situation is changed. Therefore, tell me the dream [first], and then I will know [with confidence] that you can give me its interpretation.”

¹⁰The Chaldeans answered the king and said, “There is not a man on earth who can tell the king this matter, for no king, lord or ruler has ever asked such a thing as this of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean.

¹¹“Furthermore, what the king demands is an unusual *and* difficult thing indeed! No one except the gods can reveal it to the king, and their dwelling is not with [mortal] flesh.”

¹²Because of this the king was indignant and extremely furious and gave a command to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.

¹³So the decree went out that the wise men were to be killed; and they looked for Daniel and his companions to put them to death.

¹⁴Then Daniel replied with discretion and wisdom to Arioch, the captain of the king's bodyguard, who had gone out to execute the wise men of Babylon;

¹⁵he said to Arioch, the king's captain, "Why is the decree from the king so harsh *and* urgent?" Then Arioch explained the matter to Daniel.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Lord God, blessed be Your name forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to You. You are the One Who changes the times and the seasons. You remove and establish kings. You give

*wisdom to the wise and
greater knowledge to those
who have understanding. You
are the One Who reveals
profound and hidden things;
You know what is in the
darkness, and the light dwells
with You. I thank You, O God,
because You have given me
wisdom and power.*

• adapted from Daniel 2:20–23

¹⁶So Daniel went in and asked the king to appoint a date *and* give him time, so that he might reveal to the king the interpretation *of the dream*.

¹⁷Then Daniel returned to his house and discussed the matter with Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions,

¹⁸in order that they might seek compassion from the God of heaven regarding this secret, so that Daniel and his companions would not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

¹⁹Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night, and Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

²⁰Daniel answered,

“Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,
For wisdom and power belong to Him.

²¹“It is He who changes the times and the seasons;
He removes kings and establishes kings.

He gives wisdom to the wise
And [greater] knowledge to those who have understanding!
[Dan 4:35]

²²“It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things;
He knows what is in the darkness,
And the light dwells with Him. [Job 15:8; Ps 25:14; Matt 6:6]

²³“I thank You and praise You, O God of my fathers,
For You have given me wisdom and power;
Even now You have made known to me what we requested
of You,
For You have made known to us [the solution to] the king’s
matter.”

²⁴So Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed
to destroy the wise men of Babylon; he went and said this to
him: “Do not execute the wise men of Babylon! Bring me before
the king, and I will reveal to the king the interpretation [of his
dream].”

²⁵Then Arioch hurriedly brought Daniel before the king
and said this to him: “I have found a man among the exiles of
Judah who can explain to the king the interpretation [of the
dream].”

²⁶The king said to Daniel, whose [Babylonian] name was
Belteshazzar, “Are you able to reveal to me the [content of the]
dream which I have seen and its interpretation?”

²⁷Daniel answered the king and said, “Regarding the
mystery about which the king has inquired, neither the wise
men, enchanters, magicians, nor astrologers are able to answer
the king,

²⁸but there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days (end of days). This was your dream and the vision [that appeared] in your mind while on your bed.

²⁹“As for you, O king, as you were lying on your bed thoughts came into your mind about what will take place in the future; and He who reveals secrets has shown you what will occur.

³⁰“But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because my wisdom is greater than that of any other living man, but in order to make the interpretation known to the king, and so that you may understand [fully] the thoughts of your mind.

³¹“You, O king, were looking, and behold, [there was] a single great statue; this image, which was large and of unsurpassed splendor, stood before you, and its appearance was awesome *and* terrifying.

³²“As for this statue, its head *was made* of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze,

³³its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay [pottery].

³⁴“As you were looking, a stone was cut out without [human] hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. [1 Pet 2:3–8]

³⁵“Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together and became like the chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them could be found. And the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole

earth.

³⁶“This was the dream; now we will tell the king its interpretation.

³⁷“You, O king, are the king of [earthly] kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory; [Jer 25:9; 27:6; 28:14]

³⁸and wherever the sons of men dwell, and the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, He has given them into your hand and has made you ruler over them all. You [king of Babylon] are the head of gold.

³⁹“After you will arise another kingdom (Medo-Persia) inferior to you, and then a third kingdom of bronze (Greece under Alexander the Great), which will rule over all the earth.

⁴⁰“Then a fourth kingdom (Rome) will be strong as iron, for iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things; and like iron which crushes things in pieces, it will break and crush all these [others]. [Dan 7:7, 23]

⁴¹“And as you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but there will be in it some of the durability *and* strength of iron, just as you saw the iron mixed with common clay.

⁴²“As the [ten] toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so some of the kingdom will be strong, and *another* part of it will be brittle.

⁴³“And as you saw the iron mixed with common clay, so they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not merge [for such diverse things or ideologies cannot unite], even as iron does not mix with clay.

⁴⁴“In the days of those [final ten] kings the God of heaven

will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will its sovereignty be left for another people; but it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it will stand forever. [Dan 7:14–17; Luke 1:31–33; Rev 11:15]

⁴⁵“Just as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has revealed to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.”

⁴⁶Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell face downward and paid respect to Daniel [as a great prophet of the highest God], and gave orders for an offering and fragrant incense to be presented to him [in honor of his God].

⁴⁷The king answered Daniel and said, “Most certainly your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery!” [Prov 3:32; Rev 19:16]

⁴⁸Then the king promoted Daniel [to an exalted position] and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and chief governor over all the wise men of Babylon.

⁴⁹And Daniel made a request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon, while Daniel was at the court of the king.

3 NEBUCHADNEZZAR THE king made a gold [-plated] image, whose height [including the pedestal] was sixty cubits (ninety feet) and its width six cubits (nine feet). He set it up on

the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

²Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent *word* to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates *and* lawyers and all the chief officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

³Then the satraps, the prefects, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates *and* lawyers, and all the chief officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before it.

⁴Then the herald loudly proclaimed, “You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and *speakers of every* language,

⁵that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon (four-stringed harp), dulcimer, bagpipe, and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.

⁶“Whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be thrown into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire.”

⁷So when the people heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, dulcimer, bagpipe and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations, and *speakers of every* language fell down and worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

⁸At that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought [malicious] accusations against the Jews.

⁹They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever!

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Take a Stand for Righteousness

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego had no idea what would happen to them when they were thrown into the fiery furnace, but they were willing to risk their very lives instead of disobeying God (see Dan. 3:13–17). We need people today who will take a stand for God and who will be bold for righteousness's sake, for what is right according to God's Word.

Many times, people fail to stand up for righteousness because they are afraid of the consequences. They think about whether they will lose their job, lose certain relationships, or even be publicly ridiculed. In situations such as these, when we do not know what the outcome will be, we need to trust God and press forward to do what we believe is right. Even if we are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, God's Word says we are blessed (see Matt. 5:10).

Let us be a people who will put everything on the line and say, "No matter what happens, I will not compromise and do what I know in my heart is wrong. I will obey God, regardless of the consequences, because I love Him and want to glorify Him with my life."

We should have a reverential fear of the Lord and trust Him at all times. It is better to have a good reputation in heaven than it is to compromise our morals in order to have one with people here on earth. Whether you are walking through a

situation you do not understand, being tested in some way, or wondering what will happen if you refuse to compromise, put your trust in God. He never fails.

¹⁰“You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, dulcimer, bagpipe, and all kinds of music is to fall down and worship the golden image.

¹¹“Whoever does not fall down and worship shall be thrown into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire.

¹²“There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, *namely* Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up.”

¹³Then Nebuchadnezzar in a furious rage gave a command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; and these men were brought before the king.

¹⁴Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image which I have set up?

¹⁵“Now if you are ready, when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image which I have made, very good. But if you do not worship, you shall be thrown at once into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can rescue you out of my hands?”

¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego answered the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to answer you on this

point.

¹⁷“If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and He will rescue us from your hand, O king.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

God Is Always with You

Men and women of the Bible made this common decision when encountering difficult or frightening situations: “I will not fear because God is with me.” They did not require advance proof of success or victory; they simply believed they could not fail because God was with them.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego must have been very frightened at the thought of being thrown into a fiery furnace, but they knew God was with them. When Nebuchadnezzar asked them if any god anywhere could rescue them from such a bad situation (see Dan. 3:15), they said, “our God whom we serve is able to rescue us” (Dan. 3:17).

Later, when Nebuchadnezzar looked into the furnace, he saw not only the three young men who were still alive, but also a fourth man (see Dan. 3:25), who represents the help and presence of God in their midst.

Just as God was with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and has been with many others through times of fear and crisis, He is with you and me today. We can boldly face whatever

circumstances come our way. In our own strength, we do not have what it takes to be victorious, but we do have God, and He is always more than enough. We might like some kind of proof that God is with us, but He challenges us to simply believe that He is (see Matt. 28:20).

I encourage you to be a person of faith; believe with all your heart that God is with you and will never leave you. Meditate on that truth, speak it aloud, and let it become a vital part of your conscious awareness at all times. You can even stop what you are doing several times a day and say, “I will not fear because God is with me.” Let the power of these words energize you to push past your fears.

By speaking out against fear, you defuse its power and render it ineffective against you. Satan is a predator, and fear is a sign of weakness to a predator. Don't give him the satisfaction of thinking he has any influence over you. When you confront fear in this way, you will discover strength you never knew you had, a strength based on the reality that God is with you.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord, help me to remember that no matter what my circumstances are or how tempted I may be to fear, You are always with me. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Speak God's Word

I believe that God is able to rescue me from any trial and that He will rescue me. But if He does not, I will still remain loyal to Him and not turn aside to other gods or look for other sources of strength.

| adapted from DANIEL 3:17-18 |

¹⁸“But even if *He does* not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up!” [Job 13:15; Acts 4:19, 20]

¹⁹Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and his facial expression changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then he gave a command that the furnace was to be heated seven times hotter than usual.

²⁰He commanded certain strong men in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego and to throw them into the furnace of blazing fire.

²¹Then these [three] men were tied up in their trousers, their coats, their turbans, and their other clothes, and were thrown into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire.

²²Because the king's command was urgent and the furnace was extremely hot, the flame of the fire killed the men who carried up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

²³But these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, fell into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire *still* tied up.

²⁴Then Nebuchadnezzar the king [looked and] was astounded, and he jumped up and said to his counselors, "Did we not throw three men who were tied up into the midst of the fire?" They replied to the king, "Certainly, O king."

²⁵He answered, "Look! I see four men untied, walking around in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt! And the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!" [Phil 2:5–8]

²⁶Then Nebuchadnezzar approached the door of the blazing furnace and said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, servants of the Most High God, come out [of there]! Come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego came out of the midst of the fire.

²⁷The satraps, the prefects, the governors and the king's counselors gathered around them and saw that in regard to these men the fire had no effect on their bodies—their hair was not singed, their clothes were not scorched *or* damaged, even the smell of smoke was not on them.

²⁸Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and rescued His servants who believed in, trusted in, *and* relied on Him! They violated the king's command and surrendered their bodies rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.

²⁹“Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego shall be cut into pieces and their houses be made a heap of rubbish, for there is no other god who is able to save in this way!”

³⁰Then the king caused Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to prosper in the province of Babylon.

4 NEBUCHADNEZZAR THE king, to all the peoples, nations, and *speakers of every* language that live in all the earth: “May your peace abound!

POWERPOINT

King Nebuchadnezzar was understandably astounded when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego miraculously emerged from the furnace unharmed, because they “believed in, trusted in, *and* relied on” God (Dan. 3:28). What a miracle that was, and we also can see great things like this happen in our lives through trusting God completely in every situation. Jesus said, “All things are possible for the one who believes *and* trusts [in Me]” (Mark 9:23). Believe big, and get ready to be amazed!



²“It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me.

³“How great are His signs
And how mighty are His wonders!
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom
And His dominion is from generation to generation. [Dan
7:13, 14; Luke 1:31–33]

⁴“I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house and prospering in my palace.

⁵“I saw a dream and it made me afraid; and the fantasies *and* thoughts and the visions [that appeared] in my mind *as I lay* on my bed kept alarming me.

⁶“So I gave orders to bring in before me all the wise men of Babylon, so that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream.

⁷“Then the magicians, the enchanters (Magi), the Chaldeans [who were the master astrologers] and the diviners came in, and I told them the dream, but they could not interpret it *and* make known its meaning to me.

⁸“But at last Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar, after the name of my god, and in whom is ^{*}a spirit of the holy gods; and I told the dream to him, *saying*,

⁹“O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that a spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery baffles *or* troubles you, tell me the visions of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretation.

¹⁰“The visions that passed through my mind as I lay on my bed were these: I was looking, and behold, *there was* a tree in the middle of the earth, and its height was great.

¹¹“The tree grew large and became strong

And its height reached to heaven,
And it was visible to the end of the earth.

12^cIts leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant,
And in it was food for all.
The beasts of the field found shade under it,
And the birds of the sky nested in its branches,
And all living creatures fed themselves from it.

13^cAnd behold, I saw in the visions of my mind *as I lay* on my bed, an *angelic* watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven.

14^cHe shouted aloud and said this:
“Cut down the tree and cut off its branches;
Shake off its leaves and scatter its fruit;
Let the living creatures run from under it
And the birds fly from its branches.

15^c“Nevertheless leave the stump with its roots in the ground,
Bound with a band of iron and bronze
In the new grass of the field;
And let him be wet with the dew of heaven,
And let him feed with the animals in the grass of the earth.

16^c“Let his mind *and* nature be changed from a man’s
And let an animal’s mind *and* nature be given to him,
And let seven periods of time pass over him.

17^c“This sentence is by the decree of the *angelic* watchers
And the decision is a command of the holy ones,
So that the living may know [without any doubt]
That the Most High [God] rules over the kingdom of

mankind

And He bestows it on whomever He desires

And sets over it the humblest *and* lowliest of men.” [Dan 2:21; 5:21]

¹⁸“This is the dream which I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, explain its meaning, since none of the wise men of my kingdom are able to reveal its interpretation to me; but you are able, for a spirit of the holy gods is in you.’

¹⁹“Then Daniel, whose [Babylonian] name was Belteshazzar, was appalled *and* speechless for a while [because he was deeply concerned about the destiny of the king], and his thoughts alarmed him. The king said, ‘Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation frighten you.’ Belteshazzar answered, ‘My lord, may the dream be [meant] for those who hate you and its message for your enemies!’

²⁰“The tree that you saw, which became great and grew strong, whose height reached to heaven and which was visible to all the earth,

²¹whose foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and on which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field lived, and in whose branches the birds of the sky nested—

²²it is you, O king, who have become great and grown strong; your greatness has increased and it reaches to heaven, and your dominion [reaches] to the ends of the earth.

²³“In that the king saw an *angelic* watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and saying, “Cut the tree down and destroy it; but leave the stump with its roots in the earth, but with a band of iron and bronze *around it* in the new grass of the field, and let him be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him

feed with the beasts of the field until seven periods of time pass over him,”

²⁴this is the interpretation, O king: It is the decree of the Most High [God], which has come upon my lord the king:

²⁵that you shall be driven from mankind and your dwelling place shall be with the beasts of the field; and that you be given grass to eat like the cattle and be wet with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know [without any doubt] that the Most High [God] rules over the kingdom of mankind and He bestows it to whomever He desires.

²⁶“And in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree [in the earth], your kingdom shall be restored to you after you recognize (understand fully) that Heaven rules.

²⁷“Therefore, O king, let my advice to you be [considered and found] acceptable; break away now from your sins *and* exhibit your repentance by doing what is right, and from your wickedness by showing mercy to the poor, so that [if you repent] there may possibly be a continuance of your prosperity *and* tranquility *and* a healing of your error.’

²⁸“All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king.

²⁹“Twelve months later he was walking on the upper level of the royal palace of Babylon.

³⁰“The king said thoughtfully, ‘Is not this the great Babylon which I myself have built as the royal residence *and* seat of government by the might of my power and for the honor *and* glory of my majesty?’

³¹“While the words were still in the king’s mouth, a voice

came [as if falling] from heaven, *saying*, ‘O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: “The kingdom has been removed from you,

³²and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the animals of the field. You will be given grass to eat like the cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you know [without any doubt] that the Most High God rules over the kingdom of mankind and He bestows it on whomever He desires.” ’

³³“Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles’ *feathers* and his nails were like birds’ *claws*.

³⁴“But at the end of the days [that is, at the seven periods of time], I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my understanding *and* reason returned to me; and I blessed the Most High [God] and I praised and honored *and* glorified Him who lives forever,

For His dominion is an everlasting dominion;

And His kingdom *endures* from generation to generation.

³⁵“All the inhabitants of the earth are regarded as nothing.

But He does according to His will in the host of heaven

And among the inhabitants of the earth;

And no one can hold back His hand

Or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’

A Prayer To

Renew Your Mind



Lord, Your dominion is an everlasting dominion and Your kingdom endures from generation to generation. You do according to Your will and no one can hold back Your hand. I praise and exalt and honor You, King of heaven, for all Your works are true and faithful and Your ways are just.

• adapted from Daniel 4:34–37

³⁶“Now at the same time my reason returned to me; and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor were returned to me, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was re-established in my kingdom, and still more greatness [than before] was added to me.

³⁷“Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true *and* faithful and His ways are just, and He is able to humiliate *and* humble those

who walk in [self-centered, self-righteous] pride.”

5 BELSHAZZAR THE king [who was a descendant of Nebuchadnezzar] gave a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking his wine in the presence of the thousand [guests].

²Belshazzar, as he tasted the wine, gave a command to bring in the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them.

³Then they brought in the gold *and* silver vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God which was in Jerusalem; and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them.

⁴They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.

⁵Suddenly the fingers of a man's hand appeared and began writing opposite the lampstand on [a well-lit area of] the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, and the king saw the part of the hand that did the writing.

⁶Then the king's face grew pale, and his thoughts alarmed him; the joints *and* muscles of his hips *and* back weakened and his knees began knocking together.

⁷The king called aloud to bring in the enchanters (Magi), the Chaldeans [who were master astrologers] and the diviners. The king said to the wise men of Babylon, “Whoever can read this writing and explain its interpretation to me shall be clothed

with purple and have a chain of gold put around his neck, and have authority as the third *ruler* in the kingdom.”

⁸Then all the king’s wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or reveal to the king its interpretation.

⁹Then King Belshazzar was greatly perplexed, his face became even paler, and his nobles were bewildered *and* alarmed.

¹⁰Now the queen [mother], overhearing the [excited] words of the king and his nobles, came into the banquet area. The queen [mother] spoke and said, “O king, live forever! Do not be alarmed at your thoughts or let your face be changed.

¹¹“There is a man in your kingdom in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of your father, illumination, understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him. And King Nebuchadnezzar, your father—your father the king, appointed him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans and diviners.

¹²“It was because an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, the ability to interpret dreams, clarify riddles, and solve complex problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called and he will give the interpretation.”

¹³Then Daniel was brought in before the king. And the king said to Daniel, “Are you that Daniel who is one of the sons of the exiles of Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah?

¹⁴“I have heard of you, that a spirit of the gods is in you, and that illumination, insight, and extraordinary wisdom have been found in you.

¹⁵“Now the wise men and the enchanters, were brought in before me so that they might read this writing and reveal its meaning to me, but they could not give the interpretation of the message.

¹⁶“But I personally have heard about you, that you are able to make interpretations and solve complex problems. Now if you are able to read the writing and reveal its interpretation to me, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold put around your neck, and you shall have authority as the third *ruler* in the kingdom.”

¹⁷Then Daniel answered and said before the king, “Keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else; however, I will read the writing to the king and reveal the interpretation to him.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Don't Try To Get Away with It

Do you ever say, "I know I shouldn't do this, but..." ; "I know I shouldn't say this, but..." ; "I know I shouldn't act like this, but..." ; "I know I should forgive her, but..."? What we're really saying is, "I know I'm making a wrong choice, but I hope I can get by with it."

We live in a society where lots of people do not want to be accountable. They want to be able to make wrong choices and not have wrong results. But it doesn't work that way. Accountable means "answerable." Sooner or later we will have to answer for our choices. If we don't choose to be accountable, eventually our circumstances will force us to be accountable (see Rom. 3:19).

King Belshazzar is a classic example of this. He knew in his mind and heart that he was insulting the Lord of heaven with his actions (see Dan. 5:22), but he went ahead anyway, only to be held accountable later on. Always be honorable and do the right thing and make the right choices so that you will have peace and be unashamed.

¹⁸“O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and greatness and glory and majesty;

¹⁹and because of the greatness that He gave him, all the peoples, nations, and *speakers of every language* trembled and

feared him. Whomever he wished he killed, and whomever he wished he kept alive; whomever he wished he promoted and whomever he wished he humbled.

²⁰“But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit became so proud that he behaved arrogantly, he was deposed from his royal throne and his glory was taken away from him.

²¹“He was also driven from mankind, and his mind was made like that of an animal, and his dwelling place was with the wild donkeys. He was given grass to eat like cattle, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven until he came to know [without any doubt] that the Most High God rules over the kingdom of mankind and He appoints it to whomever He wills.

²²“And you, his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart (mind), even though you knew all this.

²³“And you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven, and the vessels of His house have been brought before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or understand. But the God who holds in His hand your breath of life and your ways you have not honored *and* glorified [but have dishonored and defied].

²⁴“Then the hand was sent from the presence [of the Most High God], and this inscription was written:

²⁵“This is the inscription that was written, ‘MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN [numbered, numbered, weighed, and divided].’

²⁶“This is the interpretation of the message: ‘MENE’—God

has numbered the days of your kingdom and put an end to it;

²⁷‘TEKEL’—you have been weighed on the scales [of righteousness] and found deficient;

²⁸‘PERES’—your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians.”

²⁹Then Belshazzar gave the command, and Daniel was clothed with purple and a chain of gold was put around his neck, and a proclamation concerning him was issued [declaring] that he now had authority as the third *ruler* in the kingdom.

³⁰During that same night Belshazzar the [last] Chaldean king was slain [by troops of the invading army].

³¹So Darius the Mede received the kingdom; he was about the age of sixty-two.

6 IT SEEMED good to Darius [who became king after Belshazzar] to appoint over the kingdom 120 satraps who would be in charge throughout the kingdom,

²and over them three chief commissioners (of whom Daniel was one), that these satraps might be accountable to them, so that the king would have no loss [from disloyalty or mismanagement].

³Then this Daniel, because of the extraordinary spirit within him, began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and the satraps, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire realm.

⁴Then the [other two] commissioners and the satraps began trying to find a reason to bring a complaint against

Daniel concerning the [administration of the] kingdom; but they could find no reason for an accusation or *evidence of* corruption, because he was faithful [a man of high moral character and personal integrity], and no negligence or corruption [of any kind] was found in him.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Stand Firm in Prayer and Worship

Daniel's enemies were jealous of him and of his high position in the kingdom. Because Daniel was a righteous man, they knew they could not justly accuse him of any unrighteous behavior. They sought to find a way to negatively impact his devotion to God through fear of physical torture and death. They persuaded the king to issue a decree stating that for thirty days anyone caught petitioning any god or man except the king would be thrown into a den of hungry lions, undoubtedly to be killed in an excruciating way.

Daniel's enemies knew that he had the habit of going into his room three times each day, opening the windows toward Jerusalem, kneeling, and praying and worshiping God.

Even when it was no longer safe to honor God openly, Daniel refused to compromise his prayers and worship (see Dan. 6:10). The next time his enemies caught him praying and worshiping God, they took him before the king, who had no choice but to sentence him to the lions' den. Notice that Daniel prayed with his windows open. In other words, he never tried to hide his faith in God. His reverential fear and awe of the Lord was greater than any fear of man or any dread of bodily harm.

Daniel did end up in the lions' den, but he slept that night and emerged unharmed the next day because God miraculously

closed the mouths of the lions. Instead of Daniel being devoured by the lions, his enemies were thrown into the pit and eaten alive.

If you and I will remain faithful to the Lord, stand firm in our prayer, and continue to worship Him, God will also bring us through our trials.

⁵Then these men said, “We will not find any basis for an accusation against this Daniel unless we find something against him in connection with the law of his God.” [Acts 24:13–21; 1 Pet 4:12–16]

⁶Then these commissioners and satraps agreed to approach the king and said to him, “King Darius, live forever!

⁷“All the commissioners of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors have consulted *and* agreed together that the king should establish a *royal* statute and enforce an injunction that anyone who petitions (prays to) any god or man besides you, O king, during the next thirty days, shall be thrown into the den of lions.

⁸“Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document so that it may not be changed, in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which [insures that it] may not be altered *or* revoked.”

⁹So King Darius signed the document, that is, the injunction.

¹⁰Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he went into his house (now in his roof chamber his windows were open toward Jerusalem); he continued to get down on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his

God, as he had been doing previously. [Ps 5:7]

¹¹Then, by agreement, these men came [together] and found Daniel praying and making requests before his God.

¹²Then they approached and spoke before the king regarding his injunction, “Have you not signed an injunction that anyone who petitions (prays to) any god or man except you, O king, within the *designated* thirty days, is to be thrown into the den of lions?” The king answered, “The statement is true, in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be altered *or* revoked.”

¹³Then they answered and said before the king, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, does not pay any attention to you, O king, or to the injunction which you have signed, but keeps praying [to his God] three times a day.”

¹⁴Then, as soon as the king heard these words, he was deeply distressed [over what he had done] and set his mind on rescuing Daniel; and he struggled until the sun went down [trying to work out a way] to save him.

¹⁵Then, by agreement, these same men came to the king and said, “Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or statute which the king establishes may be altered *or* revoked.”

¹⁶Then the king gave a command, and Daniel was brought and thrown into the den of lions. The king said to Daniel, “May your God, whom you constantly serve, rescue you Himself!” [Ps 34:7, 19; 37:39, 40; 50:15]

¹⁷A stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that nothing would be changed

concerning Daniel.

¹⁸Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no music or entertainment was brought before him, and he remained unable to sleep.

¹⁹Then the king arose at dawn, at the break of day, and hurried to the den of lions.

²⁰When he had come near the den, he called out to Daniel with a troubled voice. The king said to Daniel, “O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to rescue you from the lions?”

²¹Then Daniel spoke to the king, “O king, live forever!

²²“My God has sent His angel and has shut the mouths of the lions so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also before you, O king, I have committed no crime.” [2 Tim 4:17]

²³Then the king was greatly pleased and ordered that Daniel be taken out of the den. So Daniel was taken out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in *and* relied on *and* trusted in his God.

²⁴The king then gave a command, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and thrown into the den of lions, they, their children and their wives; and before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

²⁵Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, nations, and *speakers of every* language who were living in all the land: “May peace abound to you!

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Keep Believing in the Middle

Consistently thinking good and godly thoughts, speaking positive words, and enjoying stable moods and attitudes are not necessarily easy to do, but they are possible. I have personally been working with the Holy Spirit toward this goal for years, and although I have not arrived at perfection, I have made amazing progress.

I have successful days, and days when I feel I have failed miserably, but I believe that with God's help I will keep growing. I always encourage people to look at how far they have come instead of how far they have to go. The devil wants us to focus on our failures, but God wants us to focus on our successes.

A walk begins with one step and then another and another. No matter how long your journey seems, if you take enough steps in the right direction, you will eventually arrive at your destination. Don't hesitate to begin because you think you have a long way to go. No matter what your problems may be, things will get better with God's help.

In Daniel 6, after Daniel's refusal to stop praying and thanking God led to his being thrown into the lions' den, he came out of the den without injury "because he believed in *and* relied on *and* trusted in his God" (v. 23). The Scriptures are an open invitation to experience miracles in your life if you will simply believe.

It is important to notice that believing comes before receiving. The beginning of a prayer is asking, the middle is the waiting and continuing to believe, and the end is the manifestation of the desired result. The one thing we need to do in the middle is to keep believing that God is working and that our breakthrough may come at any moment.

Believing is a great benefit when it comes to maintaining a good mood and attitude. When you believe, hope comes alive. And one of the great things about hope is that it brings joy (see Rom 5:2).

Is there any area of your life in which you have given up the hope of seeing change? If so, may this be a point of resurrection! With God's help, you can resurrect your faith and hope—you can believe once again that nothing is beyond God's ability. All things are possible with God!

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God of miracles, I thank You that the lions' den is no match for Your power to protect and deliver. I believe that You are working in my life and that the breakthrough I have asked You for is on its way. This is not beyond Your ability, Lord God. Amen.

²⁶“I issue a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to [reverently] fear and tremble before the God of Daniel,

For He is the living God, enduring *and* steadfast forever,
And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed,
And His dominion will be forever.

²⁷“He rescues and saves and performs signs and wonders
In heaven and on earth—
He who has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions.”

²⁸So this [man] Daniel prospered *and* enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

7 IN THE first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions appeared in his mind *as he lay* on his bed; then he wrote the dream down and related a summary of it.

²Daniel said, “I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea (the nations).

³“And four great beasts, each different from the other, were coming up out of the sea [in succession].

⁴“The first (the Babylonian Empire under Nebuchadnezzar) was like a lion and had the wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind was given to it. [Dan 2:37, 38]

⁵“And behold, another beast, a second one (the Medo-Persian Empire), was like a bear, and it was raised up on one side (domain), and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, ‘Arise, devour much meat.’

⁶“After this I kept looking, and behold, another one (the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great), like a leopard, which had on its back four wings like those of a bird; the beast also had four heads (Alexander’s generals, his successors), and power to rule was given to it. [Dan 2:39; 8:20–22]

⁷“After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, [I saw] a fourth beast (the Roman Empire), terrible and extremely strong; and it had huge iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that came before it, and it had ten horns (ten kings). [Dan 2:40–43; 7:23]

⁸“While I was considering the horns, behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, and three of the first horns were pulled up by the roots before it; and behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth boasting of great things.

⁹“I kept looking

Until thrones were set up,

And the Ancient of Days (God) took His seat;

His garment was white as snow

And the hair of His head like pure wool.

His throne was flames of fire;

Its wheels were a burning fire. [1 Kin 22:19; Ps 90:2; Ezek 1:26–28; Dan 7:13, 22; Matt 19:28; Rev 20:4]

10“ A river of fire was flowing
And coming out from before Him;
A thousand thousands were attending Him,
And ten thousand times ten thousand were standing before
Him;
The court was seated,
And the books were opened.

11“ Then I kept looking because of the sound of the great *and* boastful words which the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to be burned with fire.

12“ As for the rest of the beasts, their power was taken away; yet their lives were prolonged [for the length of their lives was fixed] for a predetermined time.

13“ I kept looking in the night visions,
And behold, on the clouds of heaven
One like a Son of Man was coming,
And He came up to the Ancient of Days
And was presented before Him.

14“ And to Him (the Messiah) was given dominion (supreme authority),
Glory and a kingdom,
That all the peoples, nations, and *speakers of every* language
Should serve *and* worship Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
Which will not pass away;

And His kingdom is one
Which will not be destroyed. [Rev 5:1–10]

¹⁵“As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed *and* anxious within me, and the visions [that appeared] in my mind kept alarming (agitating) me.

¹⁶“I approached one of those who stood by and began asking him the exact meaning of all this. So he told me and explained to me the interpretation of the things:

¹⁷“These four great beasts are four kings who will arise from the earth.

¹⁸“But the saints (believers) of the Most High [God] will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.’ [Rom 8:17; 1 Pet 2:9; Rev 3:21]

¹⁹“Then I wished to know the exact meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, extremely dreadful, with teeth of iron and claws of bronze, which devoured, crushed and trampled down what was left with its feet,

POWERPOINT

Daniel 7:25 mentions a tactic of Satan that we need to be aware of and understand if we are to win the battles of the mind. He has a way of trying to “wear down the saints.” Often this means harassing us until we become too tired to fight or keep resisting him. Satan regularly attacks God’s people with weariness and then puts thoughts in our mind that prompt us to give up as we stand for righteousness, obey God when obedience is difficult, or finish a task God has given us to do. I have felt this way many times, and when I do, I simply stop and ask God to strengthen me. As a result, determination returns, and I am able to complete whatever I need to do. Never give up without a fight, especially when the enemy is trying to wear you out. Stand your ground, resist the devil, and he will flee (see

James 4:7).



²⁰and *the meaning* of the ten horns (kings) that were on its head and the other *horn* which came up later, and before which three of the horns fell, specifically, that horn which had eyes and a mouth that boasted great *things* and which looked larger than the others.

²¹“As I kept looking, that horn was making war with the saints (believers) and overpowering them [Rev 13:7–9]

²²until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Most High [God], and the time arrived when the saints (believers) took possession of the kingdom.

²³“Thus the angel said, ‘The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which will be different from all other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down, and crush it.

²⁴‘As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the former ones, and he will subdue three kings.

²⁵‘He will speak words against the Most High [God] and wear down the saints of the Most High, and he will intend to change the times and the law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, [two] times, and half a time [three and one-half

years]. [Rev 13:1–6]

²⁶“But the court [of the Most High] will sit *in judgment*, and his dominion will be taken away, [first to be] consumed [gradually] and [then] to be destroyed forever.

²⁷“Then the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints (believers) of the Most High; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.’

²⁸“This is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my [waking] thoughts were extremely troubling and alarming and my face grew pale; but I kept the matter [of the vision and the angel’s explanation] to myself.”

8 IN THE third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a [second] vision appeared to me, Daniel, [this was two years] after the one that first appeared to me.

²I looked in the vision and it seemed that I was at the citadel of Susa, [the capital of Persia], which is in the province of Elam; and I looked in the vision and I saw myself by the Ulai Canal.

³Then I raised my eyes and looked, and behold, there in front of the canal stood a [lone] ram (the Medo-Persian Empire) which had two horns. The two horns were high, but one (Persia) was higher than the other (Media), and the higher one came up last.

⁴I saw the ram (Medo-Persia) charging westward and northward and southward; no beast could stand before him,

nor was there anyone who could rescue [anything] from his power, but he did as he pleased and magnified *himself*. [Dan 8:20]

⁵As I was observing [this], behold, a male goat (Greece) was coming from the west [rushing] across the face of the whole earth without touching the ground; and the goat had a conspicuous *and* remarkable horn (Alexander the Great) between his eyes. [Dan 8:21]

⁶He came up to the ram that had the two horns, which I had seen standing in front of the canal, and charged at him in [the fury of] his power *and* wrath.

⁷[In my vision] I saw him come close to the ram (Medo-Persia), and he was filled with rage toward him; and the goat (Greece) struck the ram and shattered his two horns, and the ram had no strength to stand before him. So the goat threw him to the ground and trampled on him, and there was no one who could rescue the ram from his power.

⁸Then the male goat magnified himself exceedingly, and when he was [young and] strong, the great horn (Alexander) was [suddenly] broken; and in its place there came up four prominent *horns* [among whom the kingdom was divided, one] toward [each of] the four winds of heaven.

⁹Out of one of them (Antiochus IV Epiphanes) came forth a rather small horn [but one of irreverent presumption and profane pride] which grew exceedingly powerful toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Beautiful *Land* (Israel). [Dan 8:23]

¹⁰And [in my vision] this horn grew up to the host of heaven, and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it trampled on them.

¹¹Indeed, it magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host [of heaven]; and it took away from Him the daily sacrifice (burnt offering), and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down (profaned).

¹²Because of the transgression [of God's people—their irreverence and ungodliness] the host will be given over *to the wicked horn*, along with the regular sacrifice; and righteousness *and* truth will be flung to the ground, and the horn will do as it pleases [by divine permission] and prosper.

¹³Then I heard a holy one (angel) speaking, and another holy one said to the one who was speaking, “How much time will be required to complete the vision regarding the regular sacrifice, the transgression that brings horror, and the trampling underfoot of both the sanctuary and the host [of the people]?” [Luke 21:24]

¹⁴He said to me, “For 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be cleansed *and* properly restored.”

¹⁵When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it; then behold, standing before me was one who looked like a man.

¹⁶And I heard the voice of a man between *the banks* of the Ulai, which called out and said, “Gabriel, give this man (Daniel) an understanding of the vision.” [Dan 9:21; Luke 1:19, 26]

¹⁷So he came near where I was standing, and when he came I was frightened and fell face downward; but he said to me, “Understand, son of man, that the [fulfillment of the] vision pertains to [events that will occur in] the time of the end.”

¹⁸Now as he (Gabriel) was speaking with me, I drifted into a deep sleep (unconsciousness) with my face to the ground; but

he touched me and made me stand [where I had stood before].

¹⁹He said, “Behold, I am going to let you know what will happen during the final time of the indignation *and* wrath [of God upon the ungodly], for it concerns the appointed time of the end.

²⁰“The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia.

²¹“The shaggy (rough-coated) male goat *represents* the kingdom of Greece, and the great horn between his eyes is the first king.

²²“*Regarding* the shattered horn and the four *others that* arose in its place, four kingdoms will rise from *his* (Alexander’s) nation, although not with his power *and* heritage.

²³“At the latter period of their reign,
When the transgressors have finished,
A king will arise
Insolent and skilled in intrigue *and* cunning.

²⁴“His power will be mighty, but not by his own power;
And he will corrupt *and* destroy in an astonishing manner
And [he will] prosper and do exactly as he wills;
He shall corrupt *and* destroy mighty men and the holy people. [Dan 8:9–12; 2 Thess 2:3–10; Rev 13:4–10]

²⁵“And through his shrewdness
He will cause deceit to succeed by his hand (influence);
He will magnify himself in his mind,
He will corrupt *and* destroy many who enjoy a false sense of security.
He will also stand up *and* oppose the Prince of princes,

But he will be broken, and that by no human hand [but by the hand of God]. [Rev 19:19, 20]

²⁶“The vision of the evenings and the mornings

Which has been told [to you] is true.

But keep the vision a secret,

For it has to do with many days *in the now distant future.*”

²⁷And I, Daniel, was exhausted and was sick for [several] days. Afterward I got up and continued with the king’s business; but I was astounded at the vision, and there was no one who could explain it.

9 IN THE first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans—

²in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the books the number of years which, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the desolations [which had been] pronounced on Jerusalem would end; and it was seventy years. [Jer 25:11, 12; 29:10]

³So I directed my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.

⁴I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed and said, “O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and extends lovingkindness toward those who love Him and keep His commandments,

⁵we have sinned and committed wrong, and have behaved wickedly and have rebelled, turning away from Your

commandments and ordinances.

⁶“Further, we have not listened to *and* heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

⁷“Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord, but to us confusion *and* open shame, as it is this day—to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are nearby and those who are far away, in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of the [treacherous] acts of unfaithfulness which they have committed against You.

⁸“O LORD, to us belong confusion *and* open shame—to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers—because we have sinned against You.

⁹“To the Lord our God *belong* mercy *and* lovingkindness and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him;

¹⁰and we have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God by walking in His laws which He set before us through His servants the prophets.

¹¹“Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, even turning aside, not obeying Your voice; so the curse has been poured out on us and the oath which is written in the Law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against Him. [Lev 26:14–45; Deut 28:15–68]

¹²“And He has carried out completely His [threatening] words which He had spoken against us and against our rulers [the kings, princes, and judges] who ruled us, to bring on us a great tragedy; for under the whole heaven there has not been done anything [so dreadful] like that which [He commanded and] was done to Jerusalem.

¹³“Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this tragedy has come on us. Yet we have not wholeheartedly begged for forgiveness *and* sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our wickedness and paying attention to *and* placing value in Your truth. [Deut 4:29; 28:15ff]

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord my God, You are
uncompromisingly righteous
and openly just in everything
You do. You keep Your word,
and I pray that You will
forgive me when I fail to obey
Your voice.*

• *adapted from Daniel 9:14*

¹⁴“Therefore the LORD has kept the tragedy ready and has brought it on us, for the LORD our God is [uncompromisingly] righteous *and* openly just in all His works which He does—He keeps His word; and we have not obeyed His voice.

¹⁵“And now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and who made for Yourself a name, as it is today—we have sinned, we have been wicked.

¹⁶“O Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous *and* just acts, please let Your anger and Your wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain. Because of our sins and the wickedness of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people *have become* an object of scorn *and* a contemptuous byword to all who are around us.

¹⁷“Now therefore, our God, listen to (heed) the prayer of Your servant (Daniel) and his supplications, and for Your own sake let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary.

¹⁸“O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and look at our desolations and the city which is called by Your name; for we are not presenting our supplications before You because of our own merits *and* righteousness, but because of Your great mercy *and* compassion.

¹⁹“O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! Do not delay, for Your own sake, O my God, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”

²⁰While I was still speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God in behalf of the holy mountain of my God,

²¹while I was still speaking in prayer and extremely exhausted, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me about the time of the evening sacrifice. [Dan 8:16]

²²He instructed me and he talked with me and said, “O Daniel, I have now come to give you insight *and* wisdom and understanding.

²³“At the beginning of your supplications, the command [to give you an answer] was issued, and I have come to tell you, for you are highly regarded *and* greatly beloved. Therefore consider the message and begin to understand the [meaning of the] vision.

²⁴“Seventy weeks [of years, or 490 years] have been decreed for your people and for your holy city (Jerusalem), to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make atonement (reconciliation) for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness (right-standing with God), to seal up vision and prophecy *and* prophet, and to anoint the Most Holy Place.

²⁵“So you are to know and understand that from the issuance of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until [the coming of] the Messiah (the Anointed One), the Prince, *there will be* seven weeks [of years] and sixty-two weeks [of years]; it will be built again, with [a city] plaza and moat, even in times of trouble.

²⁶“Then after the sixty-two weeks [of years] the Anointed One will be cut off [and denied His Messianic kingdom] and have nothing [and no one to defend Him], and the people of the [other] prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end *will come* with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. [Is 53:7–9; Nah 1:8; Matt 24:6–14]

²⁷“And he will enter into a binding *and* irrevocable covenant with the many for one week (seven years), but in the

middle of the week he will stop the sacrifice and grain offering [for the remaining three and one-half years]; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until the complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who causes the horror.”

10 IN THE third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar; and the message was true and it referred to great conflict (warfare, misery). And he understood the message and had an understanding of the vision. [Dan 8:26; Rev 19:9]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Take God at His Word

The angel Gabriel reassured Daniel three times that he was “highly regarded and greatly beloved” and added, “do not be afraid. Peace be to you; take courage and be strong” (Dan. 10:19). Learning about and receiving God’s unconditional love is what sets us free from fear. Nothing else will! “There is no fear in love [dread does not exist]. But perfect (complete, full-grown) love drives out fear” (1 John 4:18). Only God has perfect love, and it can be yours by faith.

Faith expresses itself through love (see Gal. 5:6). How can we put our trust in God if we are not convinced He loves us at all times? Take God at His Word and begin to receive His love for you, which will set you free from all fear.

²In those days I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks.

³I ate no tasty food, nor did any meat or wine enter my mouth; and I did not anoint (refresh, groom) myself at all for the full three weeks.

⁴On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was on the bank of the great river Hiddekel [which is the Tigris],

⁵I raised my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, whose loins were girded with [a belt of] pure gold of Uphaz.

⁶His body also was like beryl [with a golden luster], his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and his feet like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words was like the noise of a multitude [of people or the roaring of the sea]. [Rev 1:12–16; 19:6]

⁷And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision [of this heavenly being], for the men who were with me did not see the vision; nevertheless, a great panic overwhelmed them, so they ran away to hide themselves.

⁸So I was left alone and saw this great vision; yet no strength was left in me, for my normal appearance turned to a deathly pale, and I grew weak *and* faint [with fright].

⁹Then I heard the sound of his words; and when I heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in a deep sleep, with my face toward the ground.

¹⁰Then behold, a hand touched me and set me unsteadily on my hands and knees.

¹¹So he said to me, “O Daniel, you highly regarded *and* greatly beloved man, understand the words that I am about to say to you and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you.” And while he was saying this word to me, I stood up trembling.

¹²Then he said to me, “Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words.

¹³“But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was standing in opposition to me for twenty-one days. Then, behold, Michael,

one of the chief [of the celestial] princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.

¹⁴“Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision is in regard to the days yet to come.”

¹⁵When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and was speechless.

¹⁶And behold, one who resembled the sons of men touched my lips. Then I opened my mouth and spoke and said to him who was standing before me, “O my lord, because of the vision anguish has come upon me, and I have retained no strength.

¹⁷“For how can such a [weakened] servant of my lord talk with such [a being] as my lord? For now there remains no strength in me, nor has any breath been left in me.”

¹⁸Then the one (Gabriel) whose appearance was like that of a man touched me again, and he strengthened me.

¹⁹He said, “O man, highly regarded *and* greatly beloved, do not be afraid. Peace be to you; take courage and be strong.” Now when he had spoken to me, I was strengthened and said, “Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me.”

²⁰Then he said, “Do you understand [fully] why I came to you? Now I shall return to fight against the [hostile] prince of Persia; and when I have gone, behold, the prince of Greece is about to come.

²¹“But I (Gabriel) will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth. There is no one who stands firmly with me *and* strengthens himself against these [hostile spirit forces] except Michael, your prince [the guardian of your nation].

11 “ALSO I, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I (Gabriel) arose to be an encouragement and a protection for him.

²“And now I will tell you the truth. Behold, three more kings are going to arise in Persia. Then a fourth will become far richer than all of them. When he becomes strong through his riches he will stir up the whole *empire* against the realm of Greece.

³“Then a mighty [warlike, threatening] king will arise who will rule with great authority and do as he pleases.

⁴“But as soon as he (Alexander) has risen, his kingdom will be broken [by his death] and divided toward the four winds of heaven [the north, south, east, and west], but not to his descendants, nor according to the [Grecian] authority with which he ruled, for his kingdom will be torn out *and* uprooted and given to others (his four generals) to the exclusion of these.

⁵“Then the king of the South (Egypt) will be strong, along with one of his princes who will be stronger than he and have dominance over him; his domain will be a great dominion.

⁶“After some years the Syrian king of the North and the Egyptian king of the South will make an alliance; the daughter (Berenice) of the king of the South will come to the king of the North to make an equitable *and* peaceful agreement (marriage); but she will not retain the power of her position, nor will he retain his power. She will be handed over with her attendants and her father as well as he who supported her in those times.

⁷“But out of a branch of her [familial] roots will one (her brother, Ptolemy III Euergetes I) arise in his place, and he will come against the [Syrian] army and enter the fortress of the

king of the North, and he will deal with them and will prevail.

⁸“Also he will carry off to Egypt their [Syrian] gods with their cast images and their precious *and* costly treasure of silver and of gold, and he will refrain from waging war against the king of the North for some years.

⁹“And the king of the North will come into the realm of the king of the South, but he will retreat to his own country [badly defeated].

¹⁰“His sons will prepare for battle and assemble a multitude of great forces; which will keep on coming and overflow [the land], and pass through, so that they may again wage war as far as his fortress.

¹¹“The king of the South (Ptolemy IV Philopator of Egypt) will be enraged and go out and fight with the king of the North (Antiochus III the Great); and the Syrian king will raise a great multitude (army), but the multitude shall be given into the hand of the *Egyptian king*.

¹²“When the multitude (army) is captured *and* carried away, the heart of the *Egyptian king* will be proud (arrogant), and he will cause tens of thousands to fall, but he will not prevail.

¹³“For the king of the North will again raise a multitude (army) greater than the one before, and after several years he will advance with a great army and substantial equipment.

¹⁴“In those times many will rise up against the king of the South (Egypt); also the violent men among your own people will arise in order to fulfill the [earlier] visions, but they will fail.

¹⁵“Then the king of the North (Syria) will come and build up siege ramps and capture a well-fortified city. The forces of

the South will not stand *their ground*, not even the finest troops, for there will be no strength to stand [against the Syrian king].

¹⁶“But he (Syria) who comes against him (Egypt) will do exactly as he pleases, and no one will be able to stand against him; he (Antiochus III the Great) will also stay for a time in the Beautiful *and* Glorious Land [of Israel], with destruction in his hand.

¹⁷“He will be determined to come with the power of his entire kingdom, and propose equitable conditions *and* terms of peace, which he will put into effect [by making an agreement with the king of the South]. He will also give him his daughter (Cleopatra I), *in an attempt* to overthrow the kingdom, but it will not succeed or be to his advantage.

¹⁸“After this, he (Antiochus III the Great, King of Syria) will turn his attention to the islands *and* coastlands and capture many [of them]. But a commander (Lucius Scipio Asiaticus of Rome) will put an end to his aggression [toward Rome’s territorial interests]; in fact, he will repay his insolence *and* turn his audacity back upon him.

¹⁹“Then he will turn back toward the fortresses of his own land [of Syria], but he will stumble and fall and not be found.

²⁰“Then in his place one (his eldest son, Seleucus IV Philopator) will arise who will send an oppressor through the Jewel of his kingdom; yet within a few days he will be shattered, though not in anger nor in battle.

²¹“And in his place [in Syria] will arise a despicable *and* despised person, to whom royal majesty *and* the honor of kingship have not been conferred, but he will come [without warning] in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom by

intrigue. [Dan 8:9–12, 23–25]

²²“The overwhelming forces [of the invading armies of Egypt] will be flooded away before him *and* smashed; and also the prince of the covenant [will be smashed].

²³“After an alliance is made with him he will work deceitfully, and he will go up and gain power with a small *force of people*.

²⁴“In a time of tranquility, [without warning] he will enter the most productive *and* richest parts of the kingdom [of Egypt], and he will accomplish that which his fathers never did, nor his fathers’ fathers; he will distribute plunder, spoil and goods among them. He will devise plans against strongholds, but only for a time [decreed by God].

²⁵“He will stir up his strength and courage against [his former Egyptian ally] the king of the South (Ptolemy VI) with a great army; so the king of the South will prepare an extremely great and powerful army to wage war, but he will not stand, for schemes will be devised against him.

²⁶“Yes, those who eat his fine food will betray *and* destroy him (Ptolemy VI), and his army will be swept away, and many will fall down slain.

²⁷“And as for both of these kings, their hearts will be set on doing evil; they will speak lies over the same table, but it will not succeed, for the end is yet to come at the appointed time.

²⁸“Then he (Antiochus IV Epiphanes) will return to his land with great treasure (plunder); and his heart will be set against the holy covenant, and he will take action and return to his own land (Syria).

29“At the time appointed [by God] he will return and come into the South, but this last time will not be successful as were the previous invasions [of Egypt].

30“For ships of Cyprus [in Roman hands] will come against him; therefore he will be discouraged and turn back [to Israel] and carry out his rage against the holy covenant and take action; so he will return and show favoritism toward those [Jews] who abandon (break) the holy covenant [with God].

31“Armed forces of his will arise [in Jerusalem] and defile *and* desecrate the sanctuary, the [spiritual] stronghold, and will do away with the regular sacrifice [that is, the daily burnt offering]; and they will set up [a pagan altar in the sanctuary which is] the abomination of desolation.

32“With smooth *words* [of flattery and praise] he will turn to godlessness those who [are willing to] disregard the [Mosaic] covenant, but the people who [are spiritually mature and] know their God will display strength and take action [to resist].

33“They who are wise *and* have spiritual insight among the people will instruct many *and* help them understand; yet for many days some [of them and their followers] will fall by the sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder.

34“Now when they fall they will receive a little help, and many will join with them in hypocrisy.

35“Some of those who are [spiritually] wise *and* have insight will fall [as martyrs] in order to refine, to purge and to make those among God’s people pure, until the end time; because it is yet to come at the time appointed [by God].

36“Then the king (the Antichrist) will do exactly as he

pleases; he will exalt himself and magnify himself above every god and will speak astounding *and* disgusting things against the God of gods and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is determined [by God] will be done.

³⁷“He will have no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women, nor will he have regard for any *other* god, for he shall magnify himself above them all.

³⁸“Instead, he will honor a god of fortresses, a god whom his fathers did not know; he will honor him with gold and silver, with precious stones and with expensive things.

³⁹“He will act against the strongest fortresses with *the help* of a foreign god; he will give great honor to those who acknowledge him and he will cause them to rule over the many, and will parcel out land for a price.

⁴⁰“At the end time the king of the South will push *and* attack him (the Antichrist), and the king of the North will storm against him with chariots and horsemen and with many ships; and he will enter countries, overwhelm them and pass through.

⁴¹“He shall also enter the Beautiful *and* Glorious Land (Israel), and many countries will fall, but these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom, Moab, and the foremost [core] of the people of Ammon.

⁴²“Then he will stretch out his hand against other countries, but Egypt will not be among the ones which escape.

⁴³“He will have power over the treasures of gold and silver and over all the precious things of Egypt, and the Libyans and the Ethiopians *will follow* in his footsteps.

⁴⁴“But rumors from the east and from the north will alarm *and* disturb him, and he will set out with great fury to destroy

and to annihilate many.

⁴⁵“He will pitch his palatial tents between the seas and the glorious Holy Mountain (Zion); yet he will come to his end with no one to help him [in his final battle with God]. [2 Thess 2:4; Rev 13:5–8]

12 “NOW AT that [end] time Michael, the great [angelic] prince who stands *guard* over the children of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; but at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the Book [of Life], will be rescued.

²“Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake (resurrect), these to everlasting life, but some to disgrace and everlasting contempt (abhorrence). [John 5:29]

³“Those who are [spiritually] wise will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead many to righteousness, [will shine] like the stars forever and ever. [Matt 13:43]

⁴“But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the scroll until the end of time. Many will go back and forth *and* search anxiously [through the scroll], and knowledge [of the purpose of God as revealed by His prophets] will [greatly] increase.” [Amos 8:12]

⁵Then I, Daniel, looked, and behold, there stood two others, the one [angel] on this bank of the river and the other [angel] on that bank of the river.

⁶And one said to the man dressed in linen, who was above

the waters of the river, “How long *will it be* until the end of these wonders?” [Dan 10:5]

⁷And I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he held up his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and a half a time (three and a half years); and as soon as they finish shattering *and* crushing the power of the holy people, all these things will be finished.

⁸As for me, I heard, but I did not understand; so I said, “My lord, what will be the outcome of these things?”

⁹And the angel said, “Go *your way*, Daniel, for the words are concealed and sealed up until the end of time.

¹⁰“Many will be purged, purified (made white) and refined, but the wicked will behave wickedly. None of the wicked shall understand, but those who are [spiritually] wise will understand. [Dan 11:33–35]

¹¹“From the time that the regular sacrifice [that is, the daily burnt offering] is taken away and the abomination of desolation is set up [ruining the temple for worship of the true God], *there will be* 1,290 days. [Dan 11:31]

¹²“How blessed [happy, fortunate, spiritually prosperous] *and* beloved is he who waits expectantly [enduring without wavering for the period of tribulation] and comes to the 1,335 days!

¹³“But as for you (Daniel), go *your way* until the end [of your life]; for you will rest and rise *again* for your allotted inheritance at the end of the age.” [Heb 11:32–40]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

A New Perspective on Trouble

A spiritually mature person has a different view of trials and tribulations than that of a spiritually immature person. A spiritually mature person waits expectantly and earnestly for breakthrough. They handle tribulations, even periods of great tribulation (see Dan. 12:12), while remaining positive and joyful, trusting God in the midst of it all. Even though the enemy may bring the difficulty, God is able to work good out of it; and very often we learn things about ourselves during trials that we would never see any other way.

We should thank God in the midst of our trials instead of murmuring and complaining and feeling sorry for ourselves (see James 1:2). Look at (think about) your troubles in a new way. Remain stable in the storms of life and look forward to the rainbow (you don't get rainbows until after a storm!). And remember, with every temptation, God also provides a way out (see 1 Cor. 10:13).

Hosea

Author: | Hosea
Date: | About 750
BC

The book of Hosea addresses Israel's unfaithfulness to God, which is like that of a harlot. Hosea the prophet actually endures the betrayal of his wife, Gomer, who repeatedly leaves him to return to her life as a prostitute. Every time she abandons him, he buys her back and continues to love her.

Hosea's love and faithfulness are a picture of God's heart toward you and me. As we read this book, we become increasingly convinced of His love for us. A tactic the enemy often uses against our mind is to try to convince us that God does not love us or that we can sin so much that He will no longer welcome us back. These are lies! The book of Hosea affirms God's constant love, mercy, and compassion for us.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM HOSEA:

Let God turn your place of trouble into a door of hope (see Hosea 2:15).

If you ask God to give you knowledge, He will reveal His will through His Word (see Hosea 4:6).

Defeat worry and fear by trusting that God will provide for you (see Hosea 9:2).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM HOSEA:

Come and let us return [in repentance] to the LORD. | Hosea 6:1

Let us know and become personally acquainted with Him; let us press on to know and understand fully the [greatness of the] LORD [to honor, heed, and deeply cherish Him]. | Hosea 6:3

It is time to seek and search diligently for the LORD [and to long for His blessing] until He comes to rain righteousness and His gift of salvation on you. | Hosea 10:12

THE BOOK OF HOSEA

1 THE WORD of the LORD that came to Hosea the son of Beeri in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel.

²When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to him, “Go, take for yourself a wife of prostitution and have children of [her] prostitution; for the land commits great acts of prostitution by not following the LORD.”

³So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

⁴And the LORD said to him, “Name him Jezreel; for yet in a little while I will avenge the blood [that was shed in the Valley] of Jezreel *and* inflict the punishment for it on the house of Jehu, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. [2 Kin 10:1–11]

⁵“On that day I will break the bow [of the military power] of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel.”

⁶Then Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. And the LORD said to Hosea, “Name her Lo-Ruhamah (not shown mercy), for I will no longer have mercy on the house of

Israel, that I would ever forgive them.

⁷“But I will have mercy on the house of Judah and will rescue them by the LORD their God, and will not rescue them by bow, sword, war, horses, or horsemen.” [Is 31:8; 37:33–35]

⁸Now when Gomer had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived and gave birth to a son.

⁹And the LORD said, “Name him Lo-Ammi (not my people), for you are not My people and I am not your God.”

¹⁰Yet the number of the sons of Israel
Shall be like the sand of the sea,
Which cannot be measured or numbered;
And in the place

POWERPOINT

God gave each of Hosea and Gomer's three children a prophetic name. These names were intended to send a message to the children of Israel. The first, Jezreel (see Hos. 1:4), signified God's judgment against Jeroboam, the reigning king. The name of the second child, Lo-Ruhamah (see Hos. 1:6), means "not shown mercy," which told the Israelites that God was about to withdraw His mercy from Israel. The third child was named Lo-Ammi (see Hos. 1:9), which meant, "not my people." The names of these children were prophetic reminders to Israel that God was displeased with their unfaithfulness, but He would use Hosea's relationship with Gomer to show them and the entire nation of Israel that He remains faithful and merciful.



Where it is said to them,
“You are not My people,”
It will be said to them,

“*You are* the sons of the living God.” [Gen 22:17; Rom 9:26]

¹¹Then the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel shall be
gathered together, And they will appoint for themselves
one leader,

And they will go up from the land,

For great *and* glorious will be the day of Jezreel. [Is 11:12,
13; Ezek 37:15–28]

2 “[HOSEA,] SAY to your brothers, ‘Ammi (you are my
people),’ and to your sisters, ‘Ruhamah (you have been pitied
and have obtained mercy).’

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The Door of Hope

Speaking of the restoration He wanted to bring to unfaithful Israel, God said that He would “make the Valley of Achor a door of hope and expectation” (Hos. 2:15). The Valley of Achor represents times of trouble, so God was saying He would turn Israel’s trouble into hope and expectation. Hope is the confident expectation of something good. What God wanted to do for the Israelites, He also wants to do for you and me. Hope finds its entrance into our lives through our thoughts. When we think about the possibilities instead of the problems, hope is birthed in us.

When you have been through times of trouble, difficulty, fear, or disappointment, you may feel reluctant to hope again. You may even say to yourself, “If something starts to improve, don’t get your hopes up. You know what happened the last time.” Past hurts, present disappointments, and future uncertainties all try to teach you to temper your expectations and live with a low level of hope—just in case things don’t work out.

But a life without hope is not much of a life at all. When you are hesitant to hope, you may say you’re just being careful, but chances are you are simply afraid—afraid of getting hurt, afraid of disappointment, afraid of taking a chance. The fear may exist for good reason. Perhaps you have been severely wounded in life and experienced a lot of trouble and discouragement. Your experience may tell you nothing will

ever change, but Matthew 19:26 says all things are possible with God, and that promise gives us reason to hope.

If you have lived too long in the valley of trouble, it's time for a change. God has a door of hope in front of you. Trust Him enough to believe for the best—the best relationships, the best job, the best marriage, the best opportunities, the best news, the best outcome, the best life. With God, hope is always available. Step through the door of hope today.

²“Contend with your mother (nation); contend,
For she is not my wife and I am not her husband;
And have her remove her [marks of] prostitution from her
face

And her adultery from between her breasts [Is 50:1]

³Or I will strip her naked
And expose her as on the day she was born,
And make her like a wilderness
And make her like a parched land
And slay her with thirst.

⁴“Also, I will have no mercy on her children,
Because they are the children of prostitution.

⁵“For their mother has played the prostitute;
She who conceived them has acted shamefully,
For she said, ‘I will pursue my lovers
Who give me my food and my water,
My wool and my flax, my oil and my [refreshing] drinks.’

⁶“Therefore, behold, I [the LORD God] will hedge up her way
with thorns; And I will build a wall against her [shutting

off her way] so that she cannot find her paths.

7“She will [passionately] pursue her lovers, but she will not overtake them; And she will seek them, but will not find them.

Then she will say, ‘Let me go and return to my first husband,

For it was better for me then than now!’

8“For she (Israel) has not noticed *nor* understood *nor* realized that it was I [the LORD God] who gave her the grain and the new wine and the oil, And lavished on her silver and gold,

Which they used for Baal *and* made into his image.

9“Therefore, I will return *and* take back My grain at harvest time And My new wine in its season.

I will also take away My wool and My flax

Given to cover her nakedness.

10“And now I will uncover her lewdness *and* shame

In the sight of her lovers,

And no one will rescue her from My hand.

11“I will also put an end to all her rejoicing,

Her feasts, her New Moons, her Sabbaths,

And all her festivals.

12“I will destroy her vines and her fig trees

Of which she has said, ‘These are my wages

Which my lovers have given me.’

And I will make them a forest,

And the animals of the open country will devour them.

- 13“And I will punish her for the [feast] days of the Baals,
When she used to offer sacrifices *and* burn incense to them
And adorn herself with her earrings *and* nose rings and her
jewelry, And follow her lovers, so that she forgot Me,”
says the LORD.
- 14“Therefore, behold, I will allure Israel
And bring her into the wilderness,
And I will speak tenderly to her [to reconcile her to Me].
- 15“Then I will give her her vineyards from there,
And make the Valley of Achor a door of hope *and*
expectation [anticipating the time when I will restore My
favor on her].
And she will sing there *and* respond as in the days of her
youth
As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt. [Ex
15:2; Josh 7:24–26]
- 16“‘It shall come about in that day,’” says the LORD, “‘That you
will call Me Ishi (my husband)
And will no longer call Me Baali (my Baal).
- 17“‘For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth,
So that they will no longer be mentioned *or* remembered by
their names. [Ex 23:13]
- 18“‘And in that day I will make a covenant for Israel
With the animals of the open country
And with the birds of the heavens
And with the creeping things of the ground.
And I will abolish the bow and the sword and [banish] war
from the land

And will make them lie down in safety.

- ¹⁹“And I will betroth you (Israel) to Me forever;
Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice,
In lovingkindness *and* loyalty, and in compassion.
²⁰“I will betroth you to Me in stability *and* in faithfulness.
Then you will know (recognize, appreciate) the LORD [and
respond with loving faithfulness].

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that I am
one of Your people and I
belong to You in
righteousness, justice,
lovingkindness, loyalty,
compassion, stability, and
faithfulness. I will know You
and respond to You with
loving faithfulness.*

• adapted from Hosea 2:19–20

²¹“It will come about in that day that I will respond,” says the LORD.

“I will respond to the heavens [which ask for rain to pour on the earth], and they will respond to the earth [which begs for the rain], ²²And the earth shall respond to the grain and the new wine and the oil [which beg it to bring them forth], And they will respond to Jezreel [My Israel, who will now be restored].

²³“I will sow her for Myself in the land.

I will also have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy;

And I will say to those who were not My people,

‘You are My people,’

And they will say, ‘*You are my God!*’” [1 Pet 2:9, 10]

3 THEN THE LORD said to me, “Go again, love a woman (Gomer) who is beloved by her husband and yet is an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love the raisin cakes [used in the feasts in pagan worship].”

POWERPOINT

Even though Gomer was unfaithful to Hosea, God commanded him to take her back again and love her (see Hos. 3:1). Not only did Hosea take her back, he even paid a price for her (see Hos. 3:2). This was intended to illustrate God's commitment and everlasting love for His people. Although God was angry at the Israelites for their bad behavior, He never stopped loving them. He intended to deal with them in a manner that would eventually draw them back to Him. God the Father paid the ultimate price to buy us back when He gave His Son, Jesus, for our redemption. So we see that even in our sin, God devises ways to draw us back into a loving relationship with Him. God will never give up on us.



²So I bought her for myself for fifteen pieces of silver and a homer and a half of barley [the price of a common slave].

³And I said to her, “You shall stay with me for many days. You shall not play the prostitute nor shall you have a man; so I will also be toward you [until you have proved your faithfulness].”

⁴For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or [idolatrous] pillar, and without ephod or teraphim (household idols).

⁵Afterward the sons of Israel will return [in deep repentance] and seek the LORD their God and [seek from the line of] David their king [the King of kings—the Messiah]; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness *and* blessing in the last days. [Jer 30:9; Ezek 34:24]

4 HEAR THE word of the LORD, you children of Israel, For the LORD has a [legal] case with the inhabitants of the land, Because there is no faithfulness [no steadfast love, no dependability] or loyalty *or* kindness Or knowledge of God [from personal experience with Him] in the land.

²There is [false] swearing *of oaths*, deception (broken faith), murder, stealing, and adultery; They employ violence, so

that one [act of] bloodshed follows closely on another.

³Therefore the land [continually] mourns,
And everyone who lives in it languishes [in tragic suffering]
Together with the animals of the open country and the birds
of the heavens; Even the fish of the sea disappear.

⁴Yet let no one find fault, nor let any rebuke [others]; For
your people are like those who contend with the priest.

⁵So you will stumble in the daytime,
And the [false] prophet will also stumble with you in the
night;
And I will destroy your mother (Israel). [Ex 19:6]

POWERPOINT

According to Hosea, one reason people can end up in serious trouble is that they do not have the knowledge they need in certain situations (see Hos. 4:6). Thankfully, God has promised to give us the knowledge and wisdom we need. If you can think of a specific circumstance in which not knowing something could be hurtful or detrimental to you, seek God for the answers. Ask Him to continually give you knowledge and revelation so that a lack of knowledge will not harm you.



⁶My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge [of My law, where I reveal My will].
Because you [the priestly nation] have rejected knowledge,

I will also reject you from being My priest.
Since you have forgotten the law of your God,
I will also forget your children.

⁷The more they multiplied [in numbers and increased in power], the more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame.

⁸They (the priests) feed on the sin offering of My people
And set their heart on their wickedness. [Lev 7:7, 8]

⁹And it shall be: like people, like priest [both are wicked and both will be judged]; So I will punish them for their ways
And repay them for their deeds.

¹⁰They will eat, but not have enough;
They will play the prostitute, but not increase [their descendants],
Because they have stopped giving heed to the LORD.

¹¹Prostitution, wine, and new wine take away the mind *and* the [spiritual] understanding.

¹²My people consult their [lifeless] wooden idol, and their [diviner's] wand gives them oracles.
For a spirit of prostitution has led them astray [morally and spiritually], And they have played the prostitute, *withdrawing themselves* from their God.

¹³They sacrifice on the tops of the mountains
And burn incense on the hills,
Under oaks, poplars, and terebinths,
Because the shade is pleasant there.
Therefore your daughters play the prostitute

And your brides commit adultery.

- ¹⁴I will not punish your daughters when they play the prostitute Or your brides when they commit adultery,
For the men themselves slip away with prostitutes,
And they offer sacrifices with temple prostitutes [who give their bodies in honor of the idol].
So the people without understanding [stumble and fall and] come to ruin.

- ¹⁵Though you, Israel, play the prostitute [by worshiping idols], Do not let Judah become guilty [of the same thing];
And do not go to Gilgal [where idols are worshiped],
Or go up to Beth-aven (House of Wickedness),
Nor swear [oaths in idolatrous worship, saying],
“As the LORD lives!”

- ¹⁶For Israel is stubborn,
Like a stubborn heifer.
Can the LORD now pasture them
Like a lamb in a large field?

- ¹⁷Ephraim is joined to idols,
So let him alone [to suffer the consequences].

- ¹⁸When their liquor is gone [and their drinking parties are over], They habitually go to play the prostitute;
Ephraim's rulers continue to dearly love shame [more than her glory which is the LORD, Israel's God].

- ¹⁹The wind [of God's relentless wrath] has wrapped up Israel in its wings, And [in captivity] they will be ashamed

because of their sacrifices [to calves, to sun, to moon, to stars, and to pagan gods].

5 HEAR THIS *and* pay close attention, O priests!

Give heed, O house of Israel!

Listen, O house of the king!

For the [pronounced] judgment pertains to you *and* is meant for you to hear, Because you have been a snare at Mizpah

And a net spread out over Tabor (military strongholds on either side of the Jordan River).

²The revolvers have gone deep into depravity,
But I [the LORD God] will chastise them all.

³I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from Me;
For now, O Ephraim, you have played the prostitute *and* have worshiped idols; Israel has defiled itself.

⁴Their [immoral] practices will not permit them
To return to their God,
For the spirit of prostitution is within them
And they do not know the LORD [they do not recognize, appreciate, heed or cherish Him].

⁵But the pride *and* self-reliance of Israel testifies against him.
Therefore Israel, and [especially] Ephraim, stumble *and* fall
in their wickedness *and* guilt; Judah also has stumbled
with them.

⁶They will go with their flocks and with their herds
To seek the LORD [diligently searching for Him], but they

will not find Him; He has withdrawn from them [refusing to hear the prayers of the unrepentant].

⁷They have dealt treacherously against the LORD, For they have borne illegitimate (pagan) children.

Now the New Moon will devour them along with their land [bringing judgment and captivity].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Seek God's Face

As long as miracles happen, everybody is willing to follow Jesus. In John 6, the people followed Him because of what He was doing for them, but Jesus spoke to them about seeking Him for Who He is and not merely for what He does. God wants us to seek Him (see Hos. 5:15), not the things He can do for us.

We will have seasons in life when it seems as though God is silent and still, almost as if He is hiding from us. He doesn't want us to stop following Him during these times, but we may be tempted to do so if we are only seeking His hand (what He can do for us). During these seasons, when God is "hiding" and we are seeking, our faith can grow. If we are happy only when some big, exciting thing is going on in our lives, we will never be stable because real everyday life is not always exciting. We can, however, be enthusiastic and passionate about each day that God gives us as long as we live it with, in, and through Him.

⁸Blow the horn in Gibeah, The trumpet in Ramah [the lofty hills on Benjamin's northern border].

Sound the alarm at Beth-aven:

"Behind you *and* coming after you [is the enemy], O Benjamin [be on guard]!"

- ⁹Ephraim will become a desolation in the day of rebuke;
Among the tribes of Israel I declare what is certain.
- ¹⁰The princes of Judah are like those who move a boundary
marker;
I will pour out My wrath on them like [an unrestrained flood
of] water. [Deut 19:14; Prov 22:28]
- ¹¹Ephraim is oppressed; he is broken *and* crushed by [divine]
judgment, Because he was determined to follow *man's*
command (vanities, filth, secular precepts).
- ¹²Therefore I am like a moth to Ephraim
And like dry rot to the house of Judah [in My judgment
against them].
- ¹³When Ephraim saw his sickness,
And Judah his wound,
Then Ephraim went to Assyria [instead of the LORD]
And sent to [Assyria's] great King Jareb [for help].
But he cannot heal you
Nor will he cure you of your wound [received in judgment].
- ¹⁴For I *will be* like a lion to Ephraim
And like a young lion to the house of Judah.
I, even I, will tear to pieces and go on [tearing];
I will carry off [the prey] and there will be no one to rescue
them.
- ¹⁵I will go away and return to My place [on high]
Until they acknowledge their offense *and* bear their guilt
and seek My face; In their distress they will earnestly
seek Me, *saying*,

6 “COME AND let us return [in repentance] to the LORD, For
He has torn us, but He will heal us;
He has wounded us, but He will bandage us.

Speak God's Word

I will know and become personally acquainted with the Lord. I will press on to know and understand fully the greatness of the Lord—to honor, heed, and deeply cherish Him. His appearing is prepared and is as certain as the dawn, and He will come to us in salvation like the spring rain watering the earth.

| adapted from HOSEA 6:3 |

²“After two days He will revive us;
On the third day He will raise us up
That we may live before Him. [Is 26:19; Ezek 37:1–10]

³“So let us know *and* become personally acquainted with Him; let us press on to know *and* understand fully the [greatness of the] LORD [to honor, heed, and deeply cherish Him].

His appearing is prepared *and* is as certain as the dawn,
And He will come to us [in salvation] like the [heavy] rain,

Like the spring rain watering the earth.”

⁴O Ephraim, what shall I do with you?

O Judah, what shall I do with you?

For your [wavering] loyalty *and* kindness are [transient] like the morning cloud And like the dew that goes away early.

⁵Therefore, I have hewn them in pieces by [the words of] the prophets; I have slain them by the words of My mouth; My judgments [pronounced upon them by the prophets] are like the light that shines forth [obvious to all].

⁶For I desire *and* delight in [steadfast] loyalty [faithfulness in the covenant relationship], rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. [Matt 9:13; 12:7]

⁷But they, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant; There they have dealt treacherously against Me.

⁸Gilead is a city of wrongdoers;
It is tracked with bloody *footprints*.

⁹And as bands of robbers [lie in] wait for a man, So a band of priests murder on the road toward Shechem [covering their crimes in that city of refuge]; Certainly they have committed crimes *and* outrages.

¹⁰I have seen a horrible thing [sins of every kind] in the house of Israel!
Ephraim's prostitution (idolatry) is there; Israel has defiled itself.

¹¹Also, O Judah, there is a harvest [of divine judgment] appointed for you, When I restore the fortunes of My

people [who have been slaves to the misery of sin].

1 WHEN I would heal Israel, The sin (guilt) of Ephraim is uncovered,

And the wickedness of Samaria,
Because they practice false dealing;
The thief enters,
Bandits ravage *and* raid outside.

2 But they do not consider in their hearts (minds)
That I remember [always] all their wickedness.
Now their deeds surround *and* entangle them;
They are before My face.

3 They make the king glad with their wickedness,
And the princes with their lies.

4 They are all adulterers; Like the heat of an oven
When the baker ceases to stir *the fire*, [their passion
smolders]
From the kneading of the dough until it is leavened.

5 On the [special] day of our king, the princes became sick
with the heat of wine; The king stretched out his hand [in
association] with scoffers (lawless people).

6 As they approach their plotting,
Their mind burns [with intrigue] like an oven [while they lie
in wait].
Their anger smolders all night;
In the morning it blazes like a flaming fire.

7 They are all hot like an oven

And they consume their judges (rulers);
All their kings have fallen.
There is no one among them who calls to Me.

⁸Ephraim mixes himself with the [Gentile] nations [seeking favor with one country, then another]; Ephraim is a cake not turned [worthless; ready to be thrown away].

⁹Strangers have devoured his strength,
Yet he does not know it;
Gray hairs are sprinkled on him,
Yet he does not know.

¹⁰Though the pride of Israel testifies against him,
Yet they do not return [in repentance] to the LORD their God,
Nor seek *nor* search for *nor* desire Him [as essential] in spite of all this.

¹¹Ephraim also is like a silly dove, without heart *or* good sense; They call to Egypt [for help], they go to Assyria.

¹²When they go, I will spread My net over them;
I will bring them down like birds of the heavens [into Assyrian captivity].
I will chastise them in accordance with the proclamation (prophecy) to their congregation. [Lev 26:14–39; Deut 28:15–68]

¹³Woe (judgment is coming) to them, for they have wandered away from Me!
Devastation is theirs, because they have rebelled *and* trespassed against Me!
I would redeem them, but they speak lies against Me.

- ¹⁴They do not cry out to Me from their heart
When they wail on their beds [in unbelieving despair];
For the sake of grain and new wine they assemble
themselves [as if worshiping Baal]; They rebel against
Me.
- ¹⁵Although I trained and strengthened their arms [for victory
over their enemies], Yet they devise evil against Me.
- ¹⁶They turn, but they do not turn upward to the Most High.
They are like a poorly crafted bow [that misses the mark];
Their princes shall fall by the sword
Because of the insolence of their tongue.
This *will be* cause for their mockery *and* disdain in the land
of Egypt.

8 SET THE trumpet to your lips [announcing impending
judgment]!

Like a [great] vulture *the enemy comes* against the house of
the LORD, Because they have broken My covenant
And transgressed *and* rebelled against My law.

²Then they will cry out to Me,
“My God, we of Israel know You!”

³Israel has rejected the good;
The enemy shall pursue him.

⁴They set up kings, but not from Me [therefore without My
blessing]; They have appointed princes, but I did not
know it.

With their silver and their gold they made idols for

themselves,
That they might be cut off.

⁵He has rejected your [pagan] calf, O Samaria, *saying*,
“My wrath burns against them.”

How long will they be incapable of innocence?

⁶For even this [loathsome calf] is from Israel.

A craftsman made it, so it is not God;

Surely the calf of Samaria will be broken to pieces *and* go up
in flames.

⁷For they sow the wind [in evil]

And they reap the whirlwind [in disaster].

The standing grain has no growth;

It yields no grain.

If it were to yield, strangers would swallow it up.

⁸Israel is [as if] swallowed up [by enemies]; They are now
among the nations

Like a vessel [of cheap, coarse pottery] that is useless.

⁹For they have gone up to Assyria,

Like a wild donkey wandering alone *and* taking her own
way;

Ephraim has hired lovers (pagan allies).

¹⁰Yes, even though [with presents] they hire *allies* among the
nations, Now I will gather them up;

POWERPOINT

One gift God has given His people is His precepts (see Hos. 8:12), His stated will and ways. The Israelites chose to disregard His precepts and forfeited their relationship with Him. In contrast, the psalmist said that he meditated on the precepts of God all the time (see Ps. 119:97). That means he spent a great deal of time pondering and thinking on the ways of God, on His instructions and teachings. Today as I took my morning walk, I simply thought about some of my favorite verses in God's Word and pondered what they mean to me. Even if you take one scripture each day and seriously think about what it means to you, it will be beneficial to you.



And [in a little while] they will begin to grow weak *and* diminish Because of the burden imposed by the king of princes [the king of Assyria].

¹¹For Ephraim has constructed many altars for sin; They are altars intended for sinning [which multiply his guilt].

¹²I wrote for him the ten thousand *precepts* of My law, But they are regarded as a strange thing [which does not concern him].

¹³As for My sacrificial offerings,
They sacrifice the meat [as a mere formality] and eat it,
But the LORD is not pleased with them *and* does not accept them.

Now He will remember *and* take into account their wickedness *and* guilt, And punish them for their sins.

They will return [in captivity] to [another] Egypt [that is, Assyria]. [Deut 28:68]

¹⁴For Israel has forgotten his Maker and built palaces [and pagan temples],

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The God Who Provides

In Hosea 9:2, the Lord is described as “the God who provides.” There are many people who constantly fight the mental battles of fear and anxiety about provision. They worry about whether they can pay the mortgage or the rent, whether they can keep the car running, whether they can send their children to college, whether they will have enough money for retirement. Another thing many people worry about is whether or not they are pleasing to God.

I describe worry as “spending today trying to figure out tomorrow.” Let’s learn to use the time God has given to us for what He intended. Life is to be lived—here and now—without anxiety or worry. Few people know how to live each day to the fullest, simply trusting the Lord to provide for their every need. If, as Jesus said, the flowers of the fields are well taken care of (see Luke 12:27), then surely we can believe that we will be provided for. Don’t spend today worrying about tomorrow. Trust the God who provides!

And Judah has built many fortified cities;

But I will send a fire upon their cities so that it may consume
their palaces and fortresses. [Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14; 2:2,
5]

9 DO NOT rejoice, O Israel, with exultation as do the [pagan]

peoples, For you have played the prostitute, *turning* away from your God.

You have loved *prostitutes'* earnings on every threshing floor [attributing the harvest to the Baals instead of to God].

²The threshing floor and the wine press will no longer feed them, And the new wine will fail them [because they failed to honor the God who provides].

³They will not remain in the land of the LORD, But Ephraim will return to [another] Egypt [in bondage]
And they will eat [ceremonially] unclean *food* in Assyria. [2 Kin 25:26; Ezek 4:13]

⁴They will not pour out drink offerings of wine to the LORD;
Their sacrifices will not please Him.
Their bread will be like mourners' bread [eaten at funerals];
All who eat it will be [ceremonially] unclean,
For their bread will be for themselves;
It will not enter the house of the LORD [to be consecrated].

⁵What will you do on the day of the appointed festival
And on the day of the feast of the LORD [when you are in exile]?

⁶For behold, they will go away because of devastation *and* destruction; Egypt will gather them up, Memphis will bury them.
Weeds will take over their treasures of silver;
Thorns *will grow* in their tents.

⁷The days of punishment have come;

The days of retribution are at hand;
Let Israel know this!
The prophet is [considered] a fool;
The man [of God] who is inspired is [treated as if] demented,
Because of the abundance of your wickedness *and* guilt,
And *because* your deep antagonism [toward God and the
prophets] is so great. [Luke 21:22]

⁸Ephraim was a watchman with my God, a [true] prophet [to
warn the nation]; But the snare of a bird catcher was laid in
all his paths.

And there is *only* deep hostility in the house of his God (the
land of Israel).

⁹They have deeply corrupted (perverted) themselves
As in the days of Gibeah.

The LORD will remember their wickedness *and* guilt; He will
punish their sins. [Judg 20]

¹⁰I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness [an unexpected
and refreshing delight]; I saw your fathers (ancestors) as
the first ripe fruit on the fig tree in its first *season*,
But they came to Baal-peor and consecrated themselves to
shamefulness [the worship of Baal], And [because of their
spiritual and physical adultery] they became as detestable
and loathsome as the thing they loved.

¹¹As for Ephraim, their glory will fly away like a bird;
No birth, no pregnancy, and [because of their impurity] no
conception.

¹²Even though they bring up their children,

Yet I will bereave them until not one is left.

Indeed, woe (judgment is coming) to them when I look away
and withdraw [My blessing] from them!

¹³Ephraim, as I have seen,
Is planted in a pleasant [and prosperous] meadow like Tyre;
But Ephraim will bring out his children to the executioner
[for slaughter].

¹⁴Give them [the punishment they deserve], O LORD! What
will You give?
Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.

¹⁵All their wickedness [says the LORD] is focused in Gilgal;
Indeed, I came to hate them there!
Because of the wickedness of their [idolatrous] practices
I will drive them out of My house (the land of Israel)!
I will love them no longer;
All their princes are rebels. [Hos 4:15; 12:11]

¹⁶Ephraim is stricken, their root is dried up,
They will bear no fruit.
Even though they give birth,
I will slay the precious children of their womb.

¹⁷My God will reject them *and* cast them away
Because they did not listen to Him;
And they will be wanderers (fugitives) among the nations.

10 ISRAEL IS a luxuriant *and* prolific vine; He produces fruit
for himself.

The more his fruit,
The more altars he made [to Baal];
The richer his land,
The better he made the [idolatrous] pillars.

²Their heart is divided (faithless);
Now they must bear their guilt *and* punishment.
The LORD will break down [the horns of] their altars; He will
destroy their *idolatrous* pillars.

³Surely now they will say [in despair], “We have no [true]
king, For we do not revere the LORD;
And as for the king, what can he do for us [to rescue us]?”

⁴They have spoken *empty (disingenuous)* words,
Swearing falsely to make covenants [they intend to break];
Therefore, judgment springs up like poisonous weeds in the
furrows of the field.

⁵The people of Samaria will fear *and* tremble
For the [idolatrous] calf of Beth-aven (House of
Wickedness).
Indeed, its people will mourn over it
And its idolatrous priests will cry out *and* wail over it,
Over its glory, because the glory [of their calf god] has
departed from it.

⁶The golden calf itself will be carried to Assyria As tribute to
King Jareb;
Ephraim will be seized with shame
And Israel will be ashamed of his own counsel [to worship
the calf and separate Israel from Judah].

- ⁷As for Samaria, her king will be cut off *and* float away Like a twig on the surface of the water.
- ⁸Also the high places of Aven (Beth-aven), the sin of Israel, will be destroyed; The thorn and the thistle will grow on their [pagan] altars,
And [in despair] they will say to the mountains,
“Cover us!” And to the hills, “Fall on us!” [Luke 23:30; Rev 6:16; 9:6]
- ⁹O Israel, you have [willfully] sinned since the days of Gibeah; There they (Israel) stand!
Will not the battle against the sons of wickedness overtake them at Gibeah? [Judg 20]
- ¹⁰When it is my desire [to defend My righteousness], I will chastise them; And [hostile] peoples will be gathered against them
When they are bound *and* punished for their double guilt [their revolt against the LORD and their worship of idols].
[Jer 2:13; Lam 3:31–33]
- ¹¹Ephraim is a trained heifer that loves to tread out the grain,
But I will come over her fair neck *with a heavy yoke* [for hard field work].
I will harness Ephraim;

Speak God's Word

*I will sow with a view to
righteousness, that
righteousness, like seed, may
germinate in me; I will reap
in accordance with mercy
and lovingkindness. I will
break up my uncultivated
ground, for it is time to seek
and search diligently for the
Lord and to long for His
blessing until He comes to
rain righteousness and His
gift of salvation on me.*

| *adapted from* HOSEA 10:12 |

Judah will plow and Jacob will harrow *and* rake for himself.

¹²Sow with a view to righteousness [that righteousness, like seed, may germinate]; Reap in accordance with mercy *and* lovingkindness.

Break up your uncultivated ground,

For it is time to seek *and* search diligently for the LORD [and to long for His blessing]

Until He comes to rain righteousness *and* His gift of

salvation on you. [2 Cor 9:10]

¹³You have plowed *and* planted wickedness, you have reaped the [willful] injustice [of oppressors], You have eaten the fruit of lies.

Because you have trusted in your own way *and* your chariots, and in your many warriors, ¹⁴Therefore an uproar will arise among your people,

And all your fortresses will be destroyed,

As Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel on the day of battle,

When mothers were dashed in pieces with their children. [2 Kin 17:3]

¹⁵In this way it will be done to you at [idolatrous] Bethel because of your great wickedness; At daybreak the king of Israel will be completely cut off.

11 WHEN ISRAEL was a child [a young nation], I loved him, And I called My son out of Egypt. [Matt 2:15]

²The more they [the prophets] called them [to repentance and obedience], The more they went away from them; They kept sacrificing to the Baals And burning incense to the carved images.

³Yet it is I who taught Ephraim to walk, Taking them in My arms [nurturing the young nation]; But they did not know that I healed them.

⁴I led them *gently* with cords of a man, with bonds of love [guiding them],

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

A Truly Loving Father **H**osea 11 is a chapter about God's love for Israel, the kind of love a good father has for a child (see v. 1). No matter how great their sin against Him, God never stopped loving them or longing to show them compassion (see vv. 8–9).

The idea that God loves His people in such a tender, powerful, unconditional way took some time for me to embrace after I became a Christian. Even after I believed that He loved everyone, it took some more time for me to receive His unconditional love personally. My experience with my earthly father was not positive, so I found it difficult to believe that God could love *me* that much.

My earthly father told me often that he loved me, but his kind of love was sick and immoral. My mother told me that she loved me, but she did not protect me from my father's sexual abuse, even though she knew about it. My first husband told me that he loved me, but he was unfaithful to me many times. The list could go on, but I am sure you can relate to my point and that you have your own list of people who said they loved you without ever demonstrating the kind of love God has for us and wants us to have for one another.

However, when God says that He loves us, He means it in every way. His love always moves Him to action on our behalf, and true love is only known by the action it inspires (see 1 John 3:16–18). You will see and experience the love of God if you put your faith in Him.

Let me ask: Have you decided to believe that God loves you unconditionally and has a good plan for your life? I pray that you have and that you will begin to expect to see it manifested in your life. I encourage you to say aloud several times each day, “God loves me unconditionally.” By speaking this truth, you are verbally agreeing with God's Word and helping to renew your mind.

God's love seeks the welfare of all and works no ill toward anyone. It looks for opportunities to do good to everyone. The love God has for us is the love of a perfect being (God) toward entirely unworthy people (us). God loves us because He wants to and because His nature compels Him to do so. He is love!

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Loving Father, thank You for loving me perfectly, even when

others have not loved me well or have even done me harm while saying they loved me and not meaning it. Help me to receive, believe, and trust the love You have for me. In Jesus' name. Amen.

And I was to them as one who lifts up *and* eases the yoke
[of the law] over their jaws; And I bent down to them and
fed them.

⁵They will not return to the land of Egypt, But Assyria will
be their king [bringing them into captivity]
Because they refused to return *to Me*.

⁶The sword will whirl against *and* fall on their cities, And will
demolish the bars of their gates *and* fortifications
And will consume them because of their counsels.

⁷My people are bent on turning from Me;
Though the prophets call them to *the One* on high,
None at all exalts *Him*.

⁸How can I give you up, O Ephraim?
How can I surrender you, O Israel?
How can I make you like Admah?
How can I treat you like Zeboiim?
My heart recoils within Me;
All My compassions are kindled together [for My nation of
Israel]. [Deut 29:23]

⁹I will not execute the fierceness of My anger;
I will not return to Ephraim to destroy him again.
For I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst [who
will not revoke My covenant], And I will not come in
wrath *or* enter the city [in judgment].

¹⁰They will walk after the LORD [in obedience and worship],

Who will roar like a lion;
He will roar [summoning them]
And *His* sons will come trembling from the west.

¹¹They will come trembling *and* hurriedly like birds from Egypt
And like doves from the land of Assyria;
And I will settle them in their houses [in the land of their inheritance], declares the LORD.

¹²Ephraim surrounds Me with lies
And the house of Israel with deceit;
Judah is also unruly against God,
Even against the faithful Holy One.

12 EPHRAIM FEEDS on the [emptiness of the] wind And
[continually] pursues the [parching] east wind [which brings
destruction]; Every day he multiplies lies and violence.

Further, he makes a covenant with Assyria
And (olive) oil is carried to Egypt [to seek alliances]. [Is
30:6, 7]

²The LORD also has a dispute [a legal complaint and an
indictment] with Judah, And He will punish Jacob in
accordance with his ways;
He will repay him in accordance with his deeds.

³In *their mother's* womb he took his brother by the heel, And
in his maturity he contended with God. [Gen 25:26; 27:36]

⁴He wrestled with the angel and prevailed;
He wept [in repentance] and sought His favor.

He met Him at Bethel

And there God spoke with [him and through him with] us—
[Gen 28:12–19; 32:28; 35:1–15]

⁵Even the LORD, the God of hosts, The name of Him [who spoke with Jacob] is the LORD.

⁶Therefore, return [in repentance] to your God,
Observe *and* highly regard kindness and justice,
And wait [expectantly] for your God continually.

⁷A merchant, in whose hand are false *and* fraudulent balances; He loves to oppress *and* exploit.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*When I have sinned, Lord, I
will return in repentance to
You. I will observe and highly
regard kindness and justice,
and I will wait expectantly for
You continually.*

• adapted from Hosea 12:6

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Wants You Back

All God required in order to restore the Israelites' relationship with Himself was for them to return to Him and repent of their iniquity (see Hos. 12:6). He wanted them to be sorry for what they had done, to turn away from their sin, and turn back to Him.

If you have served God at some point but then walked away from Him to seek the things of the world, Hosea 12:6 can encourage you and give you hope that God is waiting with open arms to welcome you back. This verse is a passionate call from God for you to return to Him and wait expectantly for Him. Waiting for God means spending time with Him in His Word and in His presence. When we wait expectantly for God, we anticipate something good from our time with Him.

⁸Ephraim said, "I have indeed become rich [and powerful as a nation]; I have found wealth for myself.

In all my labors they will not find in me

Any wickedness that *would be* sin." [Rev 3:17]

⁹But I *have been* the LORD your God since [you became a nation in] the land of Egypt; I will make you live in tents again,

As in the days of the appointed *and* solemn festival. [Lev 23:39–43]

¹⁰I have also spoken to [you through] the prophets,
And I gave [them] many visions [to make My will known],
And through the prophets I gave parables [to appeal to
your sense of right and wrong].

¹¹Is there wickedness (idolatry) in Gilead?
Surely the people there are worthless.
In Gilgal [they defy Me when] they sacrifice bulls,
Yes, [after My judgment] their [pagan] altars are like the
stone heaps
In the furrows of the fields.

¹²Now Jacob (Israel) fled into the open country of Aram
(Paddan-aram), [Gen 28:2, 5]
And [there] Israel (Jacob) worked *and* served for a wife,
And for a wife he kept *sheep*. [Gen 29:18–20; 30:31; 31:38–
41]

¹³And by a prophet (Moses) the LORD brought Israel up from
Egypt, And by a prophet Israel was preserved.

¹⁴Ephraim has provoked most bitter anger;
So his Lord will leave his bloodguilt on him [invoking
punishment]
And bring back to him his shame *and* dishonor.

13 WHEN EPHRAIM spoke, *there was* trembling *and* terror.
He exalted himself [above the other tribes] in Israel;
But through [the worship of] Baal he became guilty and
died [spiritually, and then came ruin, sealing Israel's doom

as a nation].

²And now they sin more and more,
And make for themselves molten images,
Idols skillfully made from their silver [as it pleased them],
All of them the work of the craftsmen.
They say of these [very works of their hands], “Let those
who sacrifice kiss *and* show respect to the calves [as if
they were living gods]!”

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*I am thankful, Lord my God,
that there is no savior besides
You.*

• adapted from Hosea 13:4

³Therefore they will be [swiftly dissipated] like the morning
cloud Or like dew which soon disappears,
Like chaff which swirls with the whirlwind from the
threshing floor,

And like smoke from the chimney *or* through the window
[worthless and without substance—they will vanish].

⁴Yet I *have been* the LORD your God Since [the time you
became a nation in] the land of Egypt;
And you were not to know any god except Me,
For there is no savior besides Me.

⁵I knew *and* regarded you *and* cared for you in the
wilderness, In the land of drought.

⁶When *they had* their pasture, they became satisfied, And
being satisfied, their heart became proud (self-centered);
Therefore they forgot Me.

⁷So I will be like a lion to them;
Like a leopard I will watch *and* lie in wait [ready to attack]
by the road [to Assyria].

⁸I will encounter them like a bear robbed of her cubs,
And I will tear open their chests;
There I will also devour them like a lioness,
As a wild beast would tear them.

⁹It is your destruction, O Israel,
Because *you are* against Me, [and have rebelled] against
your help.

¹⁰Where now is your king
That he may save you [when you are attacked] in all your
cities?
And your judges of whom you asked,
“Give me a king and princes”?

- ¹¹I gave you a king in My anger,
And I took him away in My wrath [as punishment].
- ¹²The wickedness of Ephraim [which is not yet completely
punished] is bound up [as in a bag]; His sin is stored up
[for judgment and destruction].
- ¹³The pains of childbirth come on him;
But he is not a wise son,
For it is not the time to delay [his chance at a new birth] as
the womb opens [but he ignores the opportunity to
change].
- ¹⁴Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol (the place of
the dead)?
Shall I redeem them from death?
O death, where are your thorns?
O Sheol, where is your sting?
Compassion is hidden from My eyes [because of their
failure to repent]. [1 Cor 15:55]
- ¹⁵For though he flourishes among the reeds (his fellow tribes),
An east wind (Assyria) will come,
The breath of the LORD rising from the desert; And
Ephraim's spring will become dry
And his fountain will be dried up.
Assyria will plunder his treasury of every precious object.
- ¹⁶Samaria will be found guilty [and become desolate],
Because she rebelled against her God;
They will fall by the sword,
Their infants will be dashed in pieces,

And their pregnant women will be ripped open.

14 O ISRAEL, return [in repentance] to the LORD your God,
For you have stumbled *and* fallen [visited by tragedy], because
of your sin.

²Take the words [confessing your guilt] with you and return
to the LORD.

Say to Him, “Take away all our wickedness;
Accept what is good *and* receive us graciously,
So that we may present the fruit of our lips (gratitude). [Heb
13:15]

³“Assyria will not save us;
We will not ride on horses [relying on military might],
Nor will we say again to [the idols who are] the work of our
hands, ‘You are our gods.’
For in You [O LORD] the orphan finds love *and* compassion
and mercy.”

⁴I will heal their apostasy *and* faithlessness; I will love them
freely,
For My anger has turned away from Israel.

⁵I shall be like the dew to Israel;
He will blossom like the lily,
And he will take root like *the cedars of* Lebanon.

⁶His shoots will sprout,
And his beauty will be like the olive tree
And his fragrance like *the cedars of* Lebanon.

⁷Those who live in his shadow
Will again raise grain,
And they will blossom like the vine.
His renown *will be* like the wine of Lebanon.

⁸O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols?

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, I pray that You will
make me more and more
spiritually wise and
discerning, for Your ways are
right, and the righteous will
walk in them.*

• adapted from Hosea 14:9

It is I who have answered and will care for you *and* watch
over you.

I am like a luxuriant cypress tree;

With Me your fruit is found [which is to nourish you].

⁹Whoever is [spiritually] wise, let him understand these things; *Whoever* is [spiritually] discerning *and* understanding, let him know them.
For the ways of the LORD are right,
And the righteous will walk in them,
But transgressors will stumble *and* fall in them. [Ps 107:43;
Is 26:7; Jer 9:12; Dan 12:10]

Joel

Author: | Joel

Date: | Traditional
view is about 830 BC

The prophet Joel wrote to the people of Judah during a difficult time in their history. They had endured the loss of crops and livestock as well as the death of friends and loved ones because of a plague of locusts. Against this backdrop, the Lord sent Joel to speak of His desire to restore to them what they had lost.

For the people of Judah, the key to restoration was repentance. When we sin, recognize the error of our ways, and then sincerely come to God with all our heart in genuine repentance, He restores our fellowship with Him (see Joel 2:12). He always wants our relationship with Him to be restored first, and then He is eager to also restore other things we have lost (see Joel 2:25–26).

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM JOEL:

The Lord promises to restore the years you have lost (see Joel 2:25).

Let go of the past and set your mind on God's promise to redeem it and to lead you to a great future (see Joel 2:25–26).

God wants to pour out His Holy Spirit on you (see Joel 2:28–29).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM JOEL:

Do not fear... be glad and rejoice, for the LORD has done great things! | Joel 2:21

And you shall know [without any doubt] that I am in the midst of Israel [to protect and bless you], and that I am the LORD your God, and there is no other; My people will never be put to shame. | Joel 2:27

Let the weak say, "I am strong!" | Joel 3:10

THE BOOK OF

JOEL

1 THE WORD of the LORD that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel.

²Hear this, O elders,
Listen closely, all inhabitants of the land!
Has *such a thing as* this occurred in your days, Or even in
the days of your fathers?

³Tell your children about it,
And let your children tell their children,
And their children the next generation.

⁴What the gnawing locust has left, the swarming locust has eaten;
And what the swarming locust has left, the creeping locust has eaten;
And what the creeping locust has left, the stripping locust has eaten [in judgment of Judah].

⁵Awake [from your intoxication], you drunkards, and weep;
Wail, all you drinkers of wine,
Because of the [fresh] sweet wine
That is cut off from your mouth.

⁶For a [pagan and hostile] nation has invaded My land [like locusts],
Mighty and without number;

Its teeth are the teeth of a lion,
And it has the fangs of a lioness. [Rev 9:7, 8]

⁷It has made My vine (My people) a waste *and* object of horror, And splintered *and* broken My fig tree.
It has stripped them completely bare and thrown them away; Their branches have become white. [Is 5:5, 6]

⁸Wail like a virgin [bride] clothed with sackcloth For the bridegroom of her youth [who has died].

⁹The [daily] grain offering and the drink offering are cut off
From the house of the LORD; The priests mourn
Who minister to the LORD.

¹⁰The field is ruined,
The ground mourns;
For the grain is ruined,
The new wine is dried up,
The fresh oil fails.

¹¹Be ashamed, O farmers;
Wail, O vinedressers,
For the wheat and for the barley,
Because the harvest of the field has perished.

¹²The vine dries up
And the fig tree fails;
The pomegranate, the palm also, and the apple tree,
All the trees of the field dry up,
Indeed, joy dries up *and* withdraws
From the sons of men.

¹³Clothe yourselves *with sackcloth*

And lament (cry out in grief), O priests;
Wail, O ministers of the altar!
Come, spend the night in sackcloth [and pray without
ceasing], O ministers of my God,
For the grain offering and the drink offering
Are withheld from the house of your God.

¹⁴Consecrate a fast,
Proclaim a solemn assembly,
Gather the elders
And all the inhabitants of the land
To the house of the LORD your God, And cry out to the
LORD [in penitent pleadings].

¹⁵Alas for the day!
For the [judgment] day of the LORD is at hand, And it will
come [upon the nation] as a destruction from the
Almighty. [Zeph 1:14–18]

¹⁶Has not the food been cut off before our eyes, Joy and
gladness from the house of our God?

¹⁷The seeds [of grain] shrivel under the clods, The
storehouses are desolate *and* empty,
The barns are in ruins
Because the grain is dried up.

¹⁸How the animals groan!
The herds of cattle are bewildered *and* wander aimlessly
Because they have no pasture;
Even the flocks of sheep suffer.

¹⁹O LORD, I cry out to You, For fire has devoured the pastures
of the wilderness,

And the flame has burned up all the trees of the field.
²⁰Even the wild animals pant [in longing] for You; For the
water brooks are dried up
And fire has consumed the pastures of the wilderness.

2 BLOW THE trumpet in Zion [warning of impending
judgment], Sound an alarm on My holy mountain [Zion]!

Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble *and* shudder in
fear, For the [judgment] day of the LORD is coming; It is
close at hand, [Ezek 7:2–4; Amos 5:16–20]

²A day of darkness and gloom,
A day of clouds and of thick [dark] mist,
Like the dawn spread over the mountains;
There is a [pagan, hostile] people numerous and mighty,
The like of which has never been before
Nor will be again afterward
Even for years of many generations.

³Before them a fire devours,
And behind them a flame burns;
Before them the land is like the Garden of Eden,
But behind them a desolate wilderness;
And nothing at all escapes them.

⁴Their appearance is like the appearance of horses, And they
run like war horses.

⁵Like the noise of chariots
They leap on the tops of the mountains,
Like the crackling of a flame of fire devouring the stubble,

Speak God's Word

I am strong and powerful because I obediently carry out God's Word.

| adapted from JOEL 2:11 |

Like a mighty people set in battle formation. [Rev 9:7, 9]

⁶Before them the people are in anguish;
All faces become pale [with terror].

⁷They run like warriors;
They climb the wall like soldiers.
They each march [straight ahead] in line,
And they do not deviate from their paths.

⁸They do not crowd each other;
Each one marches in his path.
When they burst through the defenses (weapons),
They do not break ranks.

⁹They rush over the city,
They run on the wall;
They climb up into the houses,
They enter at the windows like a thief.

¹⁰The earth quakes before them,
The heavens tremble,
The sun and the moon grow dark
And the stars lose their brightness. [Rev 9:2–4; 16:14]

¹¹The LORD utters His voice before His army, For His camp is
very great,
Because strong *and* powerful is he who [obediently] carries

out His word.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*When I have sinned, Lord, I
will turn to You with all my
heart in genuine repentance,
with fasting, weeping, and
mourning until every barrier
is removed and broken
fellowship is restored. For You
are gracious and
compassionate, slow to anger,
and abounding in
lovingkindness.*

• adapted from Joel 2:12–13

For the day of the LORD is indeed great and very terrible
[causing dread]; Who can endure it? [Is 26:20, 21; 34:1–4,
8; Rev 6:16, 17]

¹²“Even now,” says the LORD, “Turn *and* come to Me with all

- your heart [in genuine repentance], With fasting and weeping and mourning [until every barrier is removed and the broken fellowship is restored]; ¹³Rip your heart to pieces [in sorrow and contrition] and not your garments.”
- Now return [in repentance] to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and compassionate,
Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness [faithful to His covenant with His people]; And He relents [His sentence of] evil [when His people genuinely repent].
- ¹⁴Who knows whether He will relent [and revoke your sentence], And leave a blessing behind Him,
Even a grain offering and a drink offering [from the bounty He provides you]
For the LORD your God?
- ¹⁵Blow a trumpet in Zion [warning of impending judgment],
Dedicate a fast [as a day of restraint and humility], call a solemn assembly.
- ¹⁶Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders,
Gather the children and the nursing infants.
Let the bridegroom come out of his room
And the bride out of her bridal chamber. [No one is excused from the assembly.]
- ¹⁷Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, Weep between the porch and the altar,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Redeems the Past

In Joel 2:25, God is saying that He will redeem or compensate us for lost time. Verses 25 and 26 teach us how to think about the past in order to embrace the future. Simply put, the years the locusts have eaten represent negative experiences in the past, especially seasons of loss or lack. God says He will make up for those things, promising, “You will have plenty to eat and be satisfied and praise the name of the LORD your God Who has dealt wondrously with you” (Joel 2:26).

God can redeem any negative situation in your past, and you can break free from it by saying to the Lord, “Yes, this happened in my life, but You are on my side, and You have a good plan for me. I believe You can make up for everything I have lost!”

Our hope for the future should never be based on what we have experienced in the past or on what we can see in the present. Our hope should be based on God’s Word and on His promises for our lives.

The time has come to stop thinking about everything in your past—what you’ve lost, what you’ve given up on, or the lies you have believed. Let go of what is now behind you and set your mind on God’s promise to redeem the past and lead you into a wonderful future. Live every day filled with hope, expecting something good to happen to you and through you!

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Thank God for His Holy Spirit!

In Joel 2:28, God promises to pour out His Holy Spirit on all mankind. This verse was a prophetic promise fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost and is still being fulfilled daily in our lives. Peter even said about that day, “This is [the beginning of] what was spoken through the prophet Joel: ‘AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,’ says God, ‘THAT I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND’” (Acts 2:16–17).

Receiving the fullness of the Holy Spirit is one of the most important experiences we can have as Christians. He is our Guide, our Teacher of truth, our Counselor, and our Helper in every situation. He is also our Comforter, or the parakletos, a Greek word explained in Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words as one who is “called alongside.” This term “was used in a court of justice to denote a legal assistant, counsel for the defense, an advocate... who pleads another’s cause, an intercessor.”

The Holy Spirit promises never to leave us nor forsake us. We can live the abundant life that Jesus promises (see John 10:10) as we learn to follow where He leads and as we listen to His voice.

Before Jesus was crucified, He told His disciples that it would actually be better for them if He went away than if He stayed on earth in the flesh, because if He stayed, His Spirit—the

Holy Spirit—would not come (see John 16:7). During His earthly life, Jesus was confined to a body and could only be in one place at a time. The Holy Spirit can be in every single one of us, all the time, leading us everywhere we should go. Let's seek to be filled with Him daily, embrace His guidance in our lives, and be thankful that God has given us this amazing and wonderful gift!

And let them say, “Have compassion *and* spare Your people, O LORD, And do not make Your inheritance (Israel) an object of ridicule, Or a [humiliating] byword among the [Gentile] nations.

Why should they say among the peoples,
‘Where is their God?’”

¹⁸Then the LORD will be jealous for His land [ready to defend it since it is rightfully and uniquely His]
And will have compassion on His people [and will spare them].

¹⁹The LORD will answer and say to His people, “Behold, I am going to send you grain and new wine and oil, And you will be satisfied *in full* with them;
And I will never again make you an object of ridicule among the [Gentile] nations.

²⁰“But I will remove the northern *army* far away from you,
And I will drive it into a parched and desolate land,
With its forward guard into the eastern sea (Dead Sea)
And with its rear guard into the western sea (Mediterranean Sea).

And its stench will arise and its foul odor of decay will come up [this is the fate of the northern army in the final day of the LORD], For He has done great things.” [Is 34:1–4, 8; Amos 4:10]

²¹Do not fear, O land; be glad and rejoice, For the LORD has done great things! [Zech 12:8–10]

²²Do not be afraid, you animals of the field, For the pastures of the wilderness have turned green;
The tree has produced its fruit,
And the fig tree and the vine have yielded in full.

²³So rejoice, O children of Zion,
And delight in the LORD, your God; For He has given you the early [autumn] rain in vindication And He has poured down the rain for you,
The early [autumn] rain and the late [spring] rain, as before.

²⁴And the threshing floors shall be full of grain, And the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil.

²⁵“And I will compensate you for the years
That the swarming locust has eaten,
The creeping locust, the stripping locust, and the gnawing locust— My great army which I sent among you.

²⁶“You will have plenty to eat and be satisfied And praise the name of the LORD your God Who has dealt wondrously with you;
And My people shall never be put to shame.

²⁷“And you shall know [without any doubt] that I am in the midst of Israel [to protect and bless you], And that I am

the LORD your God, And there is no other;
My people will never be put to shame.

28“‘It shall come about after this That I shall pour out My
Spirit on all mankind;
And your sons and your daughters will prophesy,
Your old men will dream dreams,
Your young men will see visions.

29“‘Even on the male and female servants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

30“‘I will show signs *and* wonders [displaying My power] in
the heavens and on the earth, Blood and fire and columns
of smoke.

31“‘The sun will be turned into darkness
And the moon into blood
Before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. [Is 13:6,
9–11; 24:21–23; Ezek 32:7–10; Matt 24:29, 30; Rev 6:12–17]

32“‘And it shall come about that whoever calls on the name of
the LORD
Will be saved [from the coming judgment]
For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
There will be those who escape,
As the LORD has said,
Even among the remnant [of survivors] whom the LORD
calls. [Acts 2:17–21; Rom 10:13]

3 “FOR BEHOLD, in those [climactic] days and at that time,
When I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem,

²I will gather together all the [Gentile] nations [that were hostile to My people]

And bring them down into the Valley of Jehoshaphat (the LORD has judged).

And there I will deal with them *and* enter into judgment with them there For [their treatment of] My people, My inheritance, Israel, Whom they have scattered among the nations,

And [because] they have encroached on My land *and* divided it up.

³“They have also cast lots for My people,

And have traded a boy for a prostitute

And have sold a girl for wine that they may drink.

⁴“Moreover, what are you to Me, O Tyre and Sidon and all the [five small] regions of Philistia? Will you pay Me back for something [I have supposedly done to you]? Even if you do pay Me back, I will swiftly and speedily return your deed [of retaliation] on your own head. [Is 23; Ezek 26:1–18; Amos 1:6–10; Zeph 2:4–7; Zech 9:2–7]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Confess What You Believe, Not What You See

One of the great privileges we have, but frequently fail to make use of, is to speak of things that are not yet evident as if they already exist. For example, God's Word encourages us to say we are strong even when we are weak (see Joel 3:10). If you believe God has strength available for you, as His Word says, there is no need to keep saying you are weak. You can confess that you are strong. We often must believe God's promise before we feel any different or see any change. It is a simple thing to remember, "Believe first and then you will see and feel."

We need to say what God says and do what He does if we want to follow in His plan for us and enjoy the life He wants us to enjoy. We should be confessing God's promises as though they already exist in our lives (see Rom. 4:17), because they do in the spiritual realm. We are called to walk by faith and not by sight (see 2 Cor. 5:7). In other words, we believe what God says in His Word even more than we believe what we see. Let's say what God says.

⁵“Because you have taken My silver and My gold and have carried My precious treasures to your temples *and* palaces, ⁶and have sold the children of Judah and the children of Jerusalem to the Greeks, so that you may send them far away

from their territory, ⁷behold, I am going to stir them up from the place where you have sold them [and return them to their land], and I shall return your action [of retaliation] on your own head.

⁸“Also I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabceans, to a distant nation,” for the LORD has spoken. [Is 14:2; 60:14]

⁹Proclaim this among the [pagan] nations: Prepare a war! Stir up the mighty men!

Let all the men of war come near, let them come up!

¹⁰Beat your plowshares into swords
And your pruning hooks into spears;
Let the weak say, “I am strong!” [Is 2:4; Mic 4:3]

¹¹Hurry and come, all you surrounding nations, And gather yourselves there;

Bring down, O LORD, Your mighty ones (Your warriors).

¹²Let the nations be stirred [to action]
And come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat,
For there I will sit to judge *and* punish
All the surrounding nations.

¹³Put in the sickle [of judgment], for the harvest is ripe; Come, tread [the grapes], for the wine press is full;
The vats overflow, for the wickedness [of the people] is great. [Mark 4:29; Rev 14:15, 18–20]

¹⁴Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision (judgment)!
For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision
[when judgment is executed]. [Zech 14:1–9]

¹⁵The sun and the moon grow dark
And the stars lose their brightness.

¹⁶The LORD thunders *and* roars from Zion

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Speak Life-Changing Words A good life is not one that is entirely trouble free, but it is a life that can always be enjoyed because we trust God, develop good attitudes, and fill our mind with hope and confident expectations of good. One of the keys to living a good life is our knowing God's Word and His promises, meditating on them, allowing them to transform our thinking, and confessing them with our mouths.

God has a good, acceptable, and perfect plan for you and me, and the way we can experience it is not to think like the world thinks, but to be changed entirely by learning to renew our minds and to think the way God thinks. If you want to have what God wants you to have, learn to think like God thinks. Once you think like God thinks, you will speak like God speaks. Joel 3:10 encourages us to follow this life-changing principle in saying, "Let the weak say, 'I am strong!'" Paul said in Romans 4:17 that God calls those things that do not yet exist as if they already do, and we should do as God does! God called Abram the "father of many nations" (Gen. 17:5) before he even had one child. He was prophesying Abram's future, and we can prophesy our own as long as we speak what God says in His Word.

Pay particular attention to the thoughts going through your mind, because they will influence your words and energize or de-energize the rest of what you do. You can jump-start your day by thinking good things on purpose as one of your first acts of the day. Thinking them and speaking them is the combination I recommend.

Speak out God's truth boldly, with authority, believing it has the power to change your life. This exercise takes only a few minutes, but it will be valuable to you all day. You may want to meditate on and confess such as these: "This is the day the Lord has made, and I am going to enjoy it."

"I can handle whatever comes my way today through Christ
Who is my strength."

"Today, I am energetic and creative."

"I have favor with God and man everywhere I go."

"Everything I lay my hand to prospers and succeeds."

“I enjoy being a blessing to others.”

“I am thankful for all that God has done for me.”

“God is working on my problems, and I can wait patiently because His timing is perfect.”

APRAYER FOR VICTORY

God, I thank You for giving me Your Word so I may know Your thoughts and begin to think like You think. I want my thoughts to be filled with hope and renewed with truth. I choose to want what you want for my life. It's in Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

And utters His voice from Jerusalem [in judgment of His enemies], And the heavens and the earth tremble *and* shudder; But the LORD is a refuge for His people And a stronghold [of protection] to the children of Israel. [Amos 9:11–15; Mic 4:1–3; 5:2; Zeph 3:13–20; Zech 6:12, 13; 12:8, 9]

¹⁷Then you will know *and* understand fully that I am the LORD your God, Dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain.
Then Jerusalem will be holy,
And strangers [who do not belong] will no longer pass through it.

¹⁸And in that day
The mountains will drip with sweet wine
And the hills will flow with milk;
And all the brooks *and* riverbeds of Judah will flow with water, And a fountain will go out from the house of the LORD
To water the [desert] Valley of Shittim. [Ezek 47:1–12; Amos 9:13; Zech 14:8]

¹⁹Egypt will become a waste,
And Edom will become a desolate wilderness,
Because of their violence against the children of Judah, In whose land they have shed innocent blood. [Ex 1:16; Amos 1:11]

²⁰But Judah shall be inhabited forever
And Jerusalem from generation to generation.

²¹And I shall avenge their blood which I have not avenged,

For the LORD dwells in Zion.

Amos

Author: | Amos
Date: | 760 BC–750
BC

One lesson the book of Amos teaches is that things are not always as they appear. The prophet Amos ministered during a time when everything seemed to be going well for Israel and Judah. They mistakenly assumed their prosperity and well-being meant that God was pleased with them. In reality, underneath the appearance of success, many people were corrupt, unjust, immoral, and idolatrous.

Amos's task was to inform the people that their blessings did not mean that God was pleased with them and to tell them to seek Him and live in righteousness and justice.

When things in your life seem to be going well, you still need God. I encourage you to seek the Lord in the good times and in the difficult seasons of life.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM AMOS:

God speaks to His servants through the power of the Holy Spirit, and He wants to speak to you today (see Amos 3:7).

Some of the simplest and best instructions for life are to hate evil and to love good (see Amos 5:15).

Pride prevents us from turning to God and asking for help (see Amos 6:8). When we are humble before God, we position ourselves to receive His grace.

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM AMOS:

Seek Me [search diligently for Me and regard Me as more essential than food] so that you may live. | Amos 5:4

Seek (long for, require) good and not evil, that you may live; and so may the LORD God of hosts be with you, just as you have said! | Amos 5:14

Listen to the word of the LORD. | AMOS 7:16

THE BOOK OF
AMOS

1 THE WORDS of Amos, who was among the shepherders of Tekoa, which he saw [in a divine revelation] concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. [Zech 14:5]

²And he said,
“The LORD thunders *and* roars from Zion [in judgment]
And utters His voice from Jerusalem;
Then the pastures of the shepherds mourn,
And the summit of [Mount] Carmel dries up [because of
God’s judgment].” [Is 42:13; Jer 25:30; Joel 3:16]

³Thus says the LORD, “For three transgressions of Damascus and for four (multiplied delinquencies) I shall not reverse its punishment *or* revoke My word concerning it, Because they have threshed Gilead [east of the Jordan River] with sharp iron sledges [having spikes that crushed and shredded]. [2 Kin 10:32, 33]

⁴“So I will send a fire [of war, conquest, and destruction] upon the house of Hazael, And it shall devour the palaces *and* strongholds of Ben-hadad (Hazael’s son).

⁵“I also will break the bar [of the gate] of Damascus,
And cut off *and* destroy the inhabitant from the Valley of
Aven (Wickedness), And the ruler who holds the scepter,
from Beth-eden (Damascus);
And the people of Aram [conquered by the Assyrians] will
go into exile to Kir,”
Says the LORD. [Ezek 30:17]

⁶Thus says the LORD, “For three transgressions of Gaza [in
Philistia] and for four (multiplied delinquencies) I will not
reverse its punishment *or* revoke My word concerning it,
Because [as slave traders] they took captive the entire
[Jewish] population [of defenseless Judean border
villages, of which none was spared]
And deported them to Edom [for the slave trade]. [Joel 3:6]

⁷“So I will send a fire [of war, conquest, and destruction] on
the wall of Gaza And it shall consume her citadels.

⁸“And I will cut off *and* destroy the inhabitants from
Ashdod, And the ruler who holds the scepter, from
Ashkelon;
And I will unleash My power *and* turn My hand [in
judgment] against Ekron, And the rest of the Philistines
[in Gath and the towns dependent on these four Philistine
cities] shall die,”
Says the Lord GOD. [Josh 13:3]

⁹Thus says the LORD, “For three transgressions of Tyre and
for four (multiplied delinquencies) I will not reverse its
punishment *or* revoke My word concerning it, Because

they [as middlemen] deported an entire [Jewish] population to Edom And did not [seriously] remember their covenant of brotherhood. [1 Kin 5:1, 12; 9:12, 13]

¹⁰“So I will send a fire [of war, conquest, and destruction] on the wall of Tyre, And it shall consume her citadels.”

¹¹Thus says the LORD, “For three transgressions of Edom [the descendants of Esau] and for four (multiplied delinquencies)

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Develop a “Word Habit”

In Amos 2:4, one of the reasons for God’s judgment against Judah was that they “rejected the law of the LORD [the sum of God’s instruction to His people].” God’s instruction to His people is His Word. Not rejecting God’s Word, but knowing it, respecting it, meditating on it, and living by it, is just as important for God’s people today as it was when Amos lived.

Studying and living by God’s Word is the best habit we can cultivate. We can develop a “Word habit” in the same way we form all other good habits. We begin with some effort and keep doing it until it becomes a regular part of our lives. For example, you might begin by reading and studying the Bible for fifteen minutes each day, continuing for two weeks and then increasing the time by a couple minutes every day until you reach the goal of time you want to spend daily in the Word. After a while you will not need to set that goal anymore, because you will have disciplined and committed yourself to the habit of knowing God’s Word, and you will want as much time as possible to learn more and more about our Lord.

Through knowledge of God’s Word, you will learn to know Him. You will know His character and ways, and you will learn how much He loves you and what a wonderful plan He has for your life. You will also develop faith and learn to seek the wisdom needed to know what to do in every situation you face.

The people of Judah made a terrible mistake by rejecting God's instructions. You and I don't have to follow their example. Let's study and embrace God's Word in such a way that it guides everything we do in life.

I will not reverse its punishment *or* revoke My word
concerning it, Because he pursued his brother Jacob
(Israel) with the sword,

Corrupting *and* stifling his compassions *and* casting off all
mercy; His destructive anger raged continually,
And he maintained [and nurtured] his wrath forever.

¹²“So I will send a fire [of war, conquest, and destruction]
upon Teman, And it shall consume the citadels of Bozrah
[in Edom].”

¹³Thus says the LORD, “For three transgressions of the
children of Ammon and for four (multiplied
delinquencies) I will not reverse its punishment *or* revoke
My word concerning it, Because the Ammonites have
ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead,
That they might enlarge their border.

¹⁴“So I will kindle a fire [of war, conquest, and destruction] on
the wall of Rabbah [in Ammon]
And it shall devour its strongholds
Amid war cries *and* shouts of alarm on the day of battle,
And a tempest on the day of the whirlwind [when the
enemy captures the city].

¹⁵“Their king shall go into exile,
He and his princes together,” says the LORD.

2 THUS SAYS the LORD, “For three transgressions of Moab and for four (multiplied delinquencies) I will not reverse its punishment *or* revoke My word concerning it, Because he burned the bones of the king of Edom [Esau’s descendant] into lime [and used it to plaster a Moabite house].

²“So I will send a fire [of war, conquest, and destruction] upon Moab And it shall devour the strongholds of Kerioth;

And Moab shall die amid tumult *and* uproar,
With war cries *and* shouts of alarm and the sound of the trumpet.

³“I will also cut off *and* destroy the ruler from its midst And slay all the princes with him,” says the LORD.

⁴Thus says the LORD, “For three transgressions of Judah and for four (multiplied delinquencies) I will not reverse its punishment *or* revoke My word concerning it, Because they have rejected the law of the LORD [the sum of God’s instruction to His people]

And have not kept His commandments;
But their lies [and their idols], after which their fathers walked,
Caused them to go astray.

⁵“So I will send a fire [of war, conquest, and destruction by the Babylonians] upon Judah And it will devour the strongholds of Jerusalem.”

⁶Thus says the LORD, “For three transgressions of Israel and for four (multiplied delinquencies) I will not reverse its

punishment *or* revoke My word concerning it, Because
they sell the righteous *and* innocent for silver
And the needy for the price of a pair of sandals.

7“These who pant after (long to see) the dust of the earth on
the head of the helpless [as sign of their grief and distress]
Also turn aside the way of the humble;
And a man and his father will go to the same girl
So that My holy name is profaned.

8“They stretch out beside every [pagan] altar on clothes
taken in pledge [to secure a loan, disregarding God’s
command], And in the house of their God [in contempt of
Him] they frivolously drink the wine [which has been]
taken from those who have been fined. [Ex 22:26; Deut
24:12, 13]

9“Yet it was I [not the false gods] who destroyed the Amorite
before them, Though his height was like the height of the
cedars,
And he was as strong as the oaks;
I even destroyed his fruit above and his root below.

10“Also it was I who brought you up out of the land of Egypt,
And I led you forty years through the wilderness
That you might possess the land of the Amorite.

11“Then I raised up some of your sons to be prophets [who
gave you My revelation], And some of your young men
to be Nazirites (dedicated ones).
Is this not true, O you children of Israel?” says the LORD.
[Num 6:1–8]

12“But you gave the Nazirites wine to drink [despite their vows]

And commanded the prophets, saying, ‘You shall not prophesy!’

13“Behold, I am weighted down beneath you

As a cart that is weighted down when it is full of sheaves.

14“Flight will be lost to the swift [so they will be unable to escape], And the strong shall not strengthen *nor* maintain his power,

Nor shall the mighty man save his own life.

15“He who handles the bow will not stand *his ground*,

The one who is swift of foot will not escape,

Nor will he who rides the horse save his life [from the invading army].

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

*The Importance of Being in
Agreement* with God **I** remember
learning Amos 3:3 in the *Amplified
Classic* translation I was using at
the time, which read: “Do two
walk together except they make an
appointment *and have agreed?*”
(emphasis mine).

There are many people who set a time to walk together literally each morning or evening. The only way they know when to show up is that they have made an appointment to meet and have agreed to do so. If we want to walk with God, we need to make an appointment, meaning we need to discipline ourselves to spend time with Him, and to live in agreement with

Him.

We can only agree with God when we know what He thinks and says. We cannot think or speak as He does unless we know what He has said. That is why it is so important to diligently study His Word. It is not possible for God to say one thing and do another. He cannot lie, and He is always faithful to perform what He has promised. Satan is a liar and seeks to deceive us through his lies. Only by knowing and applying the truth, which is God's Word, will we be set free (see John 8:31–32).

God's Word is not only truth, it is also filled with wisdom. It is full of life and power. I have studied His Word diligently for more than forty years, and it has renewed my mind and changed my life. I have made regular appointments to spend time with God and have learned how to speak in agreement with His Word. I am enjoying the fulfilled promises of God in my life, and I know that you can do the same. His promises are for whosoever will believe!

I know many people who have the same testimony I have about God's Word. But I also know many who, although they would like their lives to improve, won't discipline themselves to study and learn or speak God's Word. Whether we will know and speak God's Word is our choice and only we can make it.

Is it time for you to make an appointment with God and begin to agree with Him? The power of agreement is amazing. Think of what happens when you agree with another human being and the two of you move forward together with your plan. Agreeing with other people increases our abilities exponentially, so just imagine what happens when we agree with God.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord God, I want to spend as much time with You as possible and to know Your Word so I can agree with what You think and say. I know that as I agree with You, my life will be blessed. In Jesus' name. Amen.

¹⁶“Even the bravest among the warriors shall flee naked on that day,” says the LORD.

3 HEAR THIS word that the LORD has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt: ²“I have known [chosen, cared for, and loved] only you of all the families of the earth; Therefore I shall punish you for all your wickedness.”

³Do two men walk together unless they have made an appointment?

⁴Does a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey?
Does a young lion growl from his den if he has not captured *something*?

⁵Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground when there is no bait in it?
Does a trap spring up from the ground when it has caught nothing at all? [Of course not! So it is that Israel has earned her impending judgment.]

⁶If a trumpet is blown in a city [warning of danger] will not the people tremble?
If a disaster *or* misfortune occurs in a city has not the LORD caused it?

⁷Surely the Lord GOD does nothing Without revealing His secret plan [of the judgment to come]
To His servants the prophets. [Rev 10:7]

⁸The lion has roared! Who will not fear?

The Lord GOD has spoken [to the prophets]! Who can but prophesy? [Acts 4:20; 5:20, 29; 1 Cor 9:16]

⁹Proclaim on the fortresses in Ashdod (Philistia) and on the citadels in the land of Egypt, and say, “Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria, and see the great confusion within her and the oppressions *and* abuse of authority in her midst.

¹⁰“For they do not know how to do right,” says the LORD, “these who store up violence and devastation [like treasures] in their strongholds.”

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Help me, Lord, to always keep
my appointments with You
and to stay in agreement with
You.*

• *adapted from Amos 3:3*

POWERPOINT

Amos 3:7 says that God does not do anything without revealing it to His servants the prophets. Some people believe that God only spoke to the specific individuals the Bible names as prophets, but the truth is that God can speak to any believer at any time. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God wants to speak to you on a One-to-one basis every day. He wants you to hear His voice and follow as He leads you step-by-step into all the good things He has in store for you.



¹¹Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, “An adversary (Assyria), even one surrounding the land, Shall pull down your strength from you

And your fortresses will be looted.”

¹²Thus says the LORD,

“Just as the shepherd snatches from the mouth of the lion a couple of legs or a piece of the [sheep’s] ear [to prove to the owner that he has not stolen the animal], So will the [remaining] children of Israel living in Samaria be snatched away With the corner of a bed and [part of] the damask covering of a couch.

¹³“Hear and testify against the house of Jacob,”

Says the Lord GOD, the God of hosts,

¹⁴“On that day when I punish Israel’s transgressions,

I shall also punish the altars of Bethel [with their golden calves];

And the horns of the altar shall be cut off

And fall to the ground.

¹⁵“And I shall tear down the winter house with the summer

house; And the houses of ivory shall also perish

And the great houses shall come to an end,”

Says the LORD.

4 HEAR THIS word, you [well-fed, pampered] cows (women) of Bashan who are on the mountain of Samaria, Who oppress the poor, who crush the needy,

Who say to their husbands, “Bring [the wine] now, and let us drink!” [Ps 22:12; Ezek 39:18]

²The Lord GOD has sworn [an oath] by His holiness That,

“Behold, the days are coming upon you

When they shall take you away with meat hooks,
And the last of you with fish hooks. [Ps 89:35]

3“ And you shall go out through the breaches [made in the
city wall], Every woman straight before her [unable to turn
aside],
And you shall be cast to Harmon,”
Says the LORD.

4“ Come to Bethel [where the golden calf is] and transgress;
In Gilgal [where idols are worshiped] multiply
transgression;
Bring your sacrifices every morning,
Your tithes every three days!

5“ Offer [by burning] a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which
is leavened, And [boastfully] proclaim freewill offerings,
announce them.
For this you so love to do, O children of Israel!”
Says the Lord GOD.

6“ I also gave you cleanness of teeth [because of the famine]
in all your cities And lack of bread in all your places,
Yet you have not returned to Me [in repentance],” says the
LORD.

7“ Furthermore, I withheld the rain from you
When *there were* still three months until the harvest.
Then I would send rain on one city,
And on another city I would not send rain;
One piece of ground was rained on,
While the part not rained on would dry up.

- 8“So [the people of] two or three cities would stagger into one city to drink water, But would not be satisfied; Yet you have not returned to Me [in repentance],” says the LORD.
- 9“I wounded you with blight [from the hot, blasting east wind] and with mildew; And the caterpillar devoured Your many gardens and vineyards, your fig trees and your olive trees; Yet you have not returned to Me [in repentance],” says the LORD.
- 10“I sent a plague among you like [those of] Egypt; I killed your young men with the sword and I captured your horses, I made the stench of your camp rise up into your nostrils; Yet you have not returned to Me [in repentance],” says the LORD. [2 Kin 8:12; 13:3, 7]
- 11“I overthrew *and* destroyed [some among] you, as [I, your] God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, And you were [rescued] like a log pulled out of the flame; Yet you have not returned to Me [in repentance],” says the LORD. [Gen 19:24, 25; Is 13:19; Jer 49:18]
- 12“Therefore this is what I shall do to you, O Israel; Because I will do this to you, Prepare to meet your God [in judgment], O Israel!”
- 13For behold, He who forms the mountains and creates the wind
And declares to man what are His thoughts,
He who makes the dawn into darkness

And treads on the heights of the earth—
The LORD God of hosts is His name. [Ps 139:2; Dan 2:28]

5 HEAR THIS word which I take up for you as a funeral song,
O house of Israel:

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Search Diligently for God

God has said, “Seek Me [search diligently for Me and regard Me as more essential than food] so that you may live” (Amos 5:4). Seeking God is an absolute necessity in our walk with Him; it is vital for spiritual progress. What exactly does it mean to seek God? The word “seek” actually means “to crave, pursue, and go after with all your might.”

One way we seek God is to think about Him—to meditate on His Word, His ways, what He has done for us, how good He is, and how much we love Him. Take some time right now and think about three things that God has done for you. Thinking about His goodness will cause us to want to spend more and more time with Him simply because of Who He is, not because of what He can do for us. As you seek Him regularly, you will come to know Him more intimately and realize that He is your loving Father Who cares about every aspect of your life.

²She has fallen, she will not rise again—

The virgin Israel.

She lies neglected on her land;

There is no one to raise her up.

³For thus says the Lord GOD, “The city which goes forth a thousand *strong*

Will have a hundred left,

And the one which goes forth a hundred *strong*

Will have ten left to the house of Israel.”

⁴For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel, “Seek Me [search diligently for Me and regard Me as more essential than food] so that you may live. [2 Chr 15:2; Jer 29:13]

⁵“But do not resort to Bethel [to worship the golden calf]
Nor enter [idolatrous] Gilgal,
Nor cross over to Beersheba [and its idols];
For Gilgal will certainly go into captivity *and* exile,
And Bethel will come to nothing.

⁶“Seek the LORD [search diligently for Him and long for Him as your most essential need] so that you may live, Or He will rush down like a [devouring] fire, O house of Joseph, And there will be no one to quench the flame for [idolatrous] Bethel,

⁷“For those [shall be consumed] who turn justice into wormwood (bitterness) And cast righteousness down to the earth.”

⁸He who made the [cluster of stars called] Pleiades and [the constellation] Orion, Who turns deep darkness into the morning
And darkens the day into night,
Who calls for the waters of the sea
And pours them out on the surface of the earth,
The LORD is His name.

⁹It is He who causes [sudden] destruction to flash forth on the strong

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



I will seek You, Lord. I will search diligently for You as my most essential need, so that I may live.

• adapted from Amos 5:6

So that destruction comes on the fortress.

- ¹⁰They hate the one who reprimands [the unrighteous] in the [court held at the city] gate [regarding him as unreasonable and rejecting his reprimand], And they detest him who speaks [the truth] with integrity *and* honesty.
- ¹¹Therefore, because you impose heavy rent on the poor And demand a tribute (food-tax) of grain from them, Though you have built [luxurious] houses of square stone, You will not live in them; You have planted beautiful vineyards, but you will not drink their wine.
- ¹²For I know your transgressions are many and your sins are great (shocking, innumerable), You who distress the righteous and take bribes, And turn away from the poor in the [court of the city] gate [depriving them of justice].
- ¹³Therefore, he who is prudent *and* has insight will keep silent at such a [corrupt and evil] time, for it is an evil time [when people will not listen to truth and will disregard those of good character].

¹⁴ Seek (long for, require) good and not evil, that you may live;
And so may the LORD God of hosts be with you, Just as
you have said!

¹⁵ Hate evil and love good,
And establish justice in the [court of the city] gate.
Perhaps the LORD God of hosts
Will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph [that is, those
who remain after God's judgment].

¹⁶ Therefore, thus says the LORD God of hosts, the Lord,
“There is wailing in all the public plazas,
And in all the streets they say, ‘Alas! Alas!’
And they call the farmers to mourning [for those who have
died]
And professional mourners to wailing.

Speak God's Word

*I will seek good and not evil,
that I may live. So may the
Lord of hosts be with me. I
will hate evil, love good, seek
to establish justice, and pray
that the Lord God will be
gracious to me.*

| adapted from AMOS 5:14–15 |

- ¹⁷“And in all vineyards *there is* wailing,
For I will pass through your midst [in judgment],” says the
LORD. [Ex 12:12]
- ¹⁸Woe (judgment is coming) to you who desire the day of the
LORD [expecting rescue from the Gentiles]!
Why would you want the day of the LORD?
It is darkness (judgment) and not light [and rescue and
prosperity];
- ¹⁹It is as if a man runs from a lion [escaping one danger]
And a bear meets him [so he dies anyway],
Or goes home, and leans with his hand against the wall
And a snake bites him.
- ²⁰Will not the day of the LORD be darkness, instead of light,

Even very dark with no brightness in it?

21“*I hate, I despise and reject your [sacred] feasts, And I do not take delight in your solemn assemblies.*

22“*Even though you offer Me your burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them;
And I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fattened animals.*

23“*Take the noise of your songs away from Me [they are an irritation]!*

I shall not even listen to the melody of your harps.

24“*But let justice run down like waters*

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, let justice run down like
waters and righteousness like
an ever-flowing stream,
flowing abundantly.*

• *adapted from Amos 5:24*

And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream [flowing abundantly].

²⁵“Did you bring Me sacrifices and grain offerings during those forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? [Certainly not!]

²⁶“You carried along your king Sikkuth and Kayyun [your man-made gods of Saturn], your images of your star-god which you made for yourselves [but you brought Me none of the appointed sacrifices].

²⁷“Therefore, I will send you to go into exile far beyond Damascus,” says the LORD, whose name is the God of hosts. [Acts 7:42, 43]

6 WOE (JUDGMENT is coming) to those who are at ease *and* carefree in Zion (Judah) And to those on the mountain of Samaria who feel secure,

The distinguished men of the foremost of nations,
To whom the house of Israel comes. [Luke 6:24, 25]

²Go over to Calneh [in Babylonia] and look,
And from there go [north of Damascus] to the great city of Hamath;

Then go down to Gath of the Philistines.
Are they better than these kingdoms [of yours],
Or is their territory greater than yours?

³Do you put off the day of punishment,
Yet cause the seat of violence to come near?

⁴Those who lie on [luxurious] beds of ivory And lounge
around out on their couches,
And eat lambs from the flock
And calves from the midst of the stall,

⁵Who improvise to the sound of the harp—
Like David they have composed songs for themselves—[1
Chr 23:5]

⁶Who drink wine from sacrificial bowls
And anoint themselves with the finest oils [reflecting their
unrestrained celebration]; Yet they are not grieved over
the ruin of Joseph (Israel). [Gen 49:22, 23]

⁷Therefore, they will now go into exile with the first of the
captives,

POWERPOINT

Amos 6:8 says that God loathes and rejects self-centered arrogance, or pride. He hates it because it prevents us from coming to Him and asking for help. Our not turning to Him keeps us from knowing Him and loving Him, and it blocks His blessings in our lives. In contrast, God gives grace (undeserved favor) to the humble (see James 4:6).



And the cultic revelry *and* banqueting of those who lounge around [on their luxurious couches] will pass away.

⁸The Lord GOD has sworn [an oath] by Himself—the LORD God of hosts, says: “I loathe *and* reject the [self-centered] arrogance of Jacob (Israel), And I hate his palaces *and* citadels;

Therefore, I shall hand over the [idolatrous] city [of Samaria] with all that it contains [to the Assyrian invaders].”

⁹And it shall come to pass that if there remain ten men in one house, they shall die [by the pestilence that comes with war].

¹⁰Then one’s uncle, or his undertaker, shall come to bring the [disease-infected] body out of the house, [to cremate it], and he will say to another in the farthest part of the house, “Is there anyone else with you?” And that one will say, “No one.” Then he will respond, “Hush! Keep quiet! For the name of the

LORD is not to be mentioned [even casually, for fear that we might invoke even more punishment].” [1 Sam 31:12]

¹¹For behold, the LORD is going to command that the great house be smashed to pieces and the small house to fragments.

¹²Do horses run on rocks?

Do men plow rocks with oxen? [Of course not!]

Yet you have turned justice into poison

And the fruit of righteousness into wormwood (bitterness),

¹³You who [self-confidently] rejoice in Lo-debar (Nothing),

Who say, “Have we not by our own strength taken

Karnaim (Strength) for ourselves?”

¹⁴“For behold, I am going to stir up a nation against you,

O house of Israel,” says the LORD, the God of hosts, “And

they will afflict *and* torment you [to the entire limits of Israel] from the entrance of Hamath [in the north]

To the brook of the Arabah [in the south].”

7 THUS THE Lord GOD showed me [a vision], and behold, He was forming a swarm of locusts when the spring crop began to sprout. And behold, the spring crop was after the king’s mowing.

²And when the locusts had finished eating the plants of the land, then I said, “O Lord GOD, please forgive!

How can Jacob stand,

For he is so small [that he cannot endure this]?”

³The LORD revoked this sentence.

“It shall not take place,” said the LORD.

⁴Thus the Lord GOD showed me, and behold, the Lord GOD called for punishment with fire, and it devoured the great deep [underground sources of water] and began to consume the land.

⁵Then I said,

“O Lord GOD, please stop!

How can Jacob stand,

For he is so small [that he cannot endure this]?”

⁶The LORD revoked this sentence.

“This also shall not be,” said the Lord GOD.

⁷Thus He showed me [a vision], and behold, the Lord was standing by a vertical wall with a plumb line in His hand [to determine if the wall was straight or if it needed to be destroyed]. [2 Kin 21:13; Is 34:11]

⁸The LORD said to me, “Amos, what do you see?” And I said, “A plumb line.” Then the Lord said, “Behold, I am setting a plumb line [as a standard]

Among My people Israel [showing the defectiveness of the nation, requiring judgment].

I shall not spare them any longer. [The door of mercy is shut.]

⁹“And the [idolatrous] high places of Isaac (Israel) will be devastated *and* deserted, And the sanctuaries of Israel will be in ruins.

Then I shall rise up against the house of Jeroboam with the sword [and destroy the monarchy].”

¹⁰Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel [site of the golden calf shrine], sent *word* to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, “Amos

has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is unable to endure all his words. [1 Kin 12:31, 32]

¹¹“For in this way Amos has said, ‘Jeroboam will die by the sword and Israel will certainly go from its land into exile.’”

¹²Then Amaziah said to Amos, “Go, you seer, run for your life [from Israel] to the land of Judah [your own country] and eat bread and live as a prophet there!

¹³“But do not prophesy any longer at Bethel, for it is the king’s sanctuary and a royal residence.” [Luke 10:10–12]

¹⁴Then Amos replied to Amaziah, “I am not a prophet [by profession], nor am I a prophet’s son; I am a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs.

¹⁵“But the LORD took me as I followed the flock and the LORD said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to My people Israel.’

¹⁶“Now therefore, listen to the word of the LORD: You say, ‘You shall not prophesy against Israel nor shall you speak against the house of Isaac.’

¹⁷“Therefore, thus says the LORD, ‘Your wife shall become a prostitute in the city [when the Assyrians capture Samaria] and your sons and your daughters shall fall by the sword, and your land shall be divided by a measuring line; you yourself shall die in an unclean *and* defiled [pagan] land, and Israel shall certainly go from its land into exile.’”

8 **THUS THE Lord GOD** showed me [a vision], and behold, *there was* a basket of [overripe] summer fruit.

²And He said, “Amos, what do you see?” And I said, “A

basket of summer fruit.” Then the LORD said to me, “The end has come for My people Israel. I will spare them no longer [for the nation is ripe for judgment].

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Find Your Worth in the Right Place Amaziah, the priest who served in the court of King Jeroboam, falsely accused the prophet Amos of conspiracy in order to frighten him into silence and to get rid of him. There was great simplicity and dignity in Amos's reply: "The LORD took me as I followed the flock and the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to My people Israel'" (Amos 7:15).

He knew his divine call and would not be intimidated.

There are many voices that try to shape the way we think about every part of ourselves—our appearance, our abilities, our potential, and our identity. But those voices can be misleading. The opinions of the world, the accusations of our adversary, and our own thoughts and feelings don't define us.

The Bible teaches that a believer's true identity, worth, and value are found in Christ. Our confidence is in Him (see Phil. 3:3). It doesn't matter what people think or say, or what our circumstances look like. We are defined by the fact that God loves and accepts us completely. To walk with God, we need to be in agreement with Him, and that involves learning to think as He thinks and to say what He says.

When we fail to know our worth and value as children of God, we can end up in emotional prisons of fear, self-hatred, poor self-image, lack of confidence, and many other unpleasant things. Jesus came to announce the release of the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound (see Isa. 61:1), but we must be willing to walk out of the prison and learn to think about ourselves the way God thinks about us!

When we know who we are in Christ, our value is secured for all time and cannot be shaken. You are not loved because you are valuable—you are valuable because you are loved. Perhaps you have learned to be your own worst enemy, but it is time now to be your own best friend.

We can know within ourselves who we are as children of

God. And when we do, nothing can ever make us feel worthless and devalued. Meditate on this today: God loves you! Think about that long enough, and you will start to believe it, and when that happens, you will begin to know how truly powerful you are in Him.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Loving Father in heaven, forgive me for allowing so many voices other than Yours to try to shape my identity and worth. I thank You, Lord Jesus, for releasing me from prison and giving me a brand-new identity in You. I am Yours! Amen.

³“In that day, the songs of the palace shall turn to wailing,” says the Lord GOD. “There will be many dead bodies; in [sacred] silence they will throw them everywhere.”

⁴Hear this, you who trample down the needy, and do away with the poor of the land, ⁵saying,

“When will the New Moon [festival] be over
So that we may sell grain,
And the Sabbath ended so that we may open the wheat
market,
Making the ephah [measure] smaller and the shekel bigger
[that is, selling less for a higher price]
And to cheat by falsifying the scales,

⁶So that we may buy the poor [as slaves] for silver [since they are unable to support themselves]
And the needy for a pair of sandals,
And that we may sell the leftovers of the wheat [as if it were a good grade of grain]?”

⁷The LORD has sworn [an oath] by the pride of Jacob,
“Surely I shall never forget [nor leave unpunished] any of their [rebellious] acts.

⁸“Because of this [coming judgment] will the land not quake
And everyone mourn who dwells in it?
Indeed, all of it shall rise up like the Nile,
And it will be tossed around [from the impact of judgment]
And [afterward] subside again like the Nile of Egypt.

⁹“It shall come about in that day,” says the Lord GOD, “That I

shall cause the sun to go down at noon,
And I shall darken the earth in broad daylight. [Ezek 32:7–10]

10“And I shall turn your festivals *and* feasts into mourning
And all your songs into dirges (funeral poems to be sung);
And I shall cause sackcloth to be put on everyone’s loins
And baldness on every head [shaved for mourning].
And I shall make that time like *a time of* mourning for an only son [who has died], And the end of it shall be like a bitter day.

11“Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord GOD, “When I will send hunger over the land,
Not hunger for bread or a thirst for water,
But rather [a hunger] for hearing the words of the LORD.

12“People shall stagger from sea to sea [to the very ends of the earth]
And from the north even to the east;
They will roam here and there to seek the word of the LORD [longing for it as essential for life], But they will not find it.

13“In that day the beautiful virgins
And [even the vigorous] young men shall faint from thirst.

14“Those who swear [their oaths] by the sin (guilt) of Samaria *or* Ashimah (a pagan goddess), Who say, ‘By the life of your god [the golden calf], O Dan!’
And [swear], ‘By the life of the way of [idolatrous] Beersheba,’

They shall fall and not rise again.”

9 I SAW [in a vision] the Lord standing at the altar, and He said, “Destroy the capitals (tops) of the pillars so that the thresholds will shake, And break them on the heads of all of the people!

Then I will kill the rest of them with the sword;
They will not have a fugitive who will get away,
Or a survivor who will escape.

²“Though they dig into Sheol [to hide in the deepest pit],
From there My hand will take them [for judgment];
And though they climb up to heaven [to hide in the realm of
light],
From there will I bring them down [for judgment].

³“Though they hide on the summit of [Mount] Carmel, I will
track them down and take them from there;
And though they hide from My sight on the floor of the
sea,
From there I shall command the serpent and it will bite them.

⁴“And though they go into captivity before their enemies,
From there I shall command the sword to kill them,
And I will set My eyes against them for evil (judgment,
punishment) and not for good [that is, not for correction
leading to restoration].”

⁵The Lord GOD of hosts [the Omnipotent Ruler], It is He who
touches the earth [in judgment] and it melts,
And all who dwell on it mourn [in despair and fear],

And all of it rises up like the Nile
And subsides like the Nile of Egypt;

⁶It is He who builds His upper chambers in the heavens
And has established His vaulted dome (the firmament of
heaven) over the earth, He who calls to the waters of the
sea
And pours them out on the face of the earth—
The LORD is His name.

⁷“Are you [degenerate ones] not as the [despised] sons of
Ethiopia to Me, O sons of Israel?” says the LORD.
“Have I not brought up Israel from the land of Egypt,
And the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans
(Syrians) from Kir?

⁸“Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are on the sinful
[northern] kingdom [of Israel’s ten tribes]
And I shall destroy it from the face of the earth;
But I shall not totally destroy the house of Jacob [that is,
the entire nation of Israel],”
Says the LORD.

⁹“For behold, I am commanding,
And I shall shake *and* sift the house of Israel among all
nations [and cause it to tremble]
Like *grain* is shaken in a sieve [removing the chaff],
But not a kernel [of the faithful remnant] shall fall to the
ground *and* be lost [from My sight]. [Lev 26:33; Deut
28:64; Hos 9:17]

¹⁰“All the sinners among My people will die by the sword,

Those who say [defiantly], ‘The disaster will not overtake or confront us.’

¹¹“In that day I shall raise up *and* restore the fallen tabernacle (booth) of David, And wall up its breaches [in the city walls];

I will also raise up *and* restore its ruins
And rebuild it as it was in the days of old,

¹²That they may possess the remnant of Edom (ancient enemies)

And all the nations that are called by My name,”
Says the LORD who does this. [Acts 15:15–17]

¹³“Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “When the plowman shall overtake the one who gathers the harvest, And the one who treads the grapes [shall overtake] him who sows the seed [for the harvest continues until planting time]; When the mountains will drip sweet wine And all the hills shall melt [that is, everything that was once barren will overflow with streams of blessing]. [Lev 26:5; Joel 3:18]

¹⁴“Also I shall bring back the exiles of My people Israel, And they will rebuild the deserted *and* ruined cities and inhabit them: They will also plant vineyards and drink their wine,
And make gardens and eat their fruit.

¹⁵“I will also plant them on their land,
And they shall never again be uprooted from their land Which I have given them,”

Says the LORD your God.

Obadiah

Author: | Obadiah
Date: | Between the
ninth century and the
fourth century BC

Obadiah teaches us an important lesson for the battle of the mind. The Edomites (descendants of Esau) were very proud people and were great enemies of the Israelites (descendants of Jacob). The bitter rivalry between Jacob and Esau continued between their people for generations, with the Edomites thinking that they were superior to the Israelites. The Edomites' pride deceived them, and because of their arrogance they were eventually destroyed.

When we think we have a reason to be proud, we must resist the temptation immediately, because pride in our hearts will deceive us. It causes us to think more highly of ourselves than we should, and God's Word teaches us not to do that (see Romans 12:3). Let's learn to think of ourselves with humility, so the enemy cannot use prideful thoughts against us.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM OBADIAH:

In every battle you fight, remember that the Lord is your commanding officer and He will lead you to success (see Obadiah 1).

Pride and arrogance in our hearts will deceive us, and God will bring us down (see Obadiah 3–4).

Whatever we do to others will come back to us (see Obadiah 15).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM OBADIAH:

Arise, and let us rise up... for battle [with the LORD as commander]! | Obadiah 1

The kingdom and the kingship shall be the LORD's. | Obadiah 21

THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

1 THE VISION of Obadiah.

Thus says the Lord GOD concerning Edom— We have heard a report from the LORD, And an ambassador has been sent among the nations, *saying*,

“Arise, and let us rise up against Edom for battle [with the LORD as commander]!” [Ps 137:7; Is 34:1–15; 63:1–6; Jer 49:7–22; Ezek 25:12–14]

²“Behold [Edom], I shall [humiliate you and] make you small among the nations; You are greatly despised. [Ezek 35]

³“The pride *and* arrogance of your heart have deceived you,
You who live in the clefts *and* lofty security of the rock
(Sela), Whose dwelling place is high,
Who say [boastfully] in your heart,
‘Who will bring me down to earth?’

⁴“Though you build [your nest] on high like the eagle,
Though you set your nest among the stars,
I will bring you down from there,” says the LORD.

⁵“If thieves came to you,
If robbers by night—

How you will be ruined!—
Would they not steal only until they had enough?
If grape gatherers came to you,
Would they not leave some grapes for gleaning? [Jer 49:9]
6“How Esau (Edom) shall be ransacked [by men who come to
ravage with divine approval]!

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*In every battle that I fight,
Lord, help me to remember
that You are my commander.*

• adapted from Obadiah 1

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, I pray that I will not be
proud or arrogant because
pride and arrogance will
deceive me.*

• adapted from Obadiah 3

How his hidden treasures shall be searched out!

7“All the men allied with you
Shall send you on your way to the border;
The men who were at peace with you
Shall deceive you and overpower you;
Those who eat your bread [those you trust]
Shall set a hostile ambush for you.
(There is no understanding of it.)

8“Will I not on that day,” says the LORD, “Destroy the wise
men from Edom [removing all wisdom]
And understanding from the mountain of Esau?

9“*And your mighty men shall be dismayed and demoralized,*
O Teman, So that everyone from the mountain of Esau *may*
be cut off in the slaughter.

10“Because of the violence you did against your brother
Jacob, Shame shall cover you [completely],
And you shall be cut off forever.

11“On the day that [Jerusalem was destroyed] you stood aloof

[from your brother Jacob]— On the day that strangers took his forces captive *and* carried off his wealth, And foreigners entered his gates

And cast lots for Jerusalem [dividing the city for plunder]—

You too were like one of them [collaborating with the enemy]. [Num 20:18–20; Amos 1:11, 12]

¹²“Do not gaze *and* gloat [in triumph] over your brother’s day,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Pride Is a Problem

In Obadiah 3, God says to the people of Edom, "The pride and arrogance of your heart have deceived you." Pride not only deceives us, it also produces other negative results.

When people are proud, they don't think they need God or anyone else. They become self-sufficient and self-reliant. The truth is, we all need help at times!

Pride often accuses others of what it is guilty of, but fails to see. Prideful people are so busy judging and being critical of others that their arrogance blinds them to their own mistakes and misconduct.

Pride will prevent our prayers from being answered and keep us from experiencing God's grace (see James 4:6). God only helps the humble, so we should seek to learn all we can about humility. Pride thinks more highly of itself than it should (see Rom. 12:3), and we can catch it lurking in our minds if we pay attention.

We should ask God to help us develop attitudes of humility and do everything we can, with His help, to cultivate humility in our heart. Humble people simply know that they are nothing without Jesus!

The day when his misfortune came.

Do not rejoice over the sons of Judah

In the day of their destruction;

Do not speak arrogantly [jeering and maliciously mocking]
In the day of their distress.

13“Do not enter the gate of My people
In the day of their disaster;
Yes, you, do not look [with delight] on their misery
In the day of their ruin,
And do not loot treasures
In the day of their ruin.

14“Do not stand at the crossroad
To cut down those [of Judah] who escaped;
And do not hand over [to the enemy] those [of Judah] who
survive In the day of their distress.

15“For the [judgment] day of the LORD draws near on all the
nations.

As you have done, it shall be done to you [in retribution];
Your [evil] dealings will return on your own head. [Ps
137:7–9; Is 2:10–22; Zeph 3:8–20; Zech 12:1–14; Rev
19:11–21]

16“Because just as you [Edom] drank on My holy mountain
[desecrating it in the revelry of the destroyers], So shall
all the nations drink continually [one by one, of My
wrath]; Yes, they shall drink and swallow [the full
measure of punishment]

And become as though they had never existed. [Rev 16:14–
16]

17“But on Mount Zion [in Jerusalem] there shall be
[deliverance for] those who escape, And it shall be holy
[no pagan will defile it];

And the house of Jacob shall possess their [former] possessions. [Ezek 36; Joel 2:32]

- ¹⁸“Then the house of Jacob shall be a fire
And the house of Joseph a flame [in executing God’s wrath]; But the house of Esau will be like stubble.
They (Jacob) shall set them on fire and consume them (the Edomites), So that there shall be no survivor of the house of Esau,”

For the LORD has spoken. [Ezek 25:12–14]

- ¹⁹Then *those* of the Negev shall possess the mountain of Esau, And *those* of the Shephelah [shall possess] the Philistine *plain*;

Also, [they shall] possess the fields of Ephraim and the fields of Samaria, And Benjamin *will possess* Gilead [across the Jordan River]. [Amos 9:12; Zeph 2:7]

- ²⁰And the exiles of this host of the sons (descendants) of Israel Who are *among* the Canaanites as far as Zarephath, And the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad

Shall possess the cities of the Negev.

- ²¹The deliverers shall go up on Mount Zion
To rule *and* judge the mountain of Esau,
And the kingdom *and* the kingship shall be the LORD’s.
[Zech 12:8, 9; Mal 1:2–5; Matt 24:27–30; Luke 1:31–33; Acts 15:14–17]

Jonah

Author: | Jonah

Date: | About 760
BC or after 612 BC

Jonah, who wrote the book of Jonah, faced a battle of the mind. God wanted him to do something he did not want to do—to tell the Ninevites that God would be merciful to them if they repented of their sin. Jonah wrestled with this idea because the Ninevites were Israel's enemy and he was a loyal Israelite who did not want to see the Ninevites forgiven.

When Jonah ran from God's assignment, he ended up in the belly of a great fish and went through a very difficult time before eventually being given a second chance to obey.

When God calls you to do something, even if you can think of many reasons not to do it, be prompt to obey. Running from God's plan is never a good idea, and there is much blessing in following Him.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM JONAH:

Instead of running from God (see Jonah 1:3), embrace what He wants you to do and go all the way to victory with His help.

Even in hard times, offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving and keep any vow or promise you have made to Him, and see what He will do (see Jonah 2:9).

If you have failed before, don't be afraid to try again. When God wants you to do something, He will give you a second chance (see Jonah 3:1) and show you what to do.

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM JONAH:

I called out of my trouble and distress to the LORD, and He answered me. | Jonah 2:1

When my soul was fainting within me, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to You, into Your holy temple. | Jonah 2:7

You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and great in lovingkindness, and [when sinners turn to You] You revoke the [sentence of] disaster [against them]. | Jonah 4:2

THE BOOK OF JONAH

1 NOW THE word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

²“Go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim [judgment] against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.” [Gen 10:11, 12]

³But Jonah ran away to Tarshish to escape from the presence of the LORD [and his duty as His prophet]. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish [the most remote of the Phoenician trading cities]. So he paid the fare and went down into the ship to go with them to Tarshish away from the presence of the LORD. [Gen 4:16; Job 1:12; 2:7]

⁴But the LORD hurled a great wind toward the sea, and there was a violent tempest on the sea so that the ship was about to break up. [Ps 107:23–27]

⁵Then the sailors were afraid, and each man cried out to his god; and to lighten the ship [and diminish the danger] they threw the ship’s cargo into the sea. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship and had lain down and was sound asleep.

⁶So the captain came up to him and said, “How can you

stay asleep? Get up! Call on your god! Perhaps your god will give a thought to us so that we will not perish.”

⁷And they said to another, “Come, let us cast lots, so we may learn who is to blame for this disaster.” So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.

⁸Then they said to him, “Now tell us! Who is to blame for this disaster? What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country?”

⁹So he said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and I [reverently] fear *and* worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”

¹⁰Then the men became extremely frightened and said to him, “How could you do this?” For the men knew that he was running from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



God, I pray that I will not be like Jonah and try to run away from Your presence and will for my life. Help me to

*always run to You instead of
from You.*

• adapted from Jonah 1:3

¹¹Then they said to him, “What should we do to you, so that the sea will become calm for us?”—for the sea was becoming more and more violent.

¹²Jonah said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that it is because of me that this great storm *has come* upon you.”

¹³Nevertheless, the men rowed hard [breaking through the waves] to return to land, but they could not, because the sea became even more violent [surging higher] against them.

¹⁴Then they called on the LORD and said, “Please, O LORD, do not let us perish because of taking this man’s life, and do not make us accountable for innocent blood; for You, O LORD, have done as You pleased.”

¹⁵So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging.

¹⁶Then the men greatly feared the LORD, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.

¹⁷Now the LORD had prepared (appointed, destined) a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights. [Matt 12:40]

2 THEN JONAH prayed to the LORD his God from the

stomach of the fish,

²and said,

“I called out of my trouble *and* distress to the LORD,

And He answered me;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Don't Run!

There are several examples in the Bible of godly men and women, such as Jonah (see Jon. 1:3), who ran from their circumstances, from their calls and assignments, or from God's will. Without fail, they all ended up back at the places from which they originally tried to escape. Their stories prove that we never really get away from things by running from them. The truth is, God's plan continues to chase us, and the only way we can be free is to stop trying to avoid it, turn and embrace it boldly, and go all the way through to victory with God's help.

Jonah was a mighty prophet of God who did not want to do what God was telling him to do and ran in the opposite direction of where God told him to go. He ended up in a very bad situation and eventually cried out to God for help (see Jon. 2:9). In response, God sent Jonah back to the same place and with the same instructions as He had given him before he disobeyed and invited such misery into his life (see Jon. 3:2).

No matter what we think, the simple truth is that God is wiser than we are, and our doing things His way is always the best policy. We cannot ignore that truth and go our own way, because we will ultimately come face-to-face with the consequences of our choices.

Thank God that it is never too late to begin again! Jonah

repented of his sin, received God's mercy, and was given a fresh start to fulfill God's plan for him. The same principle applies to you and me.

Out of the belly of Sheol I cried for help,
And You heard my voice. [Ps 120:1; 130:1; 142:1; Lam 3:55–58]

³“For You cast me into the deep,
Into the [deep] heart of the seas,
And the currents surrounded *and* engulfed me;
All Your breakers and billowing waves passed over me. [Ps 42:7]

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Lord, in times of trouble and distress I will call to You, and You will answer me. When I cry for help, You will hear my voice.

• *adapted from Jonah 2:2*

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- 4“Then I said, ‘I have been cast out of Your sight.
Nevertheless I will look again toward Your holy temple.’ [Ps
31:22]
- 5“‘The waters surrounded me, to the point of death.
The great deep engulfed me,
Seaweed was wrapped around my head. [Ps 69:1; Lam 3:54]
- 6“‘I descended to the [very] roots of the mountains.
The earth with its bars closed behind me [bolting me in]
forever,
Yet You have brought up my life from the pit (death), O
LORD my God.
- 7“‘When my soul was fainting within me,
I remembered the LORD,
And my prayer came to You,
Into Your holy temple.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Choose To Thank and Praise God

In Jonah 2:9, after a prayer for help, Jonah chose to thank and praise God. Praise is a narration or a tale in which we recount the good qualities about an individual; in this case, the good qualities of God. We should praise and thank the Lord continually, throughout the day. We should praise Him for His mighty works, the wonders He has created, and even the works of grace He has yet to do in our lives.

A sacrifice of praise means to offer thanks and praise to God even when we do not feel like doing so. We should speak freely in praise of God's goodness and mercy, His lovingkindness and grace, and His long-suffering and patient nature in the hard times as well as in the good times. While we are waiting to see the fulfillment of our prayers, we are exhorted to "at all times offer up to God a sacrifice of praise, which is the fruit of lips that thankfully acknowledge and confess and glorify His name" (Heb. 13:15).

It is not our responsibility to worry and fret or try to take situations into our own hands when they should be left to Him alone. Rather, our responsibility and privilege is to cast our care upon the Lord, trust Him, pray without worry or anxiety, avoid the works of the flesh, continue in steadfast obedience, bear good fruit, and continually offer up to God a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving as Jonah did.

⁸“Those who regard *and* follow worthless idols
Turn away from their [living source of] mercy *and*
lovingkindness.

⁹“But [as for me], I will sacrifice to You
With the voice of thanksgiving;
I shall pay that which I have vowed.
Salvation is from the LORD!”

¹⁰So the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah
up onto the dry land.

3 NOW THE word of the LORD came to Jonah the second
time, saying,

²“Go to Nineveh the great city and declare to it the
message which I am going to tell you.”

³So Jonah went to Nineveh in accordance with the word of
the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three
days’ walk [about sixty miles in circumference].

⁴Then on the first day’s walk, Jonah began to go through
the city, and he called out and said, “Forty days more [remain]
and [then] Nineveh will be overthrown!”

⁵The people of Nineveh believed *and* trusted in God; and
they proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth [in penitent
mourning], from the greatest even to the least of them.

⁶When word reached the king of Nineveh [of Jonah’s
message from God], he rose from his throne, took off his robe,
covered himself with sackcloth and sat in the dust [in
repentance].

⁷He issued a proclamation and it said, “In Nineveh, by the decree of the king and his nobles: No man, animal, herd, or flock is to taste anything. They are not to eat or drink water.

⁸“But both man and animal must be covered with sackcloth; and every one is to call on God earnestly *and* forcefully that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence that is in his hands.

⁹“Who knows, God may turn [in compassion] and relent and withdraw His burning anger (judgment) so that we will not perish.” [Joel 2:13, 14]

¹⁰When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God [had compassion and] relented concerning the disaster which He had declared that He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.

4 BUT IT greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry.

²He prayed to the LORD and said, “O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still in my country? That is why I ran to Tarshish, because I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and great in lovingkindness, and [when sinners turn to You] You revoke the [sentence of] disaster [against them]. [Ex 34:6]

³“Therefore now, O LORD, just take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.”

⁴Then the LORD said, “Do you have a good reason to be angry?”

POWERPOINT

Jonah 4:2 is a beautiful prayer about God's compassion (which is His mercy), grace, and love. The understanding of mercy, grace, forgiveness, and the unconditional love of God is the foundation of everything else in our relationship with and service to God. It is vitally important for us to be deeply rooted in God's unconditional love, knowing with certainty that His attitude toward us is merciful. God's mercy is a gift. There is nothing we can do to earn or deserve it. It can only be received by faith. Thank God for His mercy and compassion today!



⁵Then Jonah went out of the city and sat east of it. There he made himself a shelter and sat under its shade so that he

could see what would happen in the city.

⁶So the LORD God prepared a plant and it grew up over Jonah, to be a shade over his head to spare him from discomfort. And Jonah was extremely happy about [the protection of] the plant.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

A Heart That Wants To Please God

Anyone who loves God wants to please Him. Simply having the desire to please God pleases Him. A desire to please God is necessary—it motivates us to seek His will in all things. People who have a deep desire to please God may not perform perfectly all the time, but they keep pressing forward and always have the attitude of wanting to improve.

In 2 Chronicles 16:9, it says that God is searching to and for someone whose heart is perfect toward Him. Jonah 3:10 tells us that “God saw” that the people of Nineveh had turned from their wicked ways, and He did not bring judgment upon them. The Bible does not say God is looking for someone with a perfect performance, but rather someone with a perfect heart—a heart that desires to please Him.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Anger Does Not Have To Become Sin

When the people of Nineveh repented, Jonah became so angry that the Lord questioned him, “Do you have a good reason to be angry?” (Jon. 4:4). Being a person of faith does not mean you will never have negative or ungodly feelings. We will experience feelings at times that need to be dealt with, and we will become angry under certain circumstances, but we can always exercise our faith in God and ask Him to help us, which Jonah failed to do. We can live beyond our feelings, rather than let them control our lives.

The feeling of anger does not have to become sin if we realize we are being tempted by the devil and we resist him. Pray and talk to God about it, and lean on His strength, choosing to act on His Word and not on how we feel. The Bible says be angry and do not sin (see Eph. 4:26), which literally means we can feel angry about an injustice. If we deal with it properly, it will not become sin.

⁷But God prepared a worm when morning dawned the next day, and it attacked the plant and it withered.

⁸When the sun came up God prepared a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he fainted and he wished to die, and said, “It is better for me to die than to live.”

⁹Then God said to Jonah, “Do you have a good reason to be angry about [the loss of] the plant?” And he said, “I have a [very] good reason to be angry, angry enough to die!”

¹⁰Then the LORD said, “You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work and which you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight.

¹¹“Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 [innocent] persons, who do not know *the difference* between their right and left hand [and are not yet accountable for sin], as well as many [blameless] animals?”

Micah

Author: | Micah

Date: | Between 704
BC and 696 BC

During the time of the prophet Micah's ministry in Judah, the nation was suffering from a crisis in leadership. Both political and spiritual leaders lacked honor for God, and they made unreasonable demands on the people. In this context of poor leadership, Micah stresses several important themes, including: God's faithfulness, compassion, and mercy; holiness; refusal to tolerate injustice; the rewards of waiting on God; restoration; and hope. Micah also includes several Messianic prophecies.

As we focus on learning to think the way God wants us to think, an important verse to remember from Micah is this: "Do not rejoice over me [amid my tragedies], O my enemy! Though I fall, I will rise; though I sit in the darkness [of distress], the LORD is a light for me" (Micah 7:8).

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM MICAH:

God wants to teach you about His ways so that you can walk in His paths (see Micah 4:2).

You can overcome insecurity and walk securely by trusting in the Lord, the true God (see Micah 4:5).

Jesus, the Messiah, is your peace (see Micah 5:5).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM MICAH:

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you except to be just, and to love [and diligently practice] kindness (compassion), and to walk humbly with your God [setting aside any overblown sense of importance or self-righteousness]. | Micah 6:8

But as for me, I will look expectantly for the LORD and with confidence in Him I will keep watch; I will wait [with confident expectation] for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me. | Micah 7:7

He will bring me out to the light, and I will behold His [amazing] righteousness and His remarkable deliverance. | Micah 7:9

THE BOOK OF
MICAH

1 THE WORD of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw [through divine revelation] concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

²Hear, O peoples, all of you;
Listen closely, O earth and all that is in it,
And let the Lord GOD be witness [giving a testimony of the judgment] against you, The Lord from His holy temple [in the heavens]. [1 Kin 22:28]

³For behold, the LORD is coming down from His place He shall come down and tread [in judgment] on the high places of the earth. [Zech 14:3, 4; Mal 4:2, 3; Matt 24:27–30; Rev 1:7; 19:11–16]

⁴The mountains shall melt under Him
And the valleys shall be split
Like wax before the fire,
Like waters poured down a steep place.

⁵All this is because of the rebellion *and* apostasy of Jacob
And for the sins of the house of Israel (the Northern

Kingdom).

What is the rebellion *and* apostasy of Jacob?

Is it not [the abandonment of God in order to worship the idols of] Samaria?

What are the high places [of idolatry] in Judah (the Southern Kingdom)?

Are they not Jerusalem [the capital and center of corruption]?

⁶Therefore I [the LORD] shall make Samaria a heap of ruins
[and of stones and arable land] in the open country, A
place for planting vineyards;

And I will pour her stones down into the ravine

And lay bare her foundations. [2 Kin 19:25; Ezek 13:14]

⁷All her idols shall be broken in pieces,
All her earnings [from her idolatry] shall be burned with fire,
And all her images I shall make desolate;
For from the earnings of a prostitute she collected them,
And to the earnings of a prostitute they shall return.

⁸Because of this I [Micah] must lament (mourn over with expressions of grief) and wail, I must go barefoot and naked [without outer garments as if robbed]; I must wail like the jackals

And lament [with a loud, mournful cry] like the ostriches.

⁹For Samaria's wound is incurable,
For it has come to Judah;
The enemy has reached the gate of my people,
Even to Jerusalem.

- ¹⁰Announce it not in Gath [in Philistia],
Weep not at all [and in this way betray your grief to
Gentiles]; In Beth-le-aphrah (House of Dust) roll in the
dust [among your own people].
- ¹¹Go on your way [into exile—stripped of beauty, disarmed],
inhabitants of Shaphir (Beautiful), in shameful nakedness.
The inhabitant of Zaanan (Go Out) does not go out [of the
house]; The wailing of Beth-ezel (House of Removal) will
take away from you its support.
- ¹²For the inhabitant of Maroth (Bitterness)
Writhes in pain [at its losses] and waits anxiously for good,
Because a catastrophe has come down from the LORD
To the gate of Jerusalem.
- ¹³Harness the chariot to the team of horses [to escape the
invasion], O inhabitant of Lachish— She was the
beginning of sin
To the Daughter of Zion (Jerusalem)—
Because in you were found
The rebellious acts of Israel.
- ¹⁴Therefore you will give parting gifts On behalf of
Moresbeth-gath (Micah's home);
The houses of Achzib (Place of Deceit) will become a
deception To the kings of Israel.
- ¹⁵Moreover, I will bring on you
The one who takes possession,
O inhabitant of Mareshah (Prominent Place).
The glory (nobility) of Israel will enter Adullam [seeking
refuge]. [1 Sam 22:1]

¹⁶Make yourself bald [in mourning]—shave off your hair For
the children of your delight;
Remain as bald as the eagle,
For your children will be taken from you into exile.

2 WOE (JUDGMENT is coming) to those who devise
wickedness And plot evil on their beds!

When morning comes, they practice evil
Because it is in the power of their hands.

²They covet fields and seize them,
And houses, and take them away.
They oppress *and* rob a man and his house,
A man and his inheritance. [Is 5:8; Ex 20:17; Lev 25:23ff.]

³Therefore, thus says the LORD, “Behold, I am planning
against this family a disaster (exile) [Like a noose] from
which you cannot remove your necks;
Nor will you be able to walk haughtily *and* erect,
For it will be an evil time [of subjugation to the invaders].

⁴“On that day they shall take up a [taunting, deriding]
parable against you And wail with a doleful *and* bitter
song of mourning and say, ‘We are completely destroyed!
God exchanges the inheritance of my people;
How He removes it from me!
He divides our fields to the rebellious [our captors].’

A Prayer To

Renew Your Mind



O Lord, I know that Your words do good to those who walk uprightly.

• adapted from Micah 2:7

⁵“Therefore, you will have no one stretching a measuring line [dividing the common land]
For you by lot in the assembly of the LORD. [Rev 21:27]

⁶“Do not speak out,’ so they speak out.
But if they do not speak out concerning these things,
Reproaches will not be turned back.

⁷“Is it being said, O house of Jacob:
‘Is the Spirit of the LORD impatient?
Or are these [prophesied judgments] His doings?’
Do not My words do good
To the one walking uprightly?

⁸“But lately My people have stood up as an enemy [and
have made Me their antagonist].
You strip the ornaments off the garment

Of those unsuspecting passers-by,
Like those returned from war.

9“‘You evict the women (widows) of My people,
Each one from her pleasant house;
From her [young, fatherless] children you take away My
splendor *and* blessing forever [by putting them among
the pagans, away from Me].

10“‘Arise and depart [because the captivity is inevitable], For
this [land] is not the place of rest
Because of the defilement that brings destruction,
A painful *and* terrible destruction.

11“‘If a man walking in a false spirit [spouting deception]
Should lie and say,
‘I will prophesy to you [O Israel] of wine and liquor (greed,
sensual pleasure),’
He would be the acceptable spokesman of this people. [Jer
5:31]

12“‘I shall most certainly assemble all of you, O Jacob; I shall
surely gather the remnant of Israel.
I shall bring them together like sheep in the fold [multiplying
the nation]; Like a flock in the midst of its pasture.
The place will swarm with many people *and* hum loudly with
noise.

13“‘The breaker [the Messiah, who opens the way] shall go up
before them [liberating them].
They will break out, pass through the gate and go out;
So their King goes on before them,

The LORD at their head.” [Ex 23:20, 21; 33:14; Is 63:8, 9; Hos 3:5; Amos 9:11]

3 AND I said, “Hear now, heads of Jacob

And rulers of the house of Israel.

Is it not for you to know *and* administer justice?

²“You who hate good and love evil,

Who tear the skin off my people

And their flesh from their bones;

³You who eat the flesh of my people,

Strip off their skin from them,

Break their bones

And chop them in pieces as for the pot,

Like meat in a kettle.”

⁴Then they will cry to the LORD, But He will not answer them;

Instead, He will even hide His face from them at that time
[withholding His mercy]

Because they have practiced *and* tolerated *and* ignored evil
acts. [Is 1:15]

⁵Thus says the LORD concerning the [false] prophets who
lead my people astray; When they have *something good* to
bite with their teeth, They call out, “Peace,”

But against the one who gives them nothing to eat,

They declare a holy war.

⁶Therefore *it will* be night (tragedy) for you—without
vision, And darkness (cataclysm) for you—without

foresight.

The sun shall go down on the [false] prophets,

And the day shall become dark *and* black over them.

⁷The seers shall be ashamed

POWERPOINT

Micah was filled with God's power and Spirit, and the same privilege is available to us (see Mic. 3:8). Many of God's people live weak, powerless lives simply because they don't know that His power is already theirs and all they need to do is believe it and act upon it. All the promises of God become ours in reality through believing, and His promise of power is no different. Luke 10:19 says that God has given us power and authority over all the power the enemy possesses and that nothing shall harm us. The enemy may come against us, but if we resist him in God's power and by His Spirit, we will experience no permanent harm. See yourself as powerful and capable, not weak and incapable!



And the diviners discredited *and* embarrassed;
Indeed, they shall all cover their mouths [in shame]
Because there is no answer from God.

⁸But in fact, I am filled with power,
With the Spirit of the LORD, And with justice and might,
To declare to Jacob his transgression
And to Israel his sin.

⁹Now hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob
And rulers of the house of Israel,
Who hate *and* reject justice
And twist everything that is straight,

¹⁰Who build Zion with blood [and extortion and murder]
And Jerusalem with violent injustice.

¹¹Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe,
Her priests teach for a fee,
And her prophets foretell for money;
Yet they lean on the LORD, saying, “Is not the LORD among
us?

No tragedy *or* distress will come on us.” [Is 1:10–15]

¹²Therefore, on account of you Zion shall be plowed like a
field,
Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins,
And the mountain of the house [of the LORD] *shall become*

like a densely wooded hill. [Jer 26:17–19]

4 BUT IT shall come about in the last days That the mountain
of the house of the LORD

Shall be established as the highest *and* chief of the
mountains; It shall be above the hills,
And peoples shall flow [like a river] to it.

² And many nations shall come and say,
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the
house of the God of Jacob,
That He may teach us about His ways
And that we may walk in His paths.”
For the law shall go forward from Zion,
And the word of the LORD [the revelation about Him and
His truth] from Jerusalem.

³ And He will judge between many peoples
And render decisions for strong and distant nations.
Then they shall hammer their swords into plowshares
And their spears into pruning hooks [so that the
implements of war may become the tools of agriculture];
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Nor shall they ever again train for war. [Is 2:2–4; Joel 3:10]

⁴ Each of them shall sit [in security and peace] under his vine
And under his fig tree,
With no one to make them afraid,

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, I will come to You, that
You may teach me about Your
ways and that I may walk in
Your paths.*

• adapted from Micah 4:2

Speak God's Word

*As for me, I will walk securely
in the name of the Lord my
true God forever and ever.*

| adapted from MICAH 4:4 |

For the mouth of the [omnipotent] LORD of hosts has
spoken it. [Zech 3:10]

⁵For all the peoples [now] walk
Each in the name of his god [in a transient relationship],
As for us, we shall walk [securely]
In the name of the LORD our [true] God forever and ever.

⁶“In that day,” says the LORD, “I shall assemble the lame,
And gather the outcasts [from foreign captivity],
Even those whom I have caused pain.

⁷“I shall make the lame a [godly] remnant
And the outcasts a strong nation;
And the LORD shall reign over them in Mount Zion From
this time on and forever.

⁸“As for you [Jerusalem], tower of the flock [of Israel], Hill
and stronghold of the Daughter of Zion (Jerusalem's
inhabitants), To you the former dominion shall come,

The kingdom of the Daughter of Jerusalem [when the Messiah reigns in Jerusalem, and the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled]. [Luke 21:24]

⁹“Now, why do you cry out loudly?
Is there no king among you?
Has your counselor perished?
For agony has gripped you like a woman in childbirth.

¹⁰“Writhe in pain and labor to give birth,
O Daughter of Zion,
Like a woman in childbirth;
For now you shall go out of the city,
Live in the field,
And go to Babylon.
There you will be rescued;
There the LORD shall redeem you From the hand of your
enemies.

¹¹“Now many [conquering] nations are assembled against
you,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

True Security

In Ephesians 3:17, the apostle Paul teaches us to be deeply rooted and securely grounded in God's love. The Greek word for secure means "without anxiety." Through Jesus, you have a right to enjoy a life without anxiety. The word also means to "have full command." You can resist insecurity and not be defeated by it as you "walk [securely] in the name of the LORD our [true] God forever and ever" (Mic. 4:5).

True security doesn't depend on how much money you have, your job, the way you look, how others respond to you, or even how they treat you. Security is not based on your education, your marital status, the label inside your clothing, the car you drive, or what kind of house you live in. True security is found by trusting in Christ alone and knowing that He loves and cares for you.

Who say, 'Let her be profaned [through Gentile presence and the temple's destruction], And let our eyes gaze on and gloat over Zion.'

¹²"But they (Gentile nations) do not know the thoughts of the LORD, Nor do they understand His purpose *and* plan; For He has gathered them (Gentiles) like sheaves to the threshing floor [for destruction].

¹³"Arise and thresh, O Daughter of Zion!
For I will make your horn iron
And I will make your hoofs bronze;

That you may beat many peoples in pieces [trampling down your enemies], That you may devote to the LORD their unjust gain (pagan possessions) And their wealth to the Lord of all the earth. [Zech 12:1–8; 14:14]

5 “NOW GATHER yourself in troops, O daughter of troops; A state of siege has been placed against us.

They shall strike the ruler of Israel on the cheek with a rod (scepter).

²“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Too little to be among the clans of Judah;
From you One shall come forth for Me [who is] to be Ruler
in Israel, His goings forth (appearances) are from long
ago,
From ancient days.” [Gen 49:10; Matt 2:5–12; John 7:42]

³Therefore, He will give them up until the time
When she who is in labor has given birth to a child.
Then what is left of His kinsmen
Shall return to the children of Israel.

⁴And He shall stand and shepherd *and* guide *His flock*
In the strength of the LORD, In the majesty of the name of
the LORD His God; And they shall dwell [secure in
undisturbed peace],
Because at that time He shall be great [extending His
authority]
[Even] to the ends of the earth. [Ps 72:8; Is 40:11; Zech 9:10;
Luke 1:32, 33]

⁵This One [the Messiah] shall be our peace.

When the Assyrian invades our land
And tramples on our citadels *and* in our palaces,
Then shall we raise against him
Seven shepherds and eight princes [an overpowering force]
among men. [Is 9:6; Eph 2:14]

⁶They shall devastate the land of Assyria with the sword
and The land of Nimrod within her [own] gates.
And He (the Messiah) shall rescue us from the Assyrian (all
enemy nations) When he attacks our land
And when he tramples our territory.

⁷Then the remnant of Jacob
Shall be among many peoples
Like dew from the LORD,
Like showers on the grass [a source of blessing]
Which [come suddenly and] do not wait for man
Nor delay for the sons of men. [Ps 72:6; 110:3]

⁸The remnant of Jacob
Shall be among the nations,
In the midst of many peoples
Like a lion among the beasts of the forest,
Like a young lion [suddenly appearing] among the flocks of
sheep Which, if he passes through,
Tramples down and tears into pieces [the nations in
judgment], And there is no one to rescue.

⁹Your hand will be lifted up against your adversaries, And all
your enemies shall be cut off *and* destroyed.

10“And in that day,” says the LORD, “I will cut off your horses
from among you

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Jesus Is Our Peace

Micah 5:5 says “[the Messiah] shall be our peace,” which makes the same point as Ephesians 2:14: “For He Himself is our peace.” We can work with the Holy Spirit to live in God’s peace all the time, no matter what is going on. Because Jesus is our peace, we can refuse to live our lives anxious, upset, frustrated, aggravated, or joyless.

One way to learn to live at peace internally is to learn to identify the things that upset us. The enemy loves to lure us away from God’s peace, but he does not use the same tactics with every person. I’ve said for years, “The devil sets us up to upset us.” He knows our weak points and pressures us over and over in those areas until we lose our composure.

I encourage you to find out what your weak spots are. One of mine is hurry. I know that when I am rushed to do something or get somewhere, the enemy can frustrate me very quickly. Maybe you feel frustrated in traffic or are easily exasperated by coworkers who talk too much or do not take their job seriously. Perhaps you have a low tolerance for a messy house or little patience with people who are chronically late. Maybe you can almost feel your blood pressure rising when your computer does not do what it is supposed to do.

We need to know ourselves and understand what causes us to lose our peace. We also need to remember at all times that

And destroy your chariots [on which you depend]. [Ps 20:7, 8; Zech 9:10]

11“*I will cut off the cities of your land
And tear down all your fortifications.*

12“*I will cut off witchcrafts and sorceries from your hand, And
you shall have no more fortune-tellers.*

13“*I will also cut off your carved images
And your sacred pillars from among you,
So that you will no longer worship and bow down
To the work of your hands.*

14“*I will root out your Asherim (symbols of the goddess
Asherah) from among you And destroy your cities
[which are the centers of pagan worship]. [Deut 16:21]*

15“*And in anger and wrath I shall execute vengeance On the
nations which have not obeyed [such vengeance as they
have not known before].”*

6 HEAR NOW what the LORD is saying, “Arise, plead your
case before the mountains,

And let the hills [as witnesses] hear your voice.

2“Hear, O mountains, the indictment of the LORD, And you
enduring foundations of the earth,
For the LORD has a case (a legal complaint) against His
people, And He will dispute (challenge) Israel.

³“O My people, what have I done to you [since you have turned away from Me]?

And how have I wearied you? Answer Me.

⁴“For I brought you up from the land of Egypt
And ransomed you from the house of slavery,
And I sent before you Moses [to lead you], Aaron [the high priest], and Miriam [the prophetess].

⁵“My people, remember now
What Balak king of Moab devised [with his evil plan against Israel]

And what Balaam the son of Beor answered him [turning the curse into blessing for Israel], [Remember what the LORD did for you] from Shittim to Gilgal, So that you may know the righteous *and* saving acts [displaying the power] of the LORD.” [Num 23:7–24; 24:3–24; Josh 3:1; 4:19]

⁶With what shall I come before the LORD [to honor Him]
And bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings,
With yearling calves?

⁷Will the LORD be delighted with thousands of rams, Or with ten thousand rivers of oil?
Shall I present my firstborn for my acts of rebellion,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

⁸He has told you, O man, what is good;
And what does the LORD require of you Except to be just,
and to love [and to diligently practice] kindness

(compassion), And to walk humbly with your God [setting aside any overblown sense of importance or self-righteousness]? [Deut 10:12, 13]

⁹The voice of the LORD shall call to the city [of Jerusalem]—
And it is sound wisdom to heed [solemnly] *and* fear Your name [with awe-filled reverence]; “Hear, O tribe [the rod of punishment]. Who has appointed its time?

¹⁰“Are there not still treasures gained by wickedness In the house of the wicked,

Speak God's Word

*The Lord has showed me
what is good. And what does
the Lord require of me? To be
just; and to love and
diligently practice kindness
and compassion; and to walk
humbly with my God.*

| *adapted from* MICAH 6:8 |

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Walk Humbly

One thing the Lord requires of us is to “walk humbly with your God” (Mic. 6:8). Humility is said to be the chief virtue, and it is more than likely the most difficult virtue to grow into.

People who walk humbly are totally dependent on God for all things, and they never think more highly of themselves than they should. They don't consider themselves superior to anyone else. When God's people have a humble heart and attitude, their humility shows in how they think about and treat others as well as in the way they speak about their own lot in life.

Humility never has an attitude of entitlement and considers every blessing to be undeserved and a gift from God. It doesn't complain, criticize, or murmur about its own life. Humility waits patiently for God to change circumstances as He desires, and trusts that He will give the needed strength to endure whatever happens with a positive attitude.

And a short (inaccurate) measure [for grain] *that is* cursed?
[Deut 25:14–16]

¹¹“Can I [be guiltless and] justify deceptive scales And a bag of dishonest weights? [1 Thess 4:6]

¹²“For the rich men of the city are full of violence [of every kind]; Her inhabitants speak lies

And their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.

¹³“So also I will make you sick, striking you down, Desolating
and devastating you, because of your sins.

¹⁴“You shall eat, but you will not be satisfied,
And your emptiness shall be among you;
You will [try to] remove [your goods and those you love]
for safekeeping

But you will fail to save *anything*,
And what you do save I shall give to the sword.

¹⁵“You shall sow but you shall not reap;
You shall tread olives, but shall not anoint yourself with oil,
And [you will extract juice from] the grapes, but you shall
not drink the wine.

¹⁶“For [you have kept] the statutes of Omri [the idolatrous
king], And all the works of the [wicked] house (dynasty)
of Ahab;

And you walk in their counsels *and* policies.
Therefore, I shall hand you over for destruction *and* horror
And your [city’s] inhabitants for ridicule,
And you shall bear the rebuke *and* scorn of My people.”

7 WOE IS me (judgment is coming)! For I am Like one who
gathers the summer fruits, like one who gleans the vintage
grapes.

There is not a cluster of grapes to eat,
No first-ripe fig which my appetite craves.

²The godly person [who is faithful and loyal to God] has

perished from the earth, And there is no upright *person*
[one with good character and moral integrity] among men.
They all lie in wait to shed blood;
Each hunts the other with a net.

Speak God's Word

*I will look expectantly for the
Lord and with confidence in
Him I will keep watch; I will
wait with confident
expectation for the God of my
salvation. My God will hear
me. Though I fall, I will rise;
though I sit in the darkness of
distress, the Lord is a light for
me.*

| adapted from MICAH 7:7-8 |

³Concerning evil, both of their hands pursue it and do it
diligently *and* thoroughly; The prince asks, also the judge,
for a bribe,

And a great man speaks the [evil] desire of his soul.
So they twist the course of justice between them.

⁴The best of them is [injurious] like a briar;
The most upright is [prickly] like a thorn hedge.
The day of your watchmen [that is, the time predicted by
the prophets]
And your punishment comes;

Now shall be their confusion.

⁵Do not trust in a neighbor [because of the moral corruption in the land]; Do not have confidence in a friend.

Guard the doors of your mouth

From her who lies in your bosom. [Luke 12:51–53]

⁶For the son dishonors the father *and* treats him contemptuously, The daughter rises up [in hostility] against her mother,

The daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—

A man's enemies are the men (members) of his own household. [Matt 10:21, 35, 36; Mark 13:12, 13]

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*When I repent of my sin, Lord,
You will bring me out into the
light, and I will behold Your
amazing righteousness and
Your remarkable deliverance.*

• adapted from Micah 7:9

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, who is a God like You,
who forgives wickedness and
passes over the rebellious
acts of the remnant of Your
possession? You do not retain
Your anger forever, because
You constantly delight in
mercy and lovingkindness.*

• adapted from Micah 7:18

⁷But as for me, I will look expectantly for the LORD *and* with confidence in Him I will keep watch; I will wait [with confident expectation] for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me.

⁸Do not rejoice over me [amid my tragedies], O my enemy! Though I fall, I will rise; Though I sit in the darkness [of distress], the LORD is a light for me.

- ⁹I will bear the indignation *and* wrath of the LORD
Because I have sinned against Him,
Until He pleads my case and executes judgment for me.
He will bring me out to the light,
And I will behold His [amazing] righteousness *and* His
remarkable deliverance. [Rom 10:1–4; 11:23–27]
- ¹⁰Then my enemy [all the pagan nations] shall see it, And
shame [for despising the LORD] will cover her who said to
me, “Where is the LORD your God?”
My eyes will look on her [with satisfaction at her judgment];
Now she (unbelievers) will be trampled down
Like mud of the streets.
- ¹¹*It shall be* a day for building your walls, On that day the
boundary [of Israel] shall be [greatly] extended. [Is 33:17;
Amos 9:11]
- ¹²*It shall be* a day when the Gentiles will come to you From
Assyria and from the cities of Egypt,
And from Egypt even to the river Euphrates,
From sea to sea and from mountain to mountain.
- ¹³Yet the earth [beyond the land of Israel] shall become
desolate because of those who dwell in it, Because of the
fruit of their deeds.
- ¹⁴Shepherd *and* rule Your people with Your scepter [of
blessing], The flock of Your inheritance *and* Your
possession
Which dwells alone [separate and secure from attack] in the
forest, In the midst of a garden land.

- Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead
As in the days of old [the days of Moses and Elijah].
- ¹⁵“As in the days when you came out from the land of Egypt,
I shall show you marvelous *and* miraculous things.”
- ¹⁶The [pagan] nations shall see [God’s omnipotence in
delivering Israel] and be ashamed Of all their might
[which cannot be compared to His].
They shall put their hand on their mouth [in silent
astonishment]; Their ears shall be deaf.
- ¹⁷They shall lick the dust like a serpent;
Like crawling things of the earth
They shall come trembling out of their fortresses *and* hiding
places.
They shall turn *and* come with fear *and* dread to the LORD
our God And they shall be afraid *and* stand in awe before
You [O LORD]. [Jer 33:9]
- ¹⁸Who is a God like You, who forgives wickedness
And passes over the rebellious acts of the remnant of His
possession?
He does not retain His anger forever,
Because He [constantly] delights in mercy *and*
lovingkindness.
- ¹⁹He shall again have compassion on us;
He will subdue *and* tread underfoot our wickedness
[destroying sin’s power].
Yes, You will cast all our sins
Into the depths of the sea. [Ps 103:12]
- ²⁰You shall give truth to Jacob

And lovingkindness *and* mercy to Abraham,
As You have sworn to our forefathers
From the days of old. [Luke 1:54, 55]

POWERPOINT

One way the enemy attacks our mind is with thoughts that God is angry with us. One of the most freeing statements I can make is this: “God is not angry with you.” Surely, since God was quick to forgive people who turned away from Him completely, as is mentioned in Micah 7:18, He is also more than ready to forgive you and me of our sins.



Nahum

Author: | Nahum

Date: | Shortly
before 612 BC

The writer of the book of Nahum was a prophet named Nahum, whose name means “consolation” or “comfort.” While most of his words focused on God’s judgment against the city of Nineveh, they also communicated God’s comfort to the people of Judah.

Nahum observes that while people may seem to get away with sin for a period of time, they will eventually pay the price for it. Sin leads to judgment, and judgment will eventually come. Because of God’s great power, no one can withstand His judgment once it is set in motion. However, God does have mercy on His people. When trouble comes against us, He is our refuge, and He gives us strength to go through it all the way to victory (see Nahum 1:7).

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM NAHUM:

God will destroy evil in His timing and in His way. In the meantime, trust Him fully (see Nahum 1:2–3).

When you face trouble and don't have all the answers, take refuge in God and you will find strength to go through to victory (see Nahum 1:7).

Instead of speaking negative words to people, encourage them by sharing good news (see Nahum 1:15).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM NAHUM:

The LORD is slow to anger and great in power and He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. The LORD has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust beneath His feet. | Nahum 1:3

The LORD is good, a strength and stronghold in the day of trouble; He knows [He recognizes, cares for, and understands fully] those who take refuge and trust in Him. | Nahum 1:7

He... will pursue His enemies into darkness. | Nahum 1:8

THE BOOK OF
NAHUM

1 THE ORACLE (a burdensome message—a pronouncement from God) concerning Nineveh [the capital city of Assyria]. The book of the vision of Nahum of Elkosh [which he saw in spirit and prophesied].

²The LORD is a jealous and avenging God [protecting and demanding what is rightfully and uniquely His]; The LORD avenges and He is full of wrath.

The LORD takes vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies. [Ex 20:5]

³The LORD is slow to anger and great in power And He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished.

The LORD has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm,
And the clouds are the dust beneath His feet. [Ex 34:6, 7]

⁴He rebukes the sea and dries it up; He dries up all the rivers [illustrating His judgment].

POWERPOINT

Notice that Nahum 1:2 says God “reserves wrath for His enemies.” One of the enemy’s most powerful strategies against many believers is to cause them to believe that God is angry with them or wants to punish them for their sins or mistakes. This is not true, and it is not consistent with God’s character. The truth is that God releases His wrath on His enemies, but He showers His love on His children.



Speak God's Word

*The Lord is good, my strength
and stronghold in the day of
trouble; He knows,
recognizes, and cares for me.
He understands fully that I
take refuge and trust in Him.*

| adapted from NAHUM 1:7 |

Bashan [on the east] and [Mount] Carmel [on the west]
wither, And [in the north] the blossoms of Lebanon fade.

⁵The mountains quake before Him

And the hills melt away;

Indeed the earth is shaken by His presence—

Yes, the world and all that dwell in it.

⁶Who can stand before His indignation [His great wrath]?

And who can stand up *and* endure the fierceness of His
anger?

His wrath is poured out like fire

And the rocks are destroyed by Him.

⁷The LORD is good, A strength *and* stronghold in the day of
trouble; He knows [He recognizes, cares for, and
understands fully] those who take refuge *and* trust in Him.

[Ps 1:6; Hos 13:5; John 10:14, 27]

⁸But with an overwhelming flood [of judgment through invading armies]

He will make a complete destruction of its site

And will pursue His enemies into darkness.

⁹Whatever [plot] you [Assyrians] devise against the LORD,
He will make a complete end of it;

Affliction [of God's people by the hand of Assyria] will not occur twice.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Trust God in the Day of Trouble

When we face troubling situations, the enemy can attack our minds with fear, worry, and reasoning, which could cause us to fret about the circumstances or consider various ways that God could intervene. We might even offer God advice on how He could help us! But when we really trust God and take our hands off the troubles we are facing, we will realize we don't have to have all the answers. We do not need to know what to do or what the outcome will be. We simply need to know that God is in control and He is good. Nahum 1:7 is a wonderful verse that reminds us that "the LORD is good" and "a strength and stronghold in the day of trouble." It adds that He "knows [He recognizes, cares for, and understands fully] those who take refuge and trust in Him." We don't have to know how God will deliver us. We simply need to take refuge in Him and trust that He will.

It is important to understand that trust sometimes requires unanswered questions. We cannot look to our own knowledge, understanding, or good ideas when we are trusting God (see Prov. 3:5–6). We have to remember that He can bring to our problems solutions we could never have imagined. We don't have to have all the answers when we face challenges in life. God will give us the breakthroughs we need in His perfect timing. And until He does, we can pray in faith, rest in Him, and live in peace.

¹⁰Like tangled thorn branches [gathered for fuel], And like those drowned in drunkenness,
The people of Nineveh are consumed [through fire]
Like stubble completely withered *and* dry [in the day of the LORD's wrath]. [Mal 4:1]

¹¹From you [O Nineveh],
One has gone forth who plotted evil against the LORD, A malevolent counselor [the king of Assyria]. [2 Kin 19:20–23; Is 10:5–7; 36:15–20]

¹²This is what the LORD says, “Though they are at full *strength* and many in number, Even so, they will be cut off and pass away.

Though I have afflicted you *and* caused you grief [O Jerusalem], I will afflict you no longer. [2 Kin 19:35–37; John 5:14]

¹³“Now, I will break his yoke [of taxation] off you, And I will tear off your shackles.” [Is 14:25]

¹⁴The LORD has given a command concerning you [O king of Nineveh]: “Your name will no longer be perpetuated.

I will cut off the carved idols and cast images

From the temple of your gods;

I will prepare your grave,

For you are vile *and* unworthy.” [Is 37:38; Ezek 32:22, 23]

¹⁵Behold, on the mountains the feet of him who brings good news [telling of Assyria's destruction], Who announces peace *and* prosperity!

Celebrate your feasts, O Judah;

POWERPOINT

Nahum 1:15 praises those who bring good news. I want to encourage you to be a person who shares good news as often as possible, whether in the form of a compliment to someone, words of encouragement, or some other verbal affirmation.

Positive words begin with positive thoughts. When you encounter someone, notice the good in that person and say something about it. In fact, you could even commit to making a habit of spreading good news.

Become known as a person others can count on to say something kind or encouraging, and people will always be happy to see you coming.



Perform your vows.

For the wicked one [the king of Assyria] will never again
pass through you; He is completely cut off. [Is 52:7; Rom
10:15]

- 2** THE ONE who scatters has come up against you [Nineveh].
Man the fortress *and* ramparts, watch the road; Strengthen
your back [prepare for battle], summon all your strength.
- 2** For the LORD will restore the splendor *and* majesty of Jacob
Like the splendor of [ancient and united] Israel, Even
though destroyers have destroyed them
And ruined their vine branches. [Is 10:12]
- 3** The shields of his soldiers [of Media and Babylon] are
colored red; The warriors are dressed in scarlet.
The chariots blaze with fire of [flashing] steel When he is
prepared *to march*,
And the cypress *spears* are brandished [for battle].
- 4** The chariots race madly in the streets; They rush wildly in
the broad plazas.
Their appearance is like torches;
They rush in various directions like forked lightning.
- 5** He remembers *and* summons his nobles; They stumble in
their march [terrified because of the attack].
They hurry to the city wall,
And the mantelet is prepared *and* firmly set up.
- 6** The gates of the rivers [surrounding Nineveh] are opened
And the palace [of sun-dried brick] is dissolved [by the

torrents].

⁷It is decreed:

Nineveh is stripped, and she is carried away,
And her handmaids are moaning like the sound of doves,
Beating on their breasts [in sorrow].

⁸Though Nineveh was like a pool of water throughout her days,
Now her inhabitants are fleeing;
“Stop! Stop!” [a few cry,]
But no one turns back.

⁹Plunder the silver!
Plunder the gold!
For there is no end to the treasure—
Wealth from every precious object.

¹⁰She is emptied! She is desolate and waste!
Hearts melting [in fear] and knees knocking!
Anguish is in the whole body,
And the faces of all grow pale! [Is 13:7, 8]

¹¹Where is the den of the lions (Assyria) And the feeding place of the young lions,
Where the lion, lioness, and lion’s cub prowled
With nothing to fear?

¹²The lion [of Assyria] tore enough for his cubs (Assyrian citizens),
Killed [enough prey] for his lionesses,
And filled his lairs with prey
And his dens with torn flesh.

¹³“Behold, I am against you [Nineveh],” declares the LORD of hosts,
“and I will burn your chariots in the smoke, and the

sword will devour your young lions. I will cut off your prey from the land, and the voice of your messengers will no longer be heard.”

3 WOE (JUDGMENT is coming) to the city of blood [guilty of murder and mayhem], completely full of lies and pillage; Her prey never departs [alive]. [Ezek 24:6, 9, 10; Hab 2:12]

²The noise of the [cracking of the] whip, The noise of the rattling of the wheel,
Galloping horses
And rumbling *and* bounding chariots [in the assault of Nineveh]!

³Horsemen charging,
Swords flashing, spears gleaming,
Many slain, a mass of corpses,
No end of corpses—
The horsemen stumble over the corpses!

⁴All because of the many acts of prostitution of [Nineveh] the prostitute, The charming *and* well-favored one, the mistress of sorceries, Who betrays nations by her acts of prostitution (idolatry) And families by her sorceries.

⁵“Behold, I am against you,” declares the LORD of hosts,
“And I will lift up your skirts over your face,
And I will let the nations look at your nakedness [O Nineveh]
And the kingdoms at your disgrace.

⁶“I will throw filth on you

And make you vile *and* treat you with contempt, And set you up as a spectacle.

7“*And it will come about that all who see you Will shrink back and run from you and say, ‘Nineveh is completely ruined!*

Who will grieve for her?’

Where will I seek comforters for you?”

8*Are you better than Thebes, Which was situated by the waters of the Nile,*

With water surrounding her,

Whose defense was the sea (the Nile),

Whose wall consisted of the sea?

9*Ethiopia was her strength,*

And Egypt too, without limits.

Put and Lubim were among her helpers.

10*Yet she became an exile;*

She went into captivity.

Her young children were dashed to pieces

At the head of every street;

They cast lots for her honorable men,

And all her great men were bound with chains.

11*You too [Nineveh] will become drunk [with the cup of God’s wrath]; You will be hidden.*

You too [Nineveh] will search [in vain] for a refuge from the enemy.

12*All your fortresses are [nothing but] fig trees with ripe figs — When shaken they fall into the mouth of the eater.*

- ¹³Behold, your people are [as weak and helpless as] women in
your midst!
The gates of your land are opened wide to your enemies;
Fire consumes the bars across your gates.
- ¹⁴Draw water for a [long, continued] siege!
Strengthen your fortresses!
Go down to the clay pits, trample the mortar!
Prepare the brick kiln [to burn bricks for the rampart]!
- ¹⁵But there [in the very midst of these preparations] the fire
will devour you; The sword will cut you down;
It will devour you as the locust does.
Multiply yourself like the creeping locusts; Multiply
yourself like the swarming locusts.
- ¹⁶You have increased your traders more than the [visible]
stars of heaven— The creeping locust strips *and*
destroys and then flies away.
- ¹⁷Your guardsmen are like the swarming locusts.
Your marshals are like the hordes of grasshoppers Settling
in the stone walls on a cold day.
When the sun rises, they fly away,
And no one knows the place where they are.
- ¹⁸Your shepherds are asleep, O king of Assyria; Your nobles
are lying down [in death].
Your people are scattered on the mountains
And there is no one to gather them.
- ¹⁹There is no relief *and* healing for your hurt; Your wound is
incurable.
All who hear the news about you

Clap their hands over [what has happened to] you.

For on whom has your [unceasing] evil not come
continually?

Habakkuk

Author: | Habakkuk
Date: | Probably
between 612 BC and
586 BC

The book of Habakkuk is not a narrative, but the record of a conversation between God and the prophet Habakkuk. Clearly Habakkuk is disturbed by the troubles and injustices surrounding him in Judah, and he takes his questions to the Lord instead of trying to figure out the answers in his mind. He is able to get his thoughts off negative things and onto positive things when he realizes this truth: “Look at the proud one, his soul is not right within him, but the righteous will live by his faith [in the true God]” (Habakkuk 2:4). We don’t always know the answers we would like to know, but God does know them and we can always have faith in Him.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM HABAKKUK:

Ask the Lord to give you a vision for your life, and then wait patiently for it. When you receive it, pursue it with all your heart (see Habakkuk 2:2–3).

Faith is more than just a way to get to heaven; it is a way of life (see Habakkuk 2:4).

As you face loss or challenges in your life, God will strengthen you and help you move forward with confidence (see Habakkuk 3:17–19).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM HABAKKUK:

Write the vision and engrave it plainly on [clay] tablets so that the one who reads it will run. | Habakkuk 2:2

O LORD, I have heard the report about You and I fear. O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath [earnestly] remember compassion and love. | Habakkuk 3:2

I will [choose to] rejoice in the LORD; I will [choose to] shout in exultation in the [victorious] God of my salvation! | Habakkuk 3:18

THE BOOK OF
HABAKKUK

1 THE ORACLE (a burdensome message—a pronouncement from God) which Habakkuk the prophet saw.

²O LORD, how long will I call for help And You will not hear?
I cry out to You, “Violence!”
Yet You do not save.

³Why do You make me see iniquity,
And cause me to look on wickedness?
For destruction and violence are before me;
Strife continues and contention arises.

⁴Therefore, the law is ineffective *and* ignored And justice is
never upheld,
For the wicked surround the righteous;
Therefore, justice becomes perverted.

⁵[The LORD replied,] “Look among the nations! See!
Be astonished! Wonder!
For I am doing something in your days—
You would not believe it if you were told. [Acts 13:40, 41]

⁶“For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans [who rule in

Babylon],

KEYS to a Victorious Life

A Discerning Heart

People who must figure out everything have a hard time with faith, because reasoning is not faith, and without faith it is impossible to please God.

I used to be a class A chief “reasoner.” I had to have everything figured out. I had to have a plan if I was going to be peaceful. Not unlike the prophet Habakkuk, I was continually asking, “Why, God, why?” (see Hab. 1:14) and “When, God, when?” Then one day the Lord spoke to my heart and said, “As long as you continue to reason, you won’t gain discernment.”

Discernment starts in the heart and enlightens the mind. As long as my mind was overloaded with my own confusing questions, I could not receive any wisdom or direction from the Holy Spirit. God wants us to acknowledge Him in every situation and let Him direct our path (see Prov. 3:5–6).

Balance is the key to victory in your thought life. It is fine to ponder situations and think about them in a prayerful manner, but we should not allow confusion in our mind. The day will come when we will know in the same way that God knows (see 1 Cor. 13:12), but for now we have the privilege of trusting Him.

If we try to figure out the reasons for which everything happens in life, we will not have peace of mind and heart.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

“Why, God, Why?”

I understand why people sometimes ask, “Why do we have so many problems and struggles and endure so much suffering in life?” The prophet Habakkuk wanted God to answer three major *why* questions in his first chapter alone (see Hab. 1:3, 13, 14), and you and I are no different.

Sometimes, with our questions, we even start to imply that God is to blame. As I considered this, I began to see that Satan often plants these questions in our mind. It is his attempt to keep us focused on our problems rather than on the goodness of God.

Consider the story of Jesus’ visit to Mary and Martha after their brother, Lazarus, died. Jesus waited until Lazarus had been dead for four days before He arrived at their home. When He arrived, Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died” (John 11:21). I’m sure Martha was wondering, as many of us would have, “why” Jesus didn’t show up sooner and “why” He didn’t save Lazarus.

Aren’t many of us like Martha? We want our lives to run

smoothly, and when they don't, we ask, "Why?" We should be careful not to let our questions cause confusion. Confusion is not from God. He desires that we trust Him no matter what our circumstances.

For example, when someone dies in an accident, one of the first questions family members ask is, "Why her, God? Why?" That is certainly understandable, but it is not likely that they will receive an answer that will be suitable.

In situations such as these, we can help ourselves greatly by learning to say, "Lord God, I believe. I don't understand, and I could never grasp all the reasons that bad things happen, but I know for certain that You love me and You are with me—always."

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Heavenly Father, instead of asking for answers to the why questions, help me to focus on Your great love for me. When the enemy tries to fill my mind with troublesome questions, help me to trust in You and receive Your comfort. Amen.

That fierce and impetuous nation Who march throughout
the earth

To take possession of dwelling places that do not belong to
them. [2 Kin 24:2]

7“‘The Chaldeans are dreaded and feared;
Their justice and authority originate with themselves *and*
are defined only by their decree.

8“‘Their horses are swifter than leopards
And keener than [hungry] wolves in the evening,
Their horsemen come galloping,
Their horsemen come from far away;
They fly like an eagle swooping down to devour.

9“‘They all come for violence;
Their horde of faces moves [eagerly] forward,
They gather prisoners like sand.

10“‘They make fun of kings
And rulers are a laughing matter to them.
They ridicule every stronghold
And heap up rubble [for earth mounds] and capture it.

11“‘Then they will sweep by like the wind and pass on.
But they will be held guilty,
They [and all men] whose own power *and* strength is their
god.”

12 Are You not from everlasting, O LORD, my God, My Holy
One?

We will not die.

O LORD, You have appointed the Chaldeans [who rule in

Babylon] to execute [Your] judgment, And You, O Rock,
have established them to correct *and* chastise. [Deut 32:4]

- ¹³Your eyes are too pure to approve evil,
And You cannot look *favorably* on wickedness.
Why then do You look favorably
On those who act treacherously?
Why are you silent when the wicked (Chaldean oppressors)
destroy Those more righteous than they?
- ¹⁴Why do You make men like the fish of the sea, Like reptiles
and creeping things that have no ruler [and are helpless
against their enemies]?
- ¹⁵*The Chaldeans* bring all of them up with a hook, And drag
them away with a net,
And gather them together in their fishing net;
So they rejoice and are glad.
- ¹⁶Therefore, they offer sacrifices to their net And burn
incense to their fishing net;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Begin To Believe

I want to encourage you to begin to trust God to do something great in your life. I always say, "I'd rather believe for a lot and get a little of it than believe for nothing and get all of it." The devil wants you to only believe for nothing so he can give it all to you. And God wants you to believe for something big, because all things are possible with Him.

Have a vision for your life and don't let it go. Habakkuk 2:2 says to write down the vision so plainly that anyone who passes by can see it. Write some things down on paper that you are trusting God to do in your life. Be filled with hope, and be a person of purpose. Study God's promises and declare that you are expecting to see them come to pass in your life.

Speak God's Word

*The vision God has given me
is for an appointed time in
the future and it hurries
toward fulfillment; it will not
fail. Even though it delays, I
wait patiently for it, because
it will certainly come; it will
not delay.*

| adapted from HABAKKUK 2:3 |

Because through these things their catch is large *and* they
live luxuriously, And their food is plentiful.

¹⁷Will they continue to empty their net
And [mercilessly] go on destroying nations without
sparing?

2 I WILL stand at my guard post And station myself on the
tower;

And I will keep watch to see what He will say to me,
And what answer I will give [as His spokesman] when I am
reproved.

- ²Then the LORD answered me and said, “Write the vision
And engrave it plainly on [clay] tablets
So that the one who reads it will run.
- ³“For the vision is yet for the appointed [future] time It
hurries toward the goal [of fulfillment]; it will not fail.
Even though it delays, wait [patiently] for it,
Because it will certainly come; it will not delay. [Heb 10:37,
38]
- ⁴“Look at the proud one, His soul is not right within him,
But the righteous will live by his faith [in the true God].
[Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11]
- ⁵“Moreover, wine is treacherous *and* betrays the arrogant
man, So that he does not stay at home.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*You, O Lord, are the true God,
and You have made me
righteous. I will live by faith
in You.*

His appetite is large like Sheol,
And he is like death, never satisfied.
He gathers to himself all nations
And collects to himself all peoples [as if he owned them].

6“Will all these [victims of his greed] not take up a taunting
song against him, And in mocking derision against him
Say, ‘Woe (judgment is coming) to him who increases that
which is not his— How long [will he possess it]?
And [woe to him who] makes himself wealthy with loans.’

7“Will your creditors not rise up suddenly, And those who
collect from you awaken?
Then you will become plunder for them.

8“Because you [king of Babylon] have looted many nations,
All peoples who are left will loot you— Because of human
bloodshed and for the violence done to the land, To the
city and all its inhabitants.

9“Woe (judgment is coming) to him who obtains wicked gain
for his house [and thinks by so doing]
To set his nest on high,
That he may be rescued from the hand of evil.

10“You have devised a shameful thing for your house By
cutting off *and* putting an end to many peoples; So you
are sinning against your own life *and* forfeiting it.

11“For the stone will cry out from the wall [to accuse you—

built in sin!]

And the rafter will answer it out of the woodwork.

12“Woe (judgment is coming) to him who builds a city with bloodshed And establishes a town by violence!

13“Is it not indeed from the LORD of hosts That peoples labor [only] for the fire [that will destroy their work], And nations grow weary for nothing [that is, things which have no lasting value]?

14“But [the time is coming when] the earth shall be filled

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Faith Is a Way of Life

Faith is not simply something that is necessary for our salvation; it is a way of life. It's how we are to live (see Hab 2:4). We need faith to build successful homes and families, to raise our children and manage our finances. We also need faith concerning our job—to work hard and operate with integrity—and to look to God as our source of provision instead of to a company or an organization. We need faith to cover the mistakes of our past and to boldly face tomorrow. And when we reach the end of our earthly lives, we will even need to die by faith, believing that God is waiting to receive us into His eternal presence in heaven.

Yes, we need faith for today and faith for tomorrow. We all have faith, but where we place it is our choice. Put your faith in God, for without it you will be doubtful, fearful, and worried about every aspect of your life. God alone gives us the strength to face each day confidently; therefore, we need to turn to Him and place our faith in Him alone. Everyone and everything else—people, material possessions, education, relationships, paychecks—may fail us, but God is our Rock, our Refuge, our Hiding Place, our High Tower, and our Stronghold in times of trouble. He is our hope, our peace, our joy, our strength and the source of everything we need. He is the only One Who never fails and the only One worth putting our faith in.

Stir up your faith today; it's the way of life for the righteous!

With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters
cover the sea. [Is 11:9]

15“Woe (judgment is coming) to you who make your
neighbors drink, Who mix in your venom to make them
drunk

So that you may look at their nakedness!

16“You will be filled with disgrace instead of honor.

Now drink and expose your own nakedness!

The cup [of wrath] in the LORD's right hand will come
around to you [O destroyer], And utter disgrace will be on
your own glory. [Rev 16:19]

17“For the violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you; The
destruction of the animals will terrify you

On account of human bloodshed and the violence done to
the land, To the city and all its inhabitants.

18“What profit is the carved image when its maker has formed
it?

It is only a cast image, and a teacher of lies.

For its maker trusts in his own creation [as his god]

When he makes speechless idols.

19“Woe (judgment is coming) to him who says to the wooden
image, ‘Awake!’

And to the speechless stone, ‘Arise!’

And that is your teacher?

Look, it is overlaid with gold and silver,

And there is no breath at all inside it.

²⁰“But the LORD is in His holy temple.

Let all the earth hush *and* be silent before Him.” [Zeph 1:7;
Zech 2:13]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Waiting on the Lord

Habakkuk 2:20 instructs us to be silent in God's presence. I call this prayer of silence "waiting on the Lord." In our instant and fast-paced society, where we want everything right now, this spiritual discipline of quieting our minds and being still is often lacking. If we are always in such a hurry, we miss out on the wisdom that God wants to speak to our heart from His Word—wisdom we can only hear when we make a practice of quieting our soul and waiting on God.

Elijah was a man who learned the secret of silent, waiting prayer in His presence. After slaying the prophets of Baal, Elijah had some very rough days emotionally, and the Lord told him to go stand on a mountain before Him and wait. "And behold, the LORD was passing by, and a great and powerful wind was tearing out the mountains and breaking the rocks in pieces before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind, [there was] an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake, [there was] a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire, [there was] the sound of a gentle blowing" (1 Kin. 19:11–12). The gentle, still, small voice of God eventually came to Elijah, as it will also come to us when we trust God and wait on Him.

David also learned to wait in the house of the Lord and "to

meditate in His temple” (Ps. 27:4). If we want to learn to pray effectively, we will need to learn to “be still” (Ps. 46:10) in silence and listen for His Word. Waiting and listening removes the focus from ourselves and places it on Him, Who is the answer to all our needs.

It is often in silence when the power of God moves the most mightily. Allow the Holy Spirit to teach you how to wait on God peacefully, knowing that He will guide you.

3 A PRAYER of Habakkuk the prophet, set to wild *and* enthusiastic music.

2 O LORD, I have heard the report about You and I fear.
O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years, In the
midst of the years make it known;
In wrath [earnestly] remember compassion *and* love.

3 God [approaching from Sinai] comes from Teman (Edom),
And the Holy One from Mount Paran. *Selah (pause, and
calmly think of that).*
His splendor *and* majesty covers the heavens
And the earth is full of His praise.

4 His brightness is like the sunlight;
He has [bright] rays *flashing* from His hand,
And there [in the sunlike splendor] is the hiding place of
His power.

5 Before Him goes the pestilence [of judgment as in Egypt],
And [the burning] plague [of condemnation] follows at His

feet [as in Sennacherib's army]. [Ex 7:2–4; 2 Kin 19:32–35]
6He stood and measured the earth;

POWERPOINT

God's mercy is always greater
than His wrath. Even in His
righteous anger, He will
earnestly remember His
compassion and love.



He looked and startled the nations,
Yes, the eternal mountains were shattered,
The ancient hills bowed low *and* collapsed.
His ways are eternal.

⁷I [Habakkuk, in my vision] saw the tents of Cushan under
distress; The tent curtains of the land of Midian were
trembling.

⁸Did the LORD rage against the rivers, Or was Your anger
against the rivers,
Or was Your wrath against the [Red] Sea,
That You rode on Your horses,
On Your chariots of salvation?

⁹Your bow was made bare;
The rods of chastisement were sworn.

Selah (pause, calmly think of that).

You split the earth with rivers [bringing waters to dry places]. [Ex 17:6; Num 20:11]

¹⁰The mountains saw You and [they] trembled *and* writhed [as if in pain]; The downpour of waters swept by [as a deluge].

The deep uttered its voice *and* raged,
It lifted its hands high.

¹¹The sun and moon stood in their places [as before Joshua];
They went away at the light of Your [swift] arrows,
At the radiance *and* gleam of Your glittering spear. [Josh 10:12, 13]

¹²In indignation You marched through the earth; In anger You trampled *and* threshed the nations.

¹³You went forth for the salvation of Your people, For the salvation *and* rescue of Your anointed [people Israel].
You struck the head from the house of the wicked

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Choose To Rejoice

In the midst of a very difficult situation, Habakkuk declares, “Yet I will [choose to] rejoice in the LORD; I will [choose to] shout in exultation in the [victorious] God of my salvation” (Hab. 3:18). God sometimes allows us to be in less than desirable situations to test our “quality of faith” (see 1 Pet. 4:12). Quite often, He is planning a promotion for us in life if we pass the test in front of us. We are like children in school who must pass tests in order to be promoted to the next grade. Are you passing the test—refusing to worry, murmur, complain, or blame when things don’t go your way?

You should praise and bless God while you are in the low valleys of life as well as when you are on the mountaintops. If you are in a difficult or trying situation right now, discipline yourself not to complain, and instead give praise and glory to God.

Speak God's Word

*The Lord God is my strength,
my source of courage, and my
invincible army. He has made
my feet steady and sure, like
hinds' feet. He makes me walk
forward with spiritual
confidence when I face
challenges and
responsibilities.*

| *adapted from* HABAKKUK 3:19

|

To lay him open from the thigh to the neck.
Selah (pause, and calmly think of that).

¹⁴With the enemy's own spears, You pierced
The head of his hordes.
They stormed out to scatter us,
Rejoicing like those
Who secretly devour the oppressed [of Israel].

¹⁵You have trampled on the sea with Your horses, On the
surge of many waters. [Ex 15:8]

¹⁶I heard and my whole inner self trembled; My lips quivered

at the sound.

Decay *and* rottenness enter my bones,

And I tremble in my place.

Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress,

For the people to arise who will invade *and* attack us.

¹⁷ Though the fig tree does not blossom

And there is no fruit on the vines,

Though the yield of the olive fails

And the fields produce no food,

Though the flock is cut off from the fold

And there are no cattle in the stalls,

¹⁸ Yet I will [choose to] rejoice in the LORD; I will [choose to] shout in exultation in the [victorious] God of my salvation! [Rom 8:37]

¹⁹ The Lord GOD is my strength [my source of courage, my invincible army]; He has made my feet [steady and sure] like hinds' feet And makes me walk [forward with spiritual confidence] on my high places [of challenge and responsibility].

For the choir director, on my stringed instruments.

Zephaniah

Author: |
Zephaniah
Date: | About 630
BC

Throughout Scripture we see at least two clear patterns of cause and effect: first, humanity's sin requires God's judgment; and second, true repentance leads to restoration. The prophet Zephaniah was well aware of the sin that was rampant in Judah, Jerusalem, and neighboring countries, and he urged the people to repent. Against the backdrop of his message about imminent judgment, he also spoke powerfully about God's presence with His people and about His love, knowing that God always forgives and restores once repentance takes place.

Sin is still a problem for people today, but thank God that Jesus has taken our sin and forgiven it once and for all. When you are in Christ, you are no longer under judgment. You can repent, receive forgiveness, and believe God for restoration.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM ZEPHANIAH:

When something that you regret happens, it's important to take responsibility for your actions instead of making excuses (see Zephaniah 1:7).

Do not let your hands fall limp with discouragement or fear. The Lord is with you (see Zephaniah 3:15–16).

When the enemy tries to convince you that God doesn't love you, always remember that the Lord (your Warrior) loves you so much that He rejoices over you with shouts of joy (see Zephaniah 3:17).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM ZEPHANIAH:

Seek the LORD [search diligently for Him and regard Him as the foremost necessity of your life]. | Zephaniah 2:3

The LORD your God is in your midst, a Warrior who saves. He will rejoice over you with joy; He will be quiet in His love [making no mention of your past sins], He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy. | Zephaniah 3:17

I am going to deal with all your oppressors; I will save the lame and gather the scattered, and I will turn their shame into praise and renown. | Zephaniah 3:19

THE BOOK OF
ZEPHANIAH

1 THE WORD of the LORD which came to Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah: ²“I will completely consume *and* sweep away all *things* From the face of the earth [in judgment],” says the LORD.

³“I will consume *and* sweep away man and beast; I will consume *and* sweep away the birds of the air And the fish of the sea,
And the stumbling blocks (idols) along with the wicked;
And I will cut off *and* destroy man from the face of the earth,” declares the LORD.

⁴“I will also stretch out My hand [in judgment] against Judah
And against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
And I will cut off *and* destroy the remnant of Baal from this place, And the names *and* remembrance of the idolatrous priests along with the [false] priests, ⁵And those who bow down *and* worship the host of heaven [the sun, the moon, and the stars] on their housetops And those who bow down and swear [oaths] to [and pretend to worship] the LORD and [yet also] swear by [the pagan god called]

Milcom [god of the Ammonites], ⁶And those who have turned back from following the LORD, And those who have not sought the LORD [as their most important need] or inquired of Him.”

⁷[Hush!] Be silent before the Lord GOD [there is no acceptable excuse to offer]!

For the day [of the vengeance] of the LORD is near,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

No Excuses

Since time began, people have made excuses to avoid responsibility. After Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, Adam blamed Eve (and God for giving him Eve), and Eve blamed the devil (see Gen. 3:12–13). People often make excuses for their sin rather than simply admitting it, confessing it, and asking God to forgive them for it.

It has been said that excuses are reasons stuffed with lies. You can easily find a reason for every error or mistake you make, but it is far better to take responsibility for your actions: “[Hush!] Be silent before the Lord GOD [there is no acceptable excuse to offer]!” (Zeph. 1:7). Remember: “The truth will set you free” (John 8:32).

For the LORD has prepared a sacrifice (Judah), He has set apart [for His use] those who have accepted His invitation [the Chaldeans who rule Babylon]. [Hab 2:20]

8“Then it will come about on the day of the LORD’s sacrifice
That I will punish the princes and the king’s sons
And all who are clothed in [lavish] foreign apparel
[reflecting their paganism]. [Num 15:38, 39]

9“On that day I will also punish all those who leap over the
temple threshold, Who fill their [pagan] lord’s temple with
violence and deceit.

10“On that day,” declares the LORD, “There will be the sound

of crying from the Fish (Damascus) Gate [in the northern wall of Jerusalem where invaders enter]

And wailing from the Second Quarter [of the city],

And a loud crash from the hills.

¹¹“Wail [in anguish], you inhabitants of the Mortar (Valley of Siloam), For all the merchants of Canaan will be silenced *and* destroyed; All who weigh out silver will be cut off.

¹²“It will come about at that time
That I will search Jerusalem with lamps
And I will punish the men
Who [like old wine] are stagnant in spirit,
Who say in their hearts,
‘The LORD will not do good, nor will He do evil.’

¹³“Furthermore, their wealth will become plunder And their houses a desolation.
Yes, they will build houses but not live in them,
And plant vineyards but not drink their wine.” [Deut 28:30, 39; Amos 5:11, 12]

¹⁴The great [judgment] day of the LORD is near, Near and coming very quickly.

Listen! The [voice of the] day of the LORD!

The warrior cries out bitterly [unable to fight or to flee].

¹⁵That day is a day of [the outpouring of the] wrath [of God],
A day of trouble and distress,
A day of destruction and devastation,
A day of darkness and gloom,
A day of clouds and thick darkness, [Jer 30:7; Joel 2:11;

Amos 5:18]

¹⁶A day of trumpet and the battle cry [of invaders]
Against the fortified cities
And against the high corner towers (battlements).

¹⁷I will bring distress on men
So that they will walk like the blind [unable to find a way of
escape], Because they have sinned against the LORD;
Their blood will be poured out like dust [and trampled
underfoot], And their flesh like dung.

¹⁸Neither their silver nor their gold
Will be able to rescue them
On the day of the LORD's indignation *and* wrath.
And the whole earth will be consumed
In the fire of His jealous wrath,
For He shall make a full *and* complete end,
Indeed a terrifying one,
Of all the inhabitants of the earth. [Luke 21:35, 36; 2 Pet
3:10–13]

2 GATHER YOURSELVES together [in repentance], yes,
gather [in submission], O nation without shame,

²Before the decree takes effect [and the time for repentance
is lost]— The day passes like the chaff [whirled by the
wind]—

Before the burning *and* fierce anger of the LORD comes
upon you, Before the day of the wrath of the LORD comes
upon you.

Speak God's Word

*I will seek the Lord and
search diligently for Him,
regarding Him as the foremost
necessity of my life. I will also
seek righteousness and
humility, regarding them as
vital in my life.*

| adapted from ZEPHANIAH 2:3 |

³Seek the LORD [search diligently for Him and regard Him as the foremost necessity of your life], All you humble of the land

Who have practiced His ordinances *and* have kept His commandments; Seek righteousness, seek humility [regard them as vital].

Perhaps you will be hidden [and pardoned and rescued] In the day of the LORD's anger.

⁴For [this is the fate of the Philistines:] Gaza will be abandoned And Ashkelon a desolation;
[The people of] Ashdod will be driven out at noon [in broad daylight]
And Ekron will be uprooted *and* destroyed.

⁵Woe (judgment is coming) to the inhabitants of the
seacoast, The nation of the Cherethites [in Philistia]!
The word of the LORD is against you, O Canaan, land of the
Philistines;
I will destroy you
So that no inhabitant will be left.

⁶So the [depopulated] seacoast shall be pastures, With
[deserted] meadows for shepherds and folds for flocks.

⁷The seacoast will belong
To the remnant of the house of Judah;
They will pasture [their flocks] on it.
In the [deserted] houses of Ashkelon [in Philistia] they [of
Judah] will lie down *and* rest in the evening, For the LORD
their God will care for them; And restore their fortune
[permitting them to occupy the land]. [Is 14:29–31; Amos
1:6–8]

⁸“I have heard the taunting of Moab And the revilings of the
sons of Ammon,
With which they have taunted My people
And become arrogant against their territory [by violating
Israel’s boundary and trying to seize its land].

⁹“Therefore, as I live,” declares the LORD of hosts, The God
of Israel,
“Moab will in fact become like Sodom
And the sons of Ammon like Gomorrah,
A land possessed by nettles and salt pits,
And a perpetual desolation.

The remnant of My people will plunder them
And what is left of My nation will inherit them [as their
own].”

¹⁰This they shall have in return for their pride, because they
have taunted and become arrogant against the people of the
LORD of hosts.

¹¹The LORD will be terrifying *and* awesome to them, for He
will starve all the gods of the earth; and all the coastlands of
the nations will bow down *and* worship Him, everyone from his
own place. [Joel 2:11; Zeph 1:4; 3:9]

¹²“You also, O Ethiopians, will be slain by My sword.” [Is 18]

¹³And the LORD will stretch out His hand against the north
And destroy Assyria,
And He will make Nineveh a desolation [a wasteland],
Parched as the desert. [Is 10:12; Nah 1:1]

¹⁴Flocks will lie down in her midst,
All the animals which range in herds;
Both the pelican and the short-eared owl
Will roost on the top of Nineveh’s pillars.
Birds will sing in the window,
Desolation will be on the threshold;
For He has uncovered the cedar paneling.

¹⁵This is the joyous city
Which dwells carelessly [feeling so secure],
Who says in her heart,
“I am, and there is no one besides me.”
What a desolation she has become,

A lair for [wild] animals!
Everyone who passes by her will hiss [in scorn]
And wave his hand *in contempt*. [Is 10:5–34; 47:8, 10]

3 WOE (JUDGMENT is coming) to her who is rebellious and defiled, The tyrannical city [Jerusalem]!

²She did not listen *and* heed the voice [of God]; She accepted no correction.

She did not trust in the LORD [but trusted her own power];
She did not draw near to her God [but to the pagan gods of Baal or Molech].

³Her officials within her are roaring lions; Her judges are [as hungry as] the wolves at evening,
They leave nothing for the morning.

⁴Her prophets are reckless and treacherous men; Her priests have profaned the sanctuary;
They have done violence to the law [by pretending their word is God's word]. [Jer 23:11; Ezek 22:26; Hos 9:7]

⁵The LORD is righteous within her; He will do no injustice.
Every morning He brings His justice to light;
He does not fail.
But the unjust person knows no shame.

⁶"I [the LORD] have cut off *and* destroyed nations [as a warning to Judah]; Their corner towers (battlements) are in ruins.
I have made their streets desolate
So that no one passes by;

Their cities are destroyed
So that there is no man, there is no inhabitant.

7“*I said, ‘Most certainly you will [reverently] fear Me;
Accept correction.’*

So Jerusalem’s dwelling will not be cut off

In accordance with all that I have appointed concerning her
[punishment], But they were eager [even rising early] to
make all their deeds corrupt. [Jer 7:13]

8“*Therefore [you of the godly remnant of Judah, patiently]
wait for Me,” declares the LORD, “[Wait] for the day when I
rise up as a witness [against the nations].*

For it is My decision *and* My right to gather the nations, To
assemble kingdoms,

To pour out on them My indignation,

All [the heat of] My burning anger;

For [in that day] all the earth shall be consumed

By the fire of My zeal.

9“*Then I will give to the peoples [clear and pure speech
from] purified lips [which reflect their purified hearts], That
all of them may call on the name of the LORD, To serve Him
shoulder to shoulder (united).*

10“*From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia
My worshipers, [the descendants of] My dispersed ones,
Will bring My offerings.*

11“*On that day you [Israel] will feel no shame Because of all
your acts
By which you have rebelled *and* sinned against Me; Then I*

will remove from among you
Your rejoicing ones who delight in their pride;
And you will never again behave arrogantly
On My holy mountain [Mount Zion].

¹²“But I will leave among you
A humble and lowly people,
And they will take refuge *and* trust confidently in the name
of the LORD.

¹³“The remnant of Israel will do no wrong
Nor speak lies,
Nor will a deceitful tongue
Be found in their mouths;
For they will eat and lie down
With no one to make them tremble *and* feel afraid.”

POWERPOINT

Any time the enemy comes against you, trying to convince you that God doesn't really love you, read Zephaniah 3:17. It's a beautiful picture of God's love for you. He will defend you and fight for you as a warrior. He will delight in you and rejoice over you as a lover rejoices over his beloved. He will forget your sins completely, refusing to hold them against you. And He will even shout for joy because of who you are!



¹⁴Shout for joy, O Daughter of Zion!

Shout *in triumph*, O Israel!

Rejoice, be in high spirits *and* glory with all your heart, O Daughter of Jerusalem [in that day]!

¹⁵The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; He has cleared away your enemies.

The King of Israel, even the LORD [Himself], is in your midst; You will no longer fear disaster.

¹⁶In that day it will be said to Jerusalem:

“Do not be afraid, O Zion;
Do not let your hands fall limp.

¹⁷“The LORD your God is in your midst, A Warrior who saves.

He will rejoice over you with joy;
He will be quiet in His love [making no mention of your past sins], He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.

¹⁸“I will gather those [Israelites in captivity] who grieve about the appointed feasts— They came from you, [O Zion];
On whom the reproach [of exile] is a burden.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord my God, that
You are in my midst as a
Warrior who saves. I know
that You rejoice over me with
joy, and make no mention of
my sins because of Your love.*

- 19“Behold, at that time I am going to deal
With all your oppressors;
I will save the lame
And gather the scattered,
And I will turn their shame into praise and renown
In every land [where they have suffered]. [Mic 4:6, 7]
- 20“At that time I will bring you in,
Yes, at the time I gather you together;
For I will make you a name and a praise
Among all the peoples of the earth
When I restore your fortunes [and freedom] before your
eyes,”
Says the LORD.

Haggai

Author: | Haggai

Date: | 520 BC

One of the roles of the prophet Haggai was to encourage obedience among the Jews after they returned to Jerusalem from exile. This call to obedience is a major theme of the book of Haggai. Both Haggai and Zechariah understood the importance of a house of worship where the Jews could worship the Lord and urged them to rebuild the temple. The people seemed to agree, but were slow to act. Apparently, they thought their good intentions were enough.

Any time God asks us to do anything, it is vital that we not only agree with Him, but that we also obey Him promptly. I often say that God's timing is part of God's will. If we want to walk in the fullness of His good plan for us, obeying Him right away is very important.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM HAGGAI:

To have a healthy, well-balanced, blessed life, think about what you think, say, and do (see Haggai 1:7).

Listen carefully to the voice of the Lord and obey it (see Haggai 1:12).

Be courageous and do what the Lord asks of you, knowing that He is with you (see Haggai 2:4).

VERSE FOR VICTORY FROM HAGGAI:

Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Consider your ways and thoughtfully reflect on your conduct!" | Haggai 1:7

My Spirit stands [firm and immovable] and continues with you; do not fear! | Haggai 2:5

THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

1 IN THE second year of Darius the king [of Persia], on the first day of the sixth month (Aug 29, 520 B.C.), the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying,

²“Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘These people say, “The time has not come that the LORD’s house (temple) should be rebuilt.”’” [Ezra 1:1–6; 4:1–6, 24; 5:1–3]

³Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying,

⁴“Is it time for you yourselves to live in your [expensive] paneled houses while this house [of the LORD] lies in ruins?”

⁵Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts, “Consider your ways *and* thoughtfully reflect on your conduct!

⁶“You have planted much, but you harvest little; you eat, but you do not have *enough*; you drink, but you do not have *enough* to be intoxicated; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm*enough*; and he who earns wages earns them *just to put* them in a bag with holes in it [because God has withheld His blessing].”

POWERPOINT

When Haggai 1:7 says to “consider your ways *and* thoughtfully reflect on your conduct,” it’s a reminder that we need to think about the thoughts we think, the words we speak, the decisions we make, and the actions we take. Especially when things don’t seem to be going well for us, one of the best things we can do is to consider our ways and ask God what changes we may need to make.



POWERPOINT

The people looked for and expected a great harvest, but they received very little, and even what they did bring home never seemed to be enough to meet their needs. The Lord told them the reason for their lack was that they had been busy building their own houses while His house was in ruins (see Hag. 1:4). Cyrus had ordered the people to rebuild God's house eighteen years earlier, yet it still had not been done. The people had been in disobedience for eighteen years and still they wondered why they were not prospering. We should obey God promptly at all times. As we obediently seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, He will add all the other things we need (see Matt. 6:33).



⁷Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Consider your ways *and* thoughtfully reflect on your conduct!

⁸“Go up to the hill country, bring lumber and rebuild My house (temple), that I may be pleased with it and be glorified,” says the LORD [accepting it as done for My glory].

⁹“You look for much [harvest], but it comes to little; and even when you bring that home, I blow it *away*. Why?” says the LORD of hosts. “Because of My house, which lies in ruins while each of you runs to his own house [eager to enjoy it].

¹⁰“Therefore, because of you [that is, your sin and disobedience] the heavens withhold the dew and the earth withholds its produce.

¹¹“I called for a drought on the land and the hill country, on the grain, on the new wine, on the oil, on what the ground produces, on men, on cattle, and on all the labor of your hands.”

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that Your
constant message to me is
this: "I am with you."*

• adapted from Haggai 1:13

¹²Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people [who had returned from exile], listened carefully *and* obeyed the voice of the LORD their God and the words of Haggai the prophet, since the LORD their God had sent him. And the people [reverently] feared the LORD.

¹³Then Haggai, the LORD's messenger, spoke the LORD's message to the people saying, "'I am with you,' declares the LORD."

¹⁴So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God,

¹⁵on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month (Sept 21, 520 B.C.) in the second year of Darius the king.

2 ON THE twenty-first day of the seventh month (Oct 17, 520

B.C., the second year of Darius king of Persia), the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai, saying,

²“Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying,

³‘Who is left among you who saw this house (temple) in its former glory? And how do you see it now? Does it not seem to you like nothing in comparison?’

⁴‘But now be courageous, Zerubbabel,’ declares the LORD, ‘be courageous also, Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and be courageous, all you people of the land,’ declares the LORD, ‘and work; for I am with you,’ declares the LORD of hosts.

⁵‘As for the promise which I made with you when you came out of Egypt, My Spirit stands [firm and immovable] *and* continues with you; do not fear!’

⁶“For thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Once more, in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. [Heb 12:26]

⁷‘I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the desirable *and* precious things of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory *and* splendor,’ says the LORD of hosts. [Is 60:5; Matt 2:1–12]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Strength and Courage from God

God told Zerubbabel and the people to be strong, alert, and courageous (see Hag. 2:4). Strength and courage from God are vital if we are to finish what He wants us to do. We have an enemy who brings many hindrances and oppositions against us, and we cannot defeat him unless we stay alert and watchful. We must also resist fear, which means that in the presence of fear we courageously continue moving forward, not bowing to it in cowardice and timidity.

Fear is not from God, but great courage is! We are more than conquerors even in the midst of our challenges in life (see Rom. 8:37). No matter what you are going through, I encourage you today to remember that God is mightier than all your problems. Always keep moving forward courageously.

⁸‘The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine,’ declares the LORD of hosts.

⁹‘The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘and in this place I shall give [the ultimate] peace *and* prosperity,’ declares the LORD of hosts.”

¹⁰On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month (Dec 18, 520 B.C.), in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to Haggai the prophet, saying,

¹¹“Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Ask the priests for a ruling:

¹²‘If a man carries meat that is holy [because it has been offered in sacrifice to God] in the fold of his garment, and he touches bread, or cooked food, or wine, or oil, or any [kind of] food with this fold, does what he touches become holy [dedicated exclusively to God’s service]?’” And the priests answered, “No!” [Holiness is not transferrable.]

¹³Then Haggai said, “If one who is [ceremonially] unclean because of [contact with] a corpse touches any of these [articles of food], will it be unclean?” And the priests answered, “It will be unclean.” [Ceremonial uncleanness, like sin, is infectious.]

¹⁴Then Haggai answered, “‘So is this people. And so is this nation before Me,’ declares the LORD, ‘and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there [on the altar] is unclean [because they who offer it are unclean].’

¹⁵‘But now, do consider [what will happen] from this day forward: before one stone was placed on another in the temple of the LORD,

¹⁶from that time when one came to a *grain* heap *expecting* twenty *measures*, there would be only ten; and when one came to the wine vat to draw out fifty measures, there would be only twenty.

**A Prayer To
Renew Your**

Mind



Lord, I thank You for Your promise to bless me from this day on.

• adapted from Haggai 2:19

¹⁷“I struck you and the work of your hands with scorching wind, mildew, and hail; yet you did not come back to Me,” declares the LORD.

¹⁸“Do consider from this day forward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month; from the day when the temple of the LORD was founded, consider:

¹⁹“Is the seed still in the barn? As to the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree—they have not produced. Yet from this day on I will bless you [in the harvest of your crops].”

²⁰And again the word of the LORD came to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month (Dec 18, 520 B.C.), saying,

²¹“Speak to Zerubbabel governor of Judah, saying, ‘I am going to shake the heavens and the earth. [Hag 2:6; Matt 1:12, 13]

²²‘I will [in the distant future] overthrow the thrones of kingdoms and destroy the power of the kingdoms of the

[ungodly] nations; and I will overthrow the chariots and those who ride in them, and the horses and their riders will go down, every one by the sword of his brother [annihilating one another]. [Dan 2:34, 35, 44, 45; Rev 19:11–21]

²³‘On that day,’ declares the LORD of hosts, ‘I will take you, Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, My servant,’ declares the LORD, ‘and I will make you [through the Messiah, your descendant] like a signet ring, for I have chosen you [as the one with whom to renew My covenant to David’s line],” declares the LORD of hosts. [2 Sam 7:12, 16]

Zechariah

Author: | Zechariah

Date: | Between 520
BC and 475 BC

One of the themes of the Minor Prophets is God's judgment, always tempered with some kind of hope or with a message of God's love. Many of these books are books of exhortation, but Zechariah is primarily a book of encouragement. Writing about the same time and to the same people as Haggai, the prophet Zechariah wrote encouraging words to the Jews who were rebuilding the temple after their return from exile.

Just as the Jews needed to be encouraged in the difficult but important task that God had asked them to do, you and I often feel called to do things that may seem challenging but that we know are important. Zechariah reminds us that we can accomplish very little in our human power and might, but that through God's Spirit and by God's grace we can do anything.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM ZECHARIAH:

Willpower is not enough to accomplish much that is significant. You need the Holy Spirit to strengthen you and help you defeat the attacks in your mind (see Zechariah 4:6).

God is aware of the obstacles on your journey through life. Speak the Word to them by faith, and wait for the Lord to make them a level plain before you (see Zechariah 4:7).

Be steadfast in hope that God will see you through (see Zechariah 9:11–12).

Ask the Lord to pour out His Spirit of grace on people who need to know that Jesus Christ died to save them (see Zechariah 12:10).

VERSES FOR VICTORY:

“I,” declares the LORD, “will be a wall of fire around her [protecting her from enemies], and I will be the glory in her midst.” | Zechariah 2:5

“Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit [of whom the oil is a symbol],” says the LORD of hosts. | Zechariah 4:6

Behold, your King (Messianic King) is coming to you; He is righteous and endowed with salvation, humble and unassuming [in submission to the will of the Father]. | Zechariah 9:9

THE BOOK OF
ZECHARIAH

1 IN THE eighth month of the second year [of the reign] of Darius [the king of Persia], the word of the LORD came to Zechariah (the LORD remembers) the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, the prophet, saying, [Ezra 5:1]

²“The LORD was extremely angry with your fathers.

³“Therefore say to the Jews, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts (armies), “Return to Me,” declares the LORD of hosts, “and I shall return to you.

⁴“Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets proclaimed, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Repent [that is, change your way of thinking] *and* return now from your evil way [of life] and from your evil deeds.” ’ But they did not listen or pay attention to Me,” declares the LORD. [2 Kin 17:13; Is 45:22; Jer 18:11; Ezek 33:11]

⁵“Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever?

⁶“But did not My words (warnings) and My statutes, which I commanded My servants the prophets, overtake your fathers? Then they repented and said, ‘As the LORD of hosts planned to do to us [in discipline and punishment], in

accordance with our ways and our deeds, so has He dealt with us.””””

⁷On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month (Feb 15, 519 B.C.), which is the month of Shebat, in the second year of [the reign of] Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, as follows:

⁸In the night I saw [a vision] and behold, a Man was riding on a red horse, and it stood among the myrtle trees that were in the ravine; and behind Him were horses: red, sorrel (reddish-brown), and white.

⁹Then I said, “O my lord, what are these?” And the angel who was speaking with me said, “I will show you what these are.”

¹⁰And the Man who stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, “These are the ones whom the LORD has sent to go throughout the earth *and* patrol it.”

¹¹And the men on the horses answered the Angel of the LORD who stood among the myrtle trees and said, “We have gone throughout the earth [patrolling it] and behold, all the earth sits at rest [in peace and free from war].”

¹²Then the Angel of the LORD said, “O LORD of hosts, how long will You withhold mercy *and* compassion from Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, against which You have had indignation *and* anger these seventy years [of the Babylonian captivity]?”

¹³And the LORD answered the angel who was speaking with me with gracious and comforting words.

¹⁴So the angel who was speaking with me said to me, “Proclaim, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “I am jealous [with a

burning, fiery passion] for Jerusalem and for Zion [demanding what is rightfully and uniquely mine] with a great jealousy.

¹⁵“But I am very angry with the nations who are at ease *and* feel secure; for while I was only a little angry, they furthered the disaster [against the people of Israel].”

¹⁶“Therefore, thus says the LORD, “I have returned to Jerusalem with mercy *and* compassion. My house shall be built in it,” says the LORD of hosts, “and a measuring line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem.” ’

¹⁷“Proclaim again, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “My cities shall again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD shall again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.”’”

¹⁸Then I looked up, and saw four horns (powers)!

¹⁹So I asked the angel who was speaking with me, “What are these?” And he answered me, “These are the horns [the powerful Gentile nations] that have scattered Judah (the Southern Kingdom), Israel (the Northern Kingdom), and Jerusalem (capital city of Judah).”

²⁰Then the LORD showed me four craftsmen.

²¹I asked, “What are these [horns and craftsmen] coming to do?” And he said, “These are the horns (powers) that have scattered Judah so that no man raised up his head [because of the suffering inflicted by the Gentile nations]. But these *craftsmen* have come to terrify them *and* make them panic, and throw down the horns of the nations who have lifted up their horns against the land of Judah in order to scatter it.”

2 AND I looked up, and saw a man with a measuring line in

his hand.

²So I said, “Where are you going?” And he said to me, “To measure Jerusalem, to see how wide it is and how long it is.”

³And behold, the angel who was speaking with me was going out, and another angel was coming out to meet him,

⁴and he said to the second angel, “Run, speak to that young man, saying, ‘Jerusalem will be inhabited [like villages] without walls [spreading out into the open country] because of the great number of people and livestock in it.

⁵‘For I,’ declares the LORD, ‘will be a wall of fire around her [protecting her from enemies], and I will be the glory in her midst.’”

⁶“Hear this! Flee from [Babylon] the land of the north [which shall come under judgment],” declares the LORD, “for I have scattered you like the four winds of the heavens,” declares the LORD.

⁷“Hear, Zion (Jerusalem)! Escape, you who are living with the daughter of Babylon!”

⁸For thus says the LORD of hosts, “After glory He has sent Me against the nations which plunder you—for he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye.

⁹“Behold, I will wave my hand over them and they shall become plunder for their own slaves. Then you shall know (recognize, understand fully) that the LORD of hosts has sent Me.

¹⁰“Sing for joy and rejoice, O Daughter of Zion; for behold, I am coming, and I will dwell in your midst,” declares the LORD.

¹¹“Many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that

day and shall be My people. And I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know (recognize, understand fully) that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. [Is 2:3; Mic 4:2]

¹²“The LORD will take possession of Judah as His portion in the holy land and will again choose Jerusalem.

¹³“Be still before the LORD, all mankind; for He is roused (raised up) from His holy habitation [in response to His persecuted people].” [Hab 2:20; Zeph 1:7]

3 THEN THE guiding angel showed me Joshua the high priest [representing disobedient, sinful Israel] standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at Joshua’s right hand to be his adversary *and* to accuse him.

²And the LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, Satan! Even the LORD, who [now and ever] has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is this not a log snatched *and* rescued from the fire?” [Jude 9]

³Now Joshua was clothed with filthy (nauseatingly vile) garments and was standing before the Angel [of the LORD].

⁴He spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” And He said to Joshua, “See, I have caused your wickedness to be taken away from you, and I will clothe *and* beautify you with rich robes [of forgiveness].”

⁵And I (Zechariah) said, “Let them put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with [rich] garments. And the Angel of the LORD stood by.

POWERPOINT

Throughout history, the enemy has always been determined to destroy God's people. In Zechariah 3:1, he is "standing at Joshua's right hand to be his adversary *and* to accuse him."

The enemy still treats God's people that way today.

Although he is your adversary and accuser, you can always overcome him with the truth of God's Word and in the power of His Spirit.



⁶And the Angel of the LORD [solemnly and earnestly] admonished Joshua, saying,

⁷"Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'If you will walk in My ways [that is, remain faithful] and perform My service, then you will also govern My house and have charge of My courts, and I will give you free access [to My presence] among these who are standing here.

⁸‘Now listen, Joshua, the high priest, you and your colleagues who are sitting in front of you—indeed they are men who are a symbol [of what is to come]—for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch [in Messianic glory]. [Is 4:2; Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech 6:12]

⁹‘For behold, the stone which I have set before Joshua; on that one stone are seven eyes (symbolizing infinite intelligence, omniscience). Behold, I will engrave an inscription on it,’ declares the LORD of hosts, ‘and I will remove the wickedness *and* guilt of this land in a single day. [2 Chr 16:9; Jer 50:20; Zech 4:10]

¹⁰‘In that day,’ declares the LORD of hosts, ‘every one of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and his fig tree [enjoying peace and prosperity in the kingdom].’” [Mic 4:1–4]

4 AND THE angel who was speaking with me came back and awakened me, like a man who is awakened out of his sleep.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

By the Spirit

God designed our life to be lived by grace, in the power of His Spirit. When we try to live life by our human strength, we become frustrated. The more we try to figure out how to solve our dilemmas, the more confused, upset, and frustrated we become (see Gal. 5:17).

When you find yourself in a frustrating situation, just stop and say, "O Lord, give me grace. I won't try to handle this in my own might. Help me deal with it by Your Spirit." Then believe that God has heard your prayer; is answering that prayer; and is working out the situation.

Faith is the channel through which you and I receive the grace of God (see Eph. 2:8). If we try to do things on our own (works of the flesh), without being open to receiving His grace and power, we end up frustrated and disappointed.

A long time ago I wrote this statement on a piece of paper and stuck it on my refrigerator:

Works of the flesh = Frustration.

I did this to remind myself that any time I felt frustrated, it meant I was trying to make something happen that only God could do. This thought helped me resist the tendency to try to do things without God's grace.

We need to trust in and rely on God's Spirit. He knows what

we are facing in every situation of life. He will work out things for the best if we trust Him enough to allow Him to do so. Remember, it is not by power or by might, but by the Spirit that we are victorious over the enemy (see Zech. 4:6).

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Victory Begins with Right Thinking

As believers, we know God wants us to spend time daily in prayer and studying the Word in order to mature spiritually and stay strong. I tried many times to maintain this spiritual self-discipline, but I always failed. One day, in desperation, I cried out, “Without Your help, God, I’ll never be faithful in doing this!” That’s when the Holy Spirit gave me the self-discipline I needed.

Too many times, we think we can do things all by ourselves and, in some instances, that may be true. But if we’re going to win continually over the attacks against our minds, we must realize that willpower alone won’t work. What we need is the humility to turn to the Holy Spirit and ask Him to strengthen us, for the Bible says, “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit” (Zech. 4:6).

Our heavenly Father cares about every aspect of our lives and wants to intervene and help us, but He waits for an

invitation to get involved. We issue the invitation for God's help through prayer. God's Word says, "You do not have because you do not ask [it of God]" (James 4:2).

Think of it this way. God is aware of the temptations, struggles, and hardships we face. If we think we can overcome them by ourselves, God takes no action. But He remains ready to jump in and rescue us as soon as we cry out, asking for the power of the Holy Spirit to operate in our lives.

Our victory begins with right thinking. We have to be convinced that God cares, that He wants to act and waits for us to ask. When we ask, it is because we understand that it's not by force or power, but by God's Holy Spirit that victory comes.

With the Spirit's help, we can learn to choose carefully what we want to think about. Through regular fellowship with Him, we can recognize the difference between healthy and unhealthy thoughts. If we don't know the difference, we provide the enemy with an opportunity to sneak into our mind and torment us.

Spend plenty of time studying God's Word, and you will quickly recognize each lie that Satan tries to plant in your mind.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Dear loving God, I want to think thoughts that honor You. I want to have a mind fully centered on You, and I know that can't happen unless I spend time daily with You. Help me, Holy Spirit, to be obedient and eager to be in constant fellowship with You. Amen.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, Your words to
Zerubbabel are true for me.
Whatever I do, it is not by
might, nor by power; but by
Your Spirit. The obstacles
before me will become as a
plain.*

• *adapted from Zechariah 4:6–7*

²He said to me, “What do you see?” I said, “I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold, with its bowl [for oil] on the top of it and its seven lamps on it with seven spouts belonging to each of the lamps which are on the top of it. [Matt 5:14, 16; Luke 12:35; Phil 2:15; Rev 1:20]

³“And there are two olive trees by it, one on the right side of the bowl and the other on its left side [supplying it continuously with oil].” [Rev 11:4–13]

⁴So I asked the angel who was speaking with me, “What are these, my lord?”

⁵Then the angel who was speaking with me answered me, “Do you not know what these are?” And I said, “No, my lord.”

⁶Then he said to me, “This [continuous supply of oil] is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel [prince of Judah], saying, ‘Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit [of whom the oil is a symbol],’ says the LORD of hosts.

⁷‘What are you, O great mountain [of obstacles]? Before Zerubbabel [who will rebuild the temple] *you will become* a plain (insignificant)! And he will bring out the capstone [of the new temple] with loud shouts of “Grace, grace to it!”’” [Ezra 4:1–5, 24; Is 40:4]

⁸Also the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

⁹“The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundations of this house, and his hands will finish it. Then you will know (recognize, understand fully) that the LORD of hosts has sent me [as His messenger] to you.

¹⁰“Who [with reason] despises the day of small things (beginnings)? For these seven [eyes] shall rejoice when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. They are the eyes of the LORD which roam throughout the earth.” [Rev 5:6]

¹¹Then I said to him [who was speaking with me], “What are these two olive trees on the right side of the lampstand and on its left?”

¹²And a second time I said to him, “What are these two olive branches which are beside the two golden pipes by which the golden oil is emptied?”

¹³And he answered me, “Do you not know what these are?” And I said, “No, my lord.”

¹⁴Then he said, “These are the two sons of fresh oil [Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel the prince of Judah] who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth [as His anointed ones].” [Rev 11:4]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Small Beginnings Are Important

The Bible tells us to not despise “the day of small things (beginnings)” (Zech. 4:10). I believe we should celebrate every small victory in our lives instead of being discontent or impatient about how far we still have to go to reach full victory.

Contentment is the ability to enjoy where you are while you are on the way to the fulfillment of your dreams. Don't wait until you reach your destination to enjoy life. Life is more about the journey than the destination, and even when we reach one destination, we usually find ourselves beginning a journey toward another. It is a tragedy to never enjoy our journeys in life. Each phase of the journey has something of value in it, and I encourage you not to miss any of it. Your beginning may seem small, but it's the first step toward reaching a wonderful destination.

5 AGAIN I looked up, and I saw a scroll flying *in the air!*

²And the angel said to me, “What do you see?” And I answered, “I see a flying scroll; its length is twenty cubits (thirty feet) and its width is ten cubits (fifteen feet).”

³Then he said to me, “This is the curse that is going out over the face of the whole land; for everyone who steals will be

cut off according to the writing on one side, and everyone who swears [oaths falsely] shall be cut off according to the writing on the other side. [Is 24:6; Mal 3:8, 9]

⁴“I will send the curse out,” declares the LORD of hosts, “and it will enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by My name; and it will spend the night in that house and consume it, both its timber and its stones.”

⁵Then the angel who was speaking with me came forward and said to me, “Now look up and see what this is going forth.”

⁶And I said, “What is it?” And he said, “This is the ephah (grain basket) going forth. This,” he continued, “is their appearance throughout the land [Amos 8:5]

⁷(and behold, a [round, flat] lead cover was lifted up); and there sat a woman inside the ephah.”

⁸Then he said, “This is Wickedness (Godlessness)!” And he threw her back down into the middle of the ephah and threw the lead cover on its opening.

⁹Then I looked up, and there were two women coming out with the wind in their wings; and they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heavens.

¹⁰I said to the angel who was speaking with me, “Where are they taking the ephah?”

¹¹And he said to me, “To the land of Shinar (Babylon) to build a temple for her; and when it is prepared, she shall be set there on her own pedestal.”

6 NOW AGAIN I looked up, and four chariots were coming out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of [firm, immovable] bronze (divine judgment).

²The first chariot had red horses (war, bloodshed), the second chariot had black horses (famine, death), [Rev 6:4–6]

³the third chariot had white horses (victory), and the fourth chariot had strong dappled horses (death through judgment). [Rev 6:2, 8]

⁴Then I said to the angel who was speaking with me, “What are these, my lord?”

⁵The angel answered me, “These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go out after presenting themselves before the Lord of all the earth, [Ps 104:4; Matt 24:31]

⁶with the chariot with the black horses going toward the north country; then the one with the white horses follows after them [because there are two northern powers to overcome], and the chariot with the dappled horses goes toward the south country.”

⁷When the strong horses went out, they were eager to patrol the earth. And the LORD said, “Go, patrol the earth.” So they patrolled the earth [watching and protecting it].

⁸Then He called out to me and said to me, “See, those who are going to the north country have quieted My Spirit [of wrath] in the north country.”

⁹The word of the LORD also came to me, saying,

¹⁰“Take *an offering* from the exiles, from Heldai, from Tobijah, and from Jedaiah [as representatives]; and you go the same day and enter the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah,

where they have arrived from Babylon.

¹¹“Take silver and gold [from them], and make an *ornate* crown and set it on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest.

¹²“Then say to Joshua, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Behold (look, keep in sight, watch), a Man (Messiah) whose name is Branch, for He shall branch out from His place (Israel, the Davidic line); and He shall build the [ultimate] temple of the LORD. [Is 4:2; Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech 3:8]

¹³“Yes, [you are to build a temple of the LORD, but] it is He who shall build the [ultimate] temple of the LORD, and He shall bear the honor *and* majesty [as the only begotten of the Father] and sit and rule on His throne. And He shall be a Priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between the two offices [Priest and King].” ’ [John 1:14; 17:5; Heb 2:9]

¹⁴“Now the crown shall become a reminder in the temple of the LORD to Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Hen the son of Zephaniah. [Matt 10:41]

¹⁵“And those who are far away will come and [help] build the temple of the LORD.” Then you shall know [without any doubt] that the LORD of hosts sent me (Zechariah) to you. And it will come about if you will diligently obey the [voice of the] LORD your God.

7 IN THE fourth year of [the reign of] King Darius [of Persia], the word of the LORD came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, *which is* Chislev (Dec 7, 518 B.C.).

²Now the people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-

melech and their men to seek the favor of the LORD,

³speaking to the priests who belong to the house of the LORD of hosts and to the prophets, saying, “[Now that I am returned from exile] shall I weep in the fifth month [mourning the destruction of the temple], and fast as I have done these many years [in Babylon]?”

⁴Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me (Zechariah), saying,

⁵“Speak to all the people of the land and to the priests, saying, ‘When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months these seventy years [that you were in exile], was it actually for Me that you fasted?’

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, I pray that I will always
dispense true justice and
practice kindness and
compassion toward others.*

• adapted from Zechariah 7:9

⁶“When you eat and when you drink, do you not eat for yourselves and do you not drink for yourselves [to satisfy your own needs]?”

⁷“Should you not hear the words which the LORD proclaimed by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and prosperous along with her cities around her, and the South (the Negev) and the foothills were inhabited?””

⁸Then the word of the LORD came to Zechariah, saying,

⁹“Thus has the LORD of hosts said, ‘Dispense true justice and practice kindness and compassion, to each other;

¹⁰and do not oppress *or* exploit the widow or the fatherless, the stranger or the poor; and do not devise *or* even imagine evil in your hearts against one another.’

¹¹“But they refused to listen *and* pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder [stiffening themselves in resistance] and stopped up their ears.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Set Your Mind To Agree with God's Will

You may not realize how strong you are when you simply set your mind to do something. This works in both positive and negative ways. If you set your mind on things above, the devil cannot stop you. If you set your mind on the things of the world, receiving God's help can be difficult (see Col. 3:2). Even though God can show you the truth in His Word, you will struggle to accept it if your mind is set against His will and His ways (see Zech. 7:12).

When your mind is truly set, nothing will change it. Make up your mind that you are going to live for God's glory and that you will not allow anything change it.

¹²“They made their hearts [hard] like flint, so that they could not hear the law and the words which the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great wrath came from the LORD of hosts.

¹³“And just as He called and they would not listen, so they called and I would not listen,” says the LORD of hosts;

¹⁴“but I scattered them with a storm wind among all the nations whom they have not known. Thus the land was desolate after they had gone, so that no one passed through or returned, for they [by their sins] had made the pleasant land desolate *and* deserted.””

8 THEN THE word of the LORD of hosts came [to me], saying,

2“Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy [demanding what is rightfully and uniquely mine], and I am jealous for her with great wrath [against her enemies].’

3“Thus says the LORD, ‘I shall return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called the [faithful] City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain.’

4“Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Old men and old women will again sit in the streets (public places) of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand because of his advanced age.

5‘And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in its streets.’

6“Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘If it is difficult in the eyes of the remnant of this people in those days [in which this comes to pass], will it also be difficult in My sight?’ declares the LORD of hosts. [Gen 18:14; Jer 32:17, 27; Luke 18:27]

7“Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Behold, I am going to save My people from the east country and from the west, [Is 43:5, 6]

8and I will bring them home and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God in truth (faithfulness) and in righteousness.’

9“Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Let your hands be strong, you who in these days hear these words from the mouths of the prophets who, on the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, foretold that the temple might be rebuilt.

¹⁰‘For before those days there were no wages for man or animal; nor was there any peace *or* success for him who went out or came in because of his enemies, for I set all men against one another.

¹¹‘But now [in this time since you began to build] I will not treat the remnant of this people as in the former days,’ declares the LORD of hosts.

¹²‘For there the seed will produce peace *and* prosperity; the vine will yield its fruit, and the ground will produce its increase, and the heavens will give their dew. And I will cause the remnant of this people to inherit *and* possess all these things.

¹³‘And as you have been a curse among the nations, O house of Judah (Southern Kingdom) and house of Israel (Northern Kingdom), so I will save you, that you may be a blessing. Fear not; let your hands be strong.’ [Jer 22:8, 9]

¹⁴‘For thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Just as I planned to do harm to you when your fathers provoked Me to wrath,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘and I did not relent,

¹⁵so I have again planned in these days to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear!

¹⁶‘These are the things which you should do: speak the truth with one another; judge with truth and pronounce the judgment that brings peace in [the courts at] your gates. [Eph 4:25]

¹⁷‘And let none of you devise *or* even imagine evil in your heart against another, and do not love lying *or* half-truths; for all these things I hate,’ declares the LORD.”

¹⁸Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me

(Zechariah), saying,

¹⁹“Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘The fast of the fourth [month to mourn the breaching of Jerusalem’s walls], the fast of the fifth [month to mourn the temple’s destruction], the fast of the seventh [month to mourn Gedaliah’s assassination], and the fast of the tenth [month to mourn the siege of Jerusalem] will become times of joy and gladness and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah; so [to bring this about] love truth and peace.’ [Jer 39:2; 2 Kin 25:1, 2, 8, 25]

Speak God's Word

*I will not devise or even
imagine evil in my heart
against another person, and I
will not love lying or half-
truths, for the Lord hates
these things.*

| *adapted from ZECHARIAH 8:17*

|

²⁰“Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘It will come to pass that peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will come [to Jerusalem].

²¹‘The inhabitants of one [city] will go to another, saying, “Let us go at once to ask the favor of the LORD and to seek the LORD of hosts. I will go also.”’

²²‘So many peoples and powerful nations will come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to ask the LORD for His favor.’

²³“Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘In those days ten men [as representatives] from all the nations will grasp the robe of a Jew, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.””’

9 THE ORACLE (a burdensome message) of the word of the LORD is against the land of Hadrach [in Syria], with Damascus as its resting place (for the eyes of men, especially of all the tribes of Israel, are toward the LORD), [Nah 1:1]

²And Hamath also, which borders on it (Damascus),
Tyre and Sidon, though they are very wise.

³For Tyre built herself an [impregnable] stronghold [on an island offshore],
And she has heaped up silver like dust
And gold like the mire of the streets.

⁴Behold, the Lord will dispossess her
And throw her wealth into the sea;
And Tyre will be devoured by fire.

⁵Ashkelon will see it and fear;
Gaza will writhe in pain,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The Humility of Jesus

Zechariah 9:9 is a beautiful prophecy of the King Who would eventually be known as the Messiah, and it highlights His righteousness and humility.

What are some of the characteristics of humble people? Truly humble people always lean on and rely on God for strength. They are quick to repent when they do something wrong. Humble people always apologize if they have hurt or offended somebody. They are willing to listen to reason and to seriously consider the opinions of others. Truly humble people are not rude, because they value others (see Phil. 2:4). They realize other people are equally as valuable as they are. Truly humble people give credit to God and to those who help them get to where they are. Humble people show appreciation, taking the time to thank others for seemingly insignificant gestures of kindness, encouragement, or support.

Jesus came to us as “righteous and endowed with salvation, humble and unassuming [in submission to the will of the Father]” (Zech. 9:9), and He teaches us that truly great people serve others (see Matt. 20:27–28). Humility is needed in order to serve others with the right motives and a good attitude. Jesus’ motives are always pure and honorable, and His attitude is always loving and above reproach.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Jesus, that You
are my King! You are
righteous and endowed with
salvation, humble and
unassuming in submission to
the Father's will.*

• adapted from Zechariah 9:9

And Ekron, for her hope *and* expectation, has been ruined.
The king will perish from Gaza,
And Ashkelon will not be inhabited.

⁶And a mongrel race will live in Ashdod,
And I will put an end to the pride *and* arrogance of the
Philistines.

⁷I will take the blood from their mouths
And their detestable things from between their teeth [those
repulsive, idolatrous sacrifices eaten with the blood].
Then they too will be a remnant for our God,
And be like a clan in Judah,

And Ekron will be like one of the Jebusites.

⁸Then I will camp around My house [as a guard] because of an army,
Because of him who passes by and returns;
And no oppressor will again overrun them (Israel),
For now My eyes are upon them [providentially protecting them].

⁹Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, O Daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your King (Messianic King) is coming to you;
He is righteous and endowed with salvation,
Humble *and* unassuming [in submission to the will of the Father] and riding on a donkey,
Upon a colt, the foal of a donkey.

¹⁰I will cut off the [war] chariot from Ephraim
And the [war] horse from Jerusalem,
And the bow of war will be cut off.
And He will speak [words of] peace to the nations,
And His dominion shall be from sea to sea [absolutely endless],
And from the River [Euphrates] to the ends of the earth. [Ps 72:8]

¹¹As for you also, because of the blood of My covenant with you [My chosen people, the covenant that was sealed with blood]
I have freed your prisoners from the waterless pit. [Gen 37:24; Ex 24:4–8; Heb 9:16]

¹²Return to the stronghold [of security and prosperity], O

prisoners who have the hope;

Even today I am declaring that I will restore double [your former prosperity] to you [as firstborn among nations].
[Ps 40:2; Is 40:2]

¹³For I will bend Judah as My bow,

I will fit the bow with Ephraim [as My arrow].

And I will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece,

And will make you [Israel] like the sword of a warrior.

¹⁴Then the LORD will be seen [hovering] over them [protecting His people],

And His arrow will go forth like lightning;

And the Lord GOD will blow the trumpet

And will march in the windstorms of the south.

¹⁵The LORD of hosts shall defend *and* protect them;

POWERPOINT

When you are dealing with difficulties in life, as we all do at times, the enemy wants you to be hopeless, not hopeful. He will try to manipulate your mind and cause you to focus on your problems instead of thinking about Jesus and His many promises. When trouble comes, don't let the cares and anxieties of the world make you hopeless. Be a prisoner of hope (see Zech. 9:12) and put your trust in God Who can do anything!



WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Become a Prisoner of Hope

Zechariah 9:12 uses an interesting phrase pertaining to our relationship with hope. In many translations of this verse, God refers to His people as “prisoners of hope.” I like the idea that we are prisoners of hope—that we can be so hopeful we feel we cannot escape from hope, as though we are held and trapped in it.

Think about it. If you’re a prisoner of hope, you have no choice about it. You can’t be negative; you can’t be a worrier; you can’t be hopeless. When times are tough and you’re dealing with disappointment, the hope that surrounds you will cause you to rise up in faith. Everything around you will tell you that God can make a way. When that happens, you are emboldened to believe and declare, “Good things are happening to me and through me!”

God wants us to be locked up in hope, trusting that He can change whatever needs to be changed in our lives. No matter what we feel or how things look, we can believe that God is working and that we will see positive change at just the right

time. Hope is filled with the expectation that something good is going to happen at any moment. When you come to the end of your rope—when your strength falters and fails—the story isn't over. There is no limit to God's strength and ability. If you will be steadfast in your hope, you can't lose.

If you make the decision to become a prisoner of hope—to live surrounded by the happy anticipation that God is going to do something good—God may very well exceed your best hopes and wildest expectations. Whatever goal or dream God has placed in your heart, you're going to see it come to pass. It might not happen when you thought it would happen, and it might not happen in the way you thought it would, but God can do superabundantly more than you dared to ask for or think (see Eph. 3:20). You won't have to make anything happen in your own strength. All you have to do is persevere; just don't give up. Surround yourself with hope and stay locked inside of it as in a prison—and watch God bless you in ways you never thought possible.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God of hope, I pray that You will make me a prisoner of hope—that I will be so filled with the confident expectation of the good things You will do in me and through me that I cannot escape! In Jesus' name. Amen.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Is Good

We often hear people say, “God is good,” but do we realize how amazingly good He truly is? God sent His Son to pay for our sins when we were still yet sinners and did not know Him or care about Him (see Eph. 2:4–5). God is merciful, long-suffering, and kind to us, and it is an understatement to say that we don’t deserve it. He reaches out to us from His goodness, not ours (see Zech. 9:17). God gives, heals, restores, and helps at all times, and our part is to simply believe He is good, to ask in faith, and to receive with thanksgiving.

As we realize how good God is, we will want to serve Him with our whole heart and be obedient to His will at all times. Let God’s goodness draw you to Him today and every day of your life.

And they will devour [the enemy] and trample down the
slingstones [that have missed their mark],

And they will drink [of victory] and be boisterous as with
wine;

And they shall be filled like *sacrificial* bowls [used to catch
the blood],

Drenched like the corners of the [sacrificial] altar.

¹⁶And the LORD their God shall save them on that day
As the flock of His people;

For they are like the [precious] jewels of a crown,
Displayed *and* glittering in His land.

¹⁷For how great is God's goodness and how great is His
beauty! And how great [He will make Israel's] goodliness
and [Israel's] beauty!

Grain and new wine will make the young men and virgins
flourish.

10 ASK *FOR* rain from the LORD at the time of the spring
rain.

It is the LORD who makes the thunder clouds;
And He will give them showers of rain, grass in the field to
everyone.

²For the teraphim (household idols) speak wickedness
(emptiness, worthlessness),
And the diviners see lying visions
And tell false dreams;
They comfort in vain.

Therefore the people wander like sheep,
They are afflicted *and* suffer because there is no shepherd.

³“My anger is kindled against the shepherds [who are not
true shepherds],
And I shall punish the male goats (leaders);
For the LORD of hosts has visited His flock, the house of
Judah (the Southern Kingdom),
And will make them like His beautiful *and* majestic horse in
the battle. [Ezek 34:1–10]

4“From them (Judah) shall come the Cornerstone,
From them the tent peg,
From them the bow of battle,
From them every ruler, all of them together. [Jer 30:21]

5“They will be like mighty men
Trampling down *their enemies* in the mire of the streets in
the battle;
And they will fight because the LORD is with them,
And the [enemies'] riders on horses will be shamed.

6“I will strengthen the house of Judah [making it superior],
And I will save the house of Joseph.
I will bring them back [and allow them to live securely],
Because I have had compassion on them.
They will be as though I had not rejected them,
For I am the LORD their God, and I will listen *and* answer
them.

7“Then Ephraim will be like a mighty warrior,
And their heart will rejoice as if from wine;
Yes, their children will see it and rejoice;
Their heart will rejoice *and* shout triumphantly in the LORD.

8“I will whistle for them and gather them together,
For I have redeemed them;
And they will increase [again] as they have increased
before [in Egypt]. [Ezek 36:10, 11]

9“When I scatter them among the nations,
They will remember Me in far countries,
And with their children they will live and come back [to Me
and the land I gave them].

- ¹⁰“I will bring them (all Israel) back home again from the land of Egypt
And gather them from Assyria,
And I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon
[the land on the east and on the west of the Jordan]
Until no room can be found for them.
- ¹¹“And they will pass through the sea of distress *and* anxiety
[with the LORD leading His people, as at the Red Sea]
And He will strike the waves in the sea,
So that all the depths of the Nile will dry up;
And the pride of Assyria will be brought down
And the scepter [of the taskmasters] of Egypt will pass away.
- ¹²“And I will strengthen Israel in the LORD,
And they will walk [and glory] in His name,” declares the LORD.

11 OPEN YOUR doors, O Lebanon,
That fire may devour your cedars.

²Wail, O cypress, for the cedar has fallen,
Because the magnificent trees have been destroyed;
Wail, O oaks of Bashan,
For the inaccessible forest [on the steep mountainside] has come down.

³There is a sound of the shepherds' wail,
For their splendor (grazing land) is ruined;
There is a sound of the young lions' roar,

For the pride of the Jordan is ruined.

⁴Thus says the LORD my God, “Pasture the flock *doomed* for slaughter,

⁵whose buyers slay them and go unpunished, and those who sell them say, ‘Blessed be the LORD, for I have become rich!’ And their own shepherds have no pity on them *nor* protect them [from the wolves].

⁶“For I will no longer have pity on the inhabitants of the land,” declares the LORD; “but behold, I will cause the men to fall, each into the hand of another and into the hands of his [foreign] king. And the enemy will strike the land, and I will not rescue the people from their hand.”

⁷So I [Zechariah] pastured the flock *doomed* for slaughter, truly [as the name implies] the most miserable of sheep. And I took two [shepherd’s] staffs, the one I called Favor (Grace) and the other I called Union (Bonds); so I pastured the flock.

⁸Then I eliminated the three [incompetent, unfit] shepherds [the civil rulers, the priests, and the prophets] in one month, for I was impatient with them, and they also were tired of me *and* despised me. [Jer 2:8, 26; 18:18]

⁹So I said, “I will not pasture you. What is to die, let it die, and what is to be destroyed, let it be destroyed; and let the survivors devour one another’s flesh.”

¹⁰I took my staff, Favor, and broke it in pieces, breaking the covenant which I had made with all the peoples.

¹¹So the covenant was broken on that day, and thus the most wretched of the flock who were watching me realized that it was the word of the LORD.

¹²I said to them, “If it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, do not.” So they weighed out thirty pieces of silver as my wages.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Be Honest About Your Emotions

In Zechariah 11:8, Zechariah speaks frankly about his feelings toward the three incompetent shepherds and about their negative opinion of him. He was impatient with them, and they were tired of him and even despised him! It's important to see this because the first step toward managing our emotions, especially anger or impatience, is to be honest about them. Zechariah certainly was.

In considering this, you may think, *I have so many strong feelings about so many things. How will I ever manage them all?* God often deals with these issues one at a time, so be encouraged. He will help you in a way that will set you up to succeed.

The more you grow in understanding your thoughts and emotions, the better you can identify why you feel the way you feel at times. For example, if you can understand what frustrates you, you can better prepare yourself to guard against it when it happens.

In learning to better manage your emotions, it's vital to

depend on God and be determined not to be a slave to your feelings. Change is not always easy, especially when learning to develop new thought patterns or emotional habits. There may even be times when you wonder if you will ever get it right.

I assure you that if you will not give up, you will keep making progress. Eventually you will have many of your emotions trained, and they will no longer be unruly. They will respond in the same way children do when they are trained properly. The more we refuse to let negative emotions rule us, the weaker they become, and eventually all they need is daily maintenance.

If you, like Zechariah, have struggled with anger and impatience, I am not saying you will never be angry or lose your temper again, but the impatience you do feel will be much easier to manage than it has been in the past. I can honestly say that I was once very emotional and now I am very stable. Gaining a victory is always more challenging than maintaining it once you have it. I encourage you to commit today to managing your intense feelings successfully, believing that God wants you to live in emotional stability, and He will help you do it.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God, I believe that You want me to live at peace and in emotional stability. Help me to be honest about my emotions, to understand why I feel the way I feel, and to be determined not to let my feelings rule over me, with Your help. In Jesus' name. Amen.

¹³Then the LORD said to me, “Throw it to the potter [as if to the dogs]—that *magnificent* sum at which I am valued by them!” So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the LORD. [Matt 26:14, 15; 27:3–10]

¹⁴Then I broke my second staff, Union, into pieces to break the brotherhood between Judah (the Southern Kingdom) and Israel (the Northern Kingdom).

¹⁵The LORD said to me, “Take again for yourself the equipment [of a shepherd, but this time] of a foolish shepherd. [Ezek 34:2–6]

¹⁶“For behold, I am going to raise up a [false] shepherd in the land who will not care for the perishing, seek the scattered, heal the broken, or feed the healthy; but will eat the flesh of the fat ones and tear off their hoofs [to consume everything].

¹⁷“Woe (judgment is coming) to the worthless *and* foolish shepherd

Who deserts the flock!

The sword will strike his arm

And his right eye!

His arm shall be totally withered

And his right eye completely blinded.” [Jer 23:1; John 10:12,

13]

12 THE ORACLE (a burdensome message) of the word of the LORD concerning Israel.

Thus declares the LORD who stretches out the heavens and

lays the foundation of the earth and forms the spirit of man within him:

2“Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling (staggering) to all the surrounding peoples; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah.

3“And in that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will come *and* be gathered against it.

4“In that day,” declares the LORD, “I will strike every horse with panic and his rider with madness; but I will open My eyes *and* watch over the house of Judah, and will strike every horse of the [opposing] nations with blindness.

5“Then the clans of Judah will say in their hearts, ‘The inhabitants of Jerusalem are our strength in the LORD of hosts, their God.’

6“In that day I will make the clans of Judah like a firepot in a woodpile, and like a flaming torch among sheaves [of grain]. They will devour all the surrounding peoples on the right hand and on the left; and the people of Jerusalem will again live [securely] in their own place, in Jerusalem.

7“*The LORD shall save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem will not be magnified above Judah.*

8“*In that day the LORD will defend the people of Jerusalem, and the one who is impaired among them in that day [of persecution] will become [strong and noble] like David; and the house of David will be like God, like the Angel of the LORD [who is] before them.*

9“*And in that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that*

come against Jerusalem.

¹⁰“I will pour out on the house of David and on the people of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace (unmerited favor) and supplication. And they will look at Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him as one who weeps bitterly over a firstborn. [John 19:37; Rev 1:7]

¹¹“In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of [the city of] Hadadrimmon in the Valley of Megiddo [over beloved King Josiah]. [2 Chr 35:22–25]

¹²“The land will mourn, every family by itself; the [royal] family of the house of David by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan [David’s son] by itself and their wives by themselves;

¹³the [priestly] family of the house of Levi by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of Shimei [grandson of Levi] by itself and their wives by themselves;

¹⁴all the families that remain, each by itself, and their wives by themselves [each with an overwhelming individual regret for having blindly rejected their Messiah].

13 “IN THAT day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the people of Jerusalem for [cleansing from] sin and impurity.

²“In that day,” declares the LORD of hosts, “I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they will no longer be remembered. I will also remove the [false] prophets and the unclean spirit from the land.

³“And if anyone still [appears as a prophet and falsely] prophesies, then his father and his mother who gave birth to him will say to him, ‘You shall not live, for you have spoken lies in the name of the LORD’; and his father and his mother who gave birth to him shall pierce him through when he prophesies.

⁴“And in that day the [false] prophets will each be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies, and they will not wear a hairy robe [of true prophets] in order to deceive,

⁵but he will [deny his identity and] say, ‘I am no prophet. I work the ground, because a man sold me as a slave in my youth.’

⁶“And one will say to him, ‘What are these wounds between your arms?’ Then he will answer, ‘Those wounds I received in the house of my friends.’

⁷“Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd,
And against the Man, My Associate,”
Declares the LORD of hosts.

“Strike the Shepherd so that the sheep [of the flock] may be scattered;
And I will turn My hand *and* stretch it out against the little ones [of the flock]. [Matt 26:31, 32]

⁸“It will come about in all the land,”
Declares the LORD,
“Two parts in it will be cut off and perish,
But the third will be left alive. [Hos 2:23; Rom 11:5]

⁹“And I will bring the third part through the fire,
Refine them as silver is refined,
And test them as gold is tested.

They will call on My name,
And I will listen *and* answer them;
I will say, ‘They are My people,’
And they will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’”

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that I can
call on You, and You will
listen and answer me. You are
my God.*

• *adapted from Zechariah 13:9*

14 BEHOLD, A day is coming for the LORD when the spoil taken from you (Jerusalem) will be divided in your midst.

²For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured and the houses plundered and the women ravished; and half of the city will be exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city.

³Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle.

⁴In that day His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives, which lies before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in half from the east to the west by a very large valley, and half of the mountain will move toward the north and half of it toward the south. [Is 64:1, 2]

⁵You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; and you will flee just as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones (believers, angels) with Him. [Amos 1:1; Col 3:4; 1 Thess 4:14; Jude 14, 15]

⁶In that day there will be no light; the glorious ones (heavenly bodies) shall be darkened.

⁷But it will be a unique day which is known to the LORD—not day and not night, but at evening time there will be light.

⁸And in that day living waters will flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea (Dead Sea) and half of them to the western sea (the Mediterranean); it will be in summer as well as in winter.

⁹And the LORD shall be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD shall be *the only* one [worshiped], and His name *the only* one.

¹⁰All the land will be changed into a plain from Geba to Rimmon, [the Rimmon that is] south of Jerusalem; but Jerusalem will rise and remain [lifted up] on its site from Benjamin's Gate to the place of the First Gate to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's wine

presses.

¹¹It will be inhabited, for there will no longer be a curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in security. [Rev 22:3]

¹²Now this will be the plague with which the LORD shall strike all the peoples that have warred against Jerusalem: Their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongue will rot in their mouth.

¹³In that day a great panic *and* dismay from the LORD will fall on them; and they will seize one another's hand, and the hand of the one will be raised against the hand of the other.

¹⁴Judah also will fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the surrounding nations will be gathered together—gold and silver and garments in great abundance.

¹⁵So like this plague [on men] there will be the plague on the horses, mules, camels, donkeys, and all the livestock in those camps.

¹⁶Then everyone who is left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and celebrate the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles).

¹⁷And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain on them.

¹⁸If the family of Egypt does not go up [to Jerusalem] and present themselves, then no *rain will fall* on them. It will be the plague with which the LORD will strike the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles).

¹⁹This will be the [consequent] punishment [for the sin] of Egypt, and the [consequent] punishment [for the sin] of all the

nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles).

²⁰In that day there will *be written* on the little bells on the horses, “HOLY TO THE LORD.” And the cooking pots in the LORD’s house will be [holy to the LORD] like the bowls before the altar.

²¹Every cooking pot in [all the houses in] Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to the LORD of hosts, and all who sacrifice will come and take them and boil [their sacrifices] in them. And in that day there will no longer be a Canaanite [that is, any godless or spiritually unclean person, whether Jew or Gentile] in the house of the LORD of hosts. [Eph 2:19–22]

Malachi

Author: | Malachi

Date: | About 450
BC

If I had to briefly summarize the theme of the book of Malachi, I would say it is “religion versus relationship.” While other books near the end of the Old Testament encourage the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem, Malachi writes *after* the temple has been rebuilt. Other prophets hoped the temple would give the Jews a place to worship God, restoring honor for God among the people. Unfortunately, once the temple was complete, their worship was superficial and not from the heart. Neither the priests nor the people worshiped with right attitudes or with actions based on sincere love for God.

Mere religion may give people a sense of satisfying some kind of spiritual requirement, but only genuine relationship with God brings true peace, joy, and fulfillment. Let me encourage you to prioritize your relationship with God over everything and everyone else.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM MALACHI:

The length or eloquence of our prayers does not impress God. He wants us to pray in uncomplicated faith as the Holy Spirit leads us (see Malachi 2:17).

One way to be victorious in your faith is to allow the Lord to purify and refine your heart (see Malachi 3:3).

Tithing paves the way for God's blessing in our lives, and the enemy is rebuked when we give faithfully to the Lord (see Malachi 3:10–11).

Contend for reconciliation—the true heart of the gospel (see Malachi 4:6).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM MALACHI:

For I am the LORD, I do not change [but remain faithful to My covenant with you]; that is why you, O sons of Jacob, have not come to an end. | Malachi 3:6

“Bring all the tithes (the tenth) into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,” says the LORD of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you [so great] a blessing until there is no more room to receive it.” | Malachi 3:10

For you who fear My name [with awe-filled reverence] the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. | Malachi 4:2

THE BOOK OF
MALACHI

1 THE ORACLE (burdensome message) of the word of the LORD to Israel through [My messenger] Malachi.

²“I have loved you,” says the LORD. But you say, “How *and* in what way have You loved us?” “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” declares the LORD. “Yet I loved Jacob (Israel);

³but [in comparison with My love for Jacob] I have hated Esau (Edom), and I have made his mountains a wasteland, and *have given* his inheritance to the jackals of the wilderness.” [Rom 9:13, 16]

⁴Though [impoverished] Edom says, “We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins.” Thus says the LORD of hosts, “They may build, but I will tear down; and men will call them the Wicked Territory, the people against whom the LORD is indignant forever.”

⁵Your own eyes will see this and you will say, “The LORD is great *and* shall be magnified beyond the border of Israel!” [Is 34; 63:1–6; Jer 49:7–22; Ezek 25:12–14; Obad 1]

⁶“A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a Father, where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is the [reverent] fear *and* respect due Me?” says the

LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise My name. But you say, ‘How *and* in what way have we despised Your name?’

⁷“You are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, ‘How have we defiled You?’ By thinking that the table of the LORD is contemptible *and* may be despised.

⁸“When you [priests] present the blind [animals] for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and the sick, is it not evil? Offer such a thing [as a blind or lame or sick animal] to your governor [as a gift or as payment for your taxes]. Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you graciously?” says the LORD of hosts.

⁹“But now will you not entreat God’s favor, that He may be gracious to us? With such an offering from your hand [as an imperfect animal for sacrifice], will He show favor to any of you?” says the LORD of hosts.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, You are a great King. I
reverently and greatly fear
Your name.*

¹⁰“Oh, that there were even one among you [whose duty it is to minister to Me] who would shut the gates, so that you would not kindle *fire on* My altar uselessly [with an empty, worthless pretense]! I am not pleased with you,” says the LORD of hosts, “nor will I accept an offering from your hand.

¹¹“For from the rising of the sun, even to its setting, My name shall be great among the nations. In every place incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering that is pure; for My name shall be great among the nations,” says the LORD of hosts.

POWERPOINT

There is great power in the name of the Lord (see Mal. 2:5).

After Jesus humbled Himself and died on the cross, He was given the name above every other name, that at the name of

Jesus every knee must bow (see Phil. 2:8–10). We should always revere and honor the name of the Lord and be careful to never use His name in vain (uselessly). When I hear people take His name in vain, I cringe because His name is holy!

Value the name of Jesus above all other names, and remember that when you speak His name in faith or in praise and worship, great power is released.



¹²“But you [priests] profane it when you say, ‘The table of

the Lord is defiled, and as for its fruit, its food is to be despised.’

¹³“You also say, ‘How tiresome this is!’ And you disdainfully sniff at it,” says the LORD of hosts, “and you bring what was taken by robbery, and the lame or the sick [animals]; this you bring as an offering! Should I receive it with pleasure from your hand?” says the LORD. [Lev 1:3; Deut 15:21]

¹⁴“But cursed is the swindler who has a male in his flock and vows [to offer] it, but sacrifices to the Lord a blemished *or* diseased thing! For I am a great King,” says the LORD of hosts, “and My name is to be [reverently and greatly] feared among the nations.”

2 “NOW, O priests, this commandment is for you.

²“If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to honor My name,” says the LORD of hosts, “then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings [on the people]. Indeed, I have cursed them already, because you are not taking it to heart.

³“Behold, I am going to rebuke your seed, and I will spread the refuse on your faces, the refuse from the festival offerings; and you will be taken away with it [in disgrace].

⁴“Then you will know [without any doubt] that I have sent this [new] commandment to you (priests), that My covenant may continue with Levi [the priestly tribe],” says the LORD of hosts.

⁵“My covenant with Levi was [one of] life and peace, and I gave them to him as an object of reverence; so he [and the

priests] feared Me and stood in reverent awe of My name.

⁶“True instruction was in Levi’s mouth and injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from wickedness.

⁷“For the lips of the priest should guard *and* preserve knowledge [of My law], and the people should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

⁸“But as for you [priests], you have turned from the way and you have caused many to stumble by your instruction [in the law]. You have violated the covenant of Levi,” says the LORD of hosts.

⁹“So I have also made you despised and abased before all the people, just as you are not keeping My ways but are showing partiality [to people] in [your administration of] the law.”

¹⁰Do we not all have one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers [with God]?

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The One True God

In the Old Testament, the Israelites seemed to make a big deal out of God being “one” (see Ps. 50:1; Mal. 2:10). Why?

Pagans who lived in Malachi’s day were deceived into believing there was a god for everything—to have a baby, they talked to the god of fertility; to grow crops, they talked to the god of the harvest. All these different gods required different sacrifices for healing, peace, or whatever the people lacked. Can you imagine how complicated it must have been for them?

That’s why it was such good news when the one true God revealed Himself and told the people that He satisfied all their needs. If you need peace, if you need righteousness, if you need hope, if you need joy, if you need healing, if you need a financial breakthrough—whatever you need, simply go to the one true God.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Short, Simple, Powerful Prayer

In Malachi 2:17, we read that the people “wearied the LORD” with their words. While God is always listening to us and eager to hear what is on our heart, one lesson I am learning is to try to communicate with Him as simply as possible, especially when I pray.

One of the biggest lies Satan tells people about prayer is that it needs to take a long time and that we must use only the right words. I am convinced that prayer does not have to be long or eloquent to be powerful. It does not have to be short and succinct to be powerful either. The length of our prayers and the number of words they contain make no difference to God. All that matters is that we pray the way the Holy Spirit leads us to pray, that our prayers are accompanied by true faith, and that we present our requests plainly.

We can get so tangled up in the words we pray that we lose the power of our prayer. It is certainly important to pray for an extended period of time if the Spirit leads you to do so, but don't fall into the enemy's trap of thinking your prayers must be lengthy and wordy in order for God to hear and answer them.

¹¹Judah has been treacherous (disloyal), and an repulsive act has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah

has profaned the sanctuary of the LORD which He loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god. [Ezra 9:2; Jer 2:3]

¹²As for the man who does this, may the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob to the last man those who do this [evil thing], awake and aware, even the one who brings an offering to the LORD of hosts.

¹³This is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with [your own] weeping and sighing, because the LORD no longer regards your offering or accepts it with favor from your hand.

¹⁴But you say, “Why [does He reject it]?” Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously. Yet she is your marriage companion and the wife of your covenant [made by your vows].

¹⁵But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did that one do while seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth.

¹⁶“For I hate divorce,” says the LORD, the God of Israel, “and him who covers his garment with wrong *and* violence,” says the LORD of hosts. “Therefore keep watch on your spirit, so that you do not deal treacherously [with your wife].”

¹⁷You have wearied the LORD with your words. But you say, “In what way have we wearied Him?” In that you say, “Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them,” or [by asking], “Where is the God of justice?”

3 “BEHOLD, I am going to send My messenger, and he will prepare *and* clear the way before Me. And the Lord [the Messiah], whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the LORD of hosts. [Matt 11:10; Luke 1:13–17, 76]

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*God, You are like a refiner's
fire and like launderer's soap.
Remove the impurities and
uncleanness from me.*

• adapted from Malachi 3:2

²“But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderer's soap [which removes impurities and uncleanness]. [Rev 6:12–17]

³He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and He will

purify the sons of Levi [the priests], and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD [grain] offerings in righteousness.

4“Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in ancient years.

5“Then I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against adulterers, against perjurers, and against those who oppress the laborer in his wages and widows and the fatherless, and *against* those who turn away the alien [from his right], and those who do not fear Me [with awe-filled reverence],” says the LORD of hosts. [Deut 24:17]

6“For I am the LORD, I do not change [but remain faithful to My covenant with you]; that is why you, O sons of Jacob, have not come to an end.

7“Yet from the days of your fathers you have turned away from My statutes *and* ordinances and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD of hosts. “But you say, ‘How shall we return?’

8“Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings [you have withheld].

9“*You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, this whole nation!* [Lev 26:14–17]

10“Bring all the tithes (the tenth) into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,” says the LORD of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you [so great] a blessing until there is no more room to receive it. [Mal 2:2]

11“Then I will rebuke the devourer (insects, plague) for

your sake and he will not destroy the fruits of the ground, nor will your vine in the field drop *its grapes* [before harvest],” says the LORD of hosts.

¹²“All nations shall call you happy *and* blessed, for you shall be a land of delight,” says the LORD of hosts.

¹³“Your words have been harsh against Me,” says the LORD. “But you say, ‘What have we spoken against You?’

¹⁴“You have said, ‘It is useless to serve God. What profit is it if we keep His ordinances, and walk around like mourners before the LORD of hosts?

¹⁵“So now we call the arrogant happy *and* blessed. Evildoers are exalted *and* prosper; and when they test God, they escape [unpunished].”

¹⁶Then those who feared the LORD [with awe-filled reverence] spoke to one another; and the LORD paid attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him of those who fear the LORD [with an attitude of reverence and respect] and who esteem His name.

¹⁷“They will be Mine,” says the LORD of hosts, “on that day when I publicly recognize them *and* openly declare them to be My own possession [that is, My very special treasure]. And I will have compassion on them *and* spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.”

POWERPOINT

In order to live in God's blessings, we need to have the proper mindset about tithing.

Malachi 3:8–10 says that withholding tithes is equal to robbing God. As believers who love and honor God, we certainly don't want to steal from Him. In addition to paving the way for the blessed life God wants us to enjoy, tithing also rebukes the devourer—the enemy. The enemy attacks in many ways. One sure way to rebuke him is to be faithful in giving to the Lord.



Speak God's Word

*When I bring all the tithes
into the storehouse, so that
there may be food in God's
house, the Lord of hosts will
open the windows of heaven
and pour out for me so great
a blessing that there is no
more room to receive it.*

| adapted from MALACHI 3:10 |

¹⁸Then you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between the one who serves God and the one who does not serve Him.

4 “FOR BEHOLD, the day is coming, burning like a furnace, and all the arrogant (proud, self-righteous, haughty), and every evildoer shall be stubble; and the day that is coming shall set them on fire,” says the LORD of hosts, “so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. [Is 5:21–25; Matt 3:12]

²“But for you who fear My name [with awe-filled reverence] the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go forward and leap [joyfully] like calves

[released] from the stall.

³“You will trample the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this,” says the LORD of hosts.

⁴“Remember [with thoughtful concern] the Law of Moses My servant, the statutes and the ordinances which I commanded him on [Mount] Horeb [to give] to all Israel.

⁵“Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. [Matt 11:14; 17:10–13]

⁶“He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers [a reconciliation produced by repentance], so that I will not come and strike the land with a curse [of complete destruction].” [Luke 1:17]

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Thank You, Lord, that for those who fear Your name with awe-filled reverence, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And

*I will go forward and leap
joyfully like a calf released
from a stall.*

• *adapted from Malachi 4:2*

THE
New Testament

Matthew

Author: |
Attributed to Matthew
Date: | Probably
shortly before AD 70

The Gospel of Matthew begins both the New Testament and the four Gospels—the stories and lessons of Jesus’ life and ministry. Matthew focuses on the teaching aspect of Jesus’ ministry. This is important because the more we learn from what Jesus said and did, the better we can renew our minds according to His teachings and the more effectively we can win the battle of the mind.

In this book, especially in “The Sermon on the Mount” (see chapters 5–7), we can learn many lessons about how to think, how to speak, and how to live. In Matthew 5:3–11, Jesus speaks in specific terms about how we can live a blessed life.

I pray you will become familiar with all of Jesus’ teachings so you can obey His Word and reap the benefits of obedience.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM MATTHEW:

Declare war against worry by seeking God and His Kingdom first; He knows what you need and will provide for you (see Matthew 6:25–33).

The Word of God is a weapon that helps us recognize and change judgmental and critical thoughts (see Matthew 7:1–5).

A great way to attack doubts in your mind is by asking God to fill you with faith (see Matthew 21:21–22).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM MATTHEW:

THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL... GOD WITH US. |
Matthew 1:23

Do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. |
Matthew 6:34

Come to Me, all who are weary and heavily burdened [by religious rituals that provide no peace], and I will give you rest [refreshing your souls with salvation]. | Matthew 11:28

With God all things are possible. | Matthew 19:26

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
MATTHEW

1 THE RECORD of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son (descendant) of David, the son (descendant) of Abraham: [Ps 132:11; Is 11:1]

² Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers [who became the twelve tribes of Israel].

³ Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez was the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram.

⁴ Ram was the father of Aminadab, Aminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon.

⁵ Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse.

⁶ Jesse was the father of David the king.

David was the father of Solomon by ^{*}Bathsheba who had been the wife of Uriah. [Ruth 4:18–22; 1 Chr 2:13–15]

⁷ Solomon was the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa.

⁸ Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah.

⁹ Uzziah was the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of

Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah.

¹⁰Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah.

¹¹Josiah became the father of Jeconiah [also called Coniah and Jehoiachin] and his brothers, at the time of the deportation (exile) to Babylon. [2 Kin 24:14; 1 Chr 3:15, 16]

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Thank You, Jesus, that Your name means, "The Lord is salvation," for You will save Your people from their sins.

• adapted from Matthew 1:21

¹²After the deportation to Babylon: Jeconiah became the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel.

¹³Zerubbabel was the father of Abihud, Abihud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor.

¹⁴Azor was the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Achim,

and Achim the father of Eliud.

¹⁵Eliud was the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob.

¹⁶Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah (Christ).

¹⁷So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen; from David to the Babylonian deportation (exile), fourteen generations; and from the Babylonian deportation to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by [the power of] the Holy Spirit.

¹⁹And Joseph her [promised] husband, being a just *and* righteous man and not wanting to expose her publicly to shame, planned to send her away *and* divorce her quietly.

²⁰But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, descendant of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the Child who has been *conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

²¹“She will give birth to a Son, and you shall name Him Jesus (The LORD is salvation), for He will save His people from their sins.”

²²All this happened in order to fulfill what the Lord had spoken through the prophet [Isaiah]:

²³“BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND GIVE BIRTH TO A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL”—which, when translated, means, “GOD WITH US.” [Is 7:14]

²⁴Then Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him, and he took *Mary* [to his home] as his wife, ²⁵but he kept her a virgin until she had given birth to a Son [her firstborn child]; and he named Him Jesus (The LORD is salvation).

2 NOW WHEN Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king (Herod the Great), magi (wise men) from the east came to Jerusalem, asking, ²“Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east and have come to worship Him.” [Num 24:17; Jer 23:5; Zech 9:9]

³When Herod the king heard this, he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.

⁴So he called together all the chief priests and scribes of the people and [anxiously] asked them where the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed) was to be born.

⁵They replied to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what has been written by the prophet [Micah]:

⁶‘AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, IN THE LAND OF JUDAH,
ARE NOT IN ANY WAY LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH;
FOR FROM YOU SHALL COME A RULER
WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.’” [Mic 5:2]

⁷Then Herod secretly sent for the magi and learned from them the [exact] time the star [had first] appeared.

⁸Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report

to me, so that I too may come and worship Him.”

⁹After hearing the king, they went their way; and behold, the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them [continually leading the way] until it came and stood over *the place* where the young Child was.

¹⁰When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

¹¹And after entering the house, they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then, after opening their treasure chests, they presented to Him gifts [fit for a king, gifts] of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

¹²And having been warned [by God] in a dream not to go back to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way.

¹³Now when they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod intends to search for the Child in order to destroy Him.”

¹⁴So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt.

¹⁵He remained there until the death of Herod. *This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet [Hosea]: “OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON.”* [Hos 11:1]

¹⁶Then Herod, when he realized that he had been tricked by the magi, was extremely angry, and he sent [soldiers] and put to death all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that area who were two years old and under, according to the date which he had learned from the magi.

¹⁷Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the

prophet was fulfilled:

¹⁸“A VOICE WAS HEARD IN RAMAH,
WEeping AND GREAT MOURNING,
RACHEL WEeping FOR HER CHILDREN;
SHE REFUSED TO BE COMFORTED,
BECAUSE THEY WERE NO MORE.” [Jer 31:15]

¹⁹But when Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said,

²⁰“Get up! Take the Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child’s life are dead.”

²¹Then Joseph got up, and took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.

²²But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod [the Great], he was afraid to go there. Then being warned *by God* in a dream, he left for the region of Galilee, ²³and went and settled in a city called Nazareth. *This was* to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

3 IN THOSE days John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the Wilderness of Judea [along the western side of the Dead Sea] and saying, ²“Repent [change your inner self—your old way of thinking, regret past sins, live your life in a way that proves repentance; seek God’s purpose for your life], for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

³This is the one who was mentioned by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

“THE VOICE OF ONE SHOUTING IN THE WILDERNESS,
‘PREPARE THE ROAD FOR THE LORD,
MAKE HIS HIGHWAYS STRAIGHT (level, direct)!’” [Is 40:3]

⁴Now this same John had clothing made of camel’s hair and a [wide] leather band around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. [Lev 11:22; 2 Kin 1:8; Zech 13:4]

⁵At that time Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan;

⁶and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.

⁷But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the [divine] wrath *and* judgment to come?

⁸“So produce fruit that is consistent with repentance [demonstrating new behavior that proves a change of heart, and a conscious decision to turn away from sin]; ⁹and do not presume to say to yourselves [as a defense], ‘We have Abraham for our father [so our inheritance assures us of salvation]’; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children (descendants) for Abraham. [Luke 3:8]

Speak God's Word

*Because I am a believer, with
God's help, I will produce
fruit that is consistent with
repentance—fruit that
demonstrates new behavior;
proves a change of heart, and
results from a conscious
decision to turn away from
sin.*

| adapted from MATTHEW 3:8 |

¹⁰“And already the axe [of God's judgment] is swinging toward the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹“As for me, I baptize you with water because of [your] repentance [that is, because you are willing to change your inner self—your old way of thinking, regret your sin and live a changed life], but He (the Messiah) who is coming after me is mightier [more powerful, more noble] than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to remove [even as His slave]; He will baptize you [who truly repent] with the Holy Spirit and [you who remain unrepentant] with fire (judgment). [Luke 3:16]

¹²“His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will

thoroughly clear out His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat (believers) into His barn (kingdom), but He will burn up the chaff (the unrepentant) with unquenchable fire.”

¹³Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan [River], to be baptized by him. [Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21, 22; John 1:32]

¹⁴But John tried to prevent Him [vigorously protesting], saying, “It is I who need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?”

¹⁵But Jesus replied to him, “Permit it just now; for this is the fitting way for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John permitted [it and baptized] Him.

¹⁶After Jesus was baptized, He came up immediately out of the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he (John) saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him (Jesus), [John 1:32]

¹⁷and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased *and* delighted!” [Ps 2:7; Is 42:1]

4 THEN JESUS was led by the [Holy] Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. [Luke 4:1–13]

²After He had gone without food for forty days and forty nights, He became hungry. [Ex 34:28; 1 Kin 19:8]

³And the tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”

⁴But Jesus replied, “It is written *and* forever remains written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY

WORD THAT COMES OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.” [Deut 8:3]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Talk Back to the Enemy

One of the best ways to defend ourselves against the enemy is to know the Word of God and speak it aloud against the lies with which he bombards our minds. This is exactly what Jesus did when Satan tempted Him in the wilderness (see Matt. 4:4, 7, 10).

When the enemy tells you that God doesn't love you and that you will never amount to anything, go to war using the Word of God as your weapon. Talk back to the enemy, loud and clear, saying, "I am the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ" (see 2 Cor. 5:21); "God has a good plan for my life" (see Jer. 29:11); "Nothing can separate me from the love of God" (see Rom. 8:35–39); and other powerful verses that are meaningful to you. Know that you are more than a conqueror through Christ as you confidently declare the truth of God's Word.

⁵Then the devil took Him into the holy city [Jerusalem] and placed Him on the pinnacle (highest point) of the temple. [Neh 11:1; Dan 9:24]

⁶And he said [mockingly] to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written,

'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU [to serve, care for, protect and watch over You]';

and

“THEY WILL LIFT YOU UP ON *their* HANDS, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.” [Ps 91:11, 12]

⁷Jesus said to him, “On the other hand, it is written *and* forever remains written, ‘YOU SHALL NOT TEST THE LORD YOUR GOD.’” [Deut 6:16]

⁸Again, the devil took Him up on a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory [splendor, magnificence, and excellence] of them; ⁹and he said to Him, “All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.”

¹⁰Then Jesus said to him, “Go away, Satan! For it is written *and* forever remains written, ‘YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.’” [Deut 6:13]

¹¹Then the devil left Him; and angels came and ministered to Him [bringing Him food and serving Him].

¹²Now when Jesus heard that John [the Baptist] had been arrested *and* put in prison, He left for Galilee.

¹³And leaving Nazareth, He went and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the country of Zebulun and Naphtali. [Mark 2:1]

¹⁴*This was* to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁵“THE LAND OF ZEBULUN AND THE LAND OF NAPHTALI,
BY THE WAY OF THE SEA, BEYOND THE JORDAN, GALILEE [in the district] OF THE GENTILES— ¹⁶“THE PEOPLE WHO WERE SITTING (living) IN [spiritual] DARKNESS HAVE SEEN A GREAT LIGHT, AND FOR THOSE WHO WERE SITTING (living) IN THE LAND AND SHADOW OF [spiritual and moral] DEATH, UPON

THEM A LIGHT HAS DAWNED.” [Is 9:1, 2]

17From that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent [change your inner self—your old way of thinking, regret past sins, live your life in a way that proves repentance; seek God’s purpose for your life], for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Winning over Temptation

After Jesus endured a forty-day fast, while He was still in a weakened state, Satan approached Him with three temptations. The first temptation pertained to the need for physical sustenance, and the second tried to shake His confidence in God the Father. Then the devil took Jesus to a mountaintop and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world (see Matt. 4:8) and said, in effect, “You can have it all in exchange for one thing: Worship me just once.”

The third temptation was a test to see whether Jesus would act on His own authority without instruction from His Father, but Jesus promptly answered the devil, stating that He would worship the Lord God and serve Him only.

As attractive as the enemy’s offer may have sounded, Jesus never hesitated to obey. The world would be won for God, and it would be won through sacrifice and obedience. The way of the cross would be Jesus’ pathway to victory. Jesus teaches us that His is not always the easy way, but it certainly is the right and best way.

One of the enemy's most subtle lies is, "Just this one time. No one will know." Not only does he tempt you to give in and to receive the things you'd like to have, but he also makes it sound simple and easy. God never works that way. He wants you to have the best, and only the best, but it has to come to you in the right way.

Jesus defeated each temptation because He relied on God's Word for His strength. The devil cannot fight the Word. Finally, Matthew records, "Then the devil left Him; and angels came and ministered to Him [bringing Him food and serving Him]" (Matt. 4:11).

The wisdom to be gleaned from this experience is powerful. Even when you are being tempted, you can be assured that God doesn't leave you. He remains with you to comfort you, to minister to your needs, and to encourage you. Never forget that He is as close to you as the mention of His name. He will never leave you nor forsake you.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your victory over the devil. Thank You for standing on God's Word in the midst of every temptation. In Your name, I pray for the wisdom and strength to defeat the same enemy when he tempts me. Amen.

¹⁸As Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He noticed two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.

¹⁹And He said to them, "Follow Me [as My disciples, accepting Me as your Master and Teacher and walking the same path of life that I walk], and I will make you fishers of men."

²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed Him [becoming His disciples, believing and trusting in Him and following His example].

²¹And going on [further] from there He noticed two other brothers, James the *son* of Zebedee, and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets; and He called them[to follow Him as His disciples].

²²Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him [becoming His disciples, believing and trusting in Him and following His example].

²³And He went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the good news (gospel) of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people [demonstrating and revealing that He was indeed the promised Messiah].

²⁴So the news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were sick, those suffering with various diseases and pains, those under the power of demons, and epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them.

²⁵Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and the other side of the

Jordan.

5 WHEN JESUS saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and when He was seated, His disciples came to Him.

²Then He *began* to teach them, saying,

³“Blessed [spiritually prosperous, happy, to be admired] are the poor in spirit [those devoid of spiritual arrogance, those who regard themselves as insignificant], for theirs is the kingdom of heaven [both now and forever]. [Luke 6:20–23]

⁴“Blessed [forgiven, refreshed by God’s grace] are those who mourn [over their sins and repent], for they will be comforted [when the burden of sin is lifted]. [Is 61:2]

⁵“Blessed [inwardly peaceful, spiritually secure, worthy of respect] are the ^{*}gentle [the kind-hearted, the sweet-spirited, the self-controlled], for they will inherit the earth. [Ps 37:11]

⁶“Blessed [joyful, nourished by God’s goodness] are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness [those who actively seek right standing with God], for they will be [completely] satisfied. [Is 55:1, 2]

⁷“Blessed [content, sheltered by God’s promises] are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

⁸“Blessed [anticipating God’s presence, spiritually mature] are the pure in heart [those with integrity, moral courage, and godly character], for they will see God. [Ps 24:3, 4]

⁹“Blessed [spiritually calm with life-joy in God’s favor] are the makers *and* maintainers of peace, for they will [express His character and] be called the sons of God. [Heb 12:14]

10“Blessed [comforted by inner peace and God’s love] are those who are persecuted for ^{*}doing that which is morally right, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven [both now and forever].

POWERPOINT

Jesus calls us to be “makers
and maintainers of peace”
(Matt. 5:9). When we make and
keep peace around us, and
when we develop the habit of
staying at peace regardless of
what happens, people will
begin to realize that we belong
to God; and we can become
very effective witnesses for
Him.



A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Lord, I pray that my light will shine before other people in such a way that they will see my good deeds and moral excellence, and that they will recognize, honor, and glorify You, my Father in heaven.

• adapted from Matthew 5:16

¹¹“Blessed [morally courageous and spiritually alive with life-joy in God’s goodness] are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil things against you because of [your association with] Me.

¹²“Be glad and exceedingly joyful, for your reward in heaven is great [absolutely inexhaustible]; for in this same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. [2 Chr 36:16]

¹³“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has lost its taste (purpose), how can it be made salty? It is no longer good for anything, but to be thrown out and walked on by people [when the walkways are wet and slippery].

¹⁴“You are the light of [Christ to] the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;

¹⁵nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. [Mark 4:21; Luke 8:16; 11:33]

¹⁶“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good deeds *and* moral excellence, and [recognize

and honor and] glorify your Father who is in heaven.

17“Do not think that I came to do away with *or* undo the Law [of Moses] or the [writings of the] Prophets; I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

18“For I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke [of the pen] will pass from the Law until all things [which it foreshadows] are accomplished.

19“So whoever breaks one of the least [important] of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least [important] in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever practices and teaches them, he will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20“For I say to you that unless your righteousness (uprightness, moral essence) is more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

21“‘You have heard that it was said to the men of old, ‘YOU SHALL NOT MURDER,’ and ‘Whoever murders shall be ^{*}guilty before the court.’ [Ex 20:13; Deut 5:17; 16:18]

22“‘But I say to you that everyone who continues to be angry with his brother *or* harbors malice against him shall be guilty before the court; and whoever speaks [contemptuously and insultingly] to his brother, Raca (You empty-headed idiot)!’ shall be guilty before the supreme court (Sanhedrin); and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of the ^{*}fiery hell.

23“‘So if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and *while* there you remember that your brother has something [such as a grievance or legitimate complaint] against you, 24leave your offering there at the altar and go. First make peace

with your brother, and then come and present your offering.

²⁵“Come to terms quickly [at the earliest opportunity] with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way [to court], so that your opponent does not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you are thrown into prison. [Luke 12:58, 59]

²⁶“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid the last cent.

²⁷“You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY’; [Ex 20:14; Deut 5:18]

²⁸but I say to you that everyone who [so much as] looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

²⁹“If your right eye makes you stumble *and* leads you to sin, tear it out and throw it away [that is, remove yourself from the source of temptation]; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

³⁰“If your right hand makes you stumble *and* leads you to sin, cut it off and throw it away [that is, remove yourself from the source of temptation]; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

³¹“It has also been said, ‘WHOEVER DIVORCES HIS WIFE IS TO GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE’; ³²but I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except on grounds of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who has been divorced commits adultery. [Deut 24:1–4; Luke 16:18]

³³“Again, you have heard that it was said to the men of old, ‘YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT YOU SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD [as a religious duty].’

³⁴“But I say to you, do not make an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God;

³⁵or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet; or by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING. [Ps 48:2; Is 66:1]

³⁶“Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you are not able to make a single hair white or black.

Speak God's Word

*I will let my "yes" be "yes"
and my "no" be "no," a firm
yes or no. Anything more
than that comes from the evil
one.*

| adapted from MATTHEW 5:37 |

³⁷“But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’ [a firm yes or no]; anything more than that comes from the evil one. [Lev 19:12; Num 30:2; Deut 23:21]

³⁸“You have heard that it was said, ‘AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH [punishment that fits the offense].’ [Ex 21:24; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21]

³⁹“But I say to you, do not resist an evil person [who insults you or violates your rights]; but whoever slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other toward him also [simply ignore insignificant insults or trivial losses and do not bother to retaliate—maintain your dignity, your self-respect, your poise]. [Luke 6:29, 30; Rom 12:17–21]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Pressing Past the Pain

Any time we seek to please people instead of pleasing God, a mental battle usually takes place. We feel conflict inside when living to please people because we are not living to please God, and we are not being true to ourselves. At times we become people-pleasers because we are insecure due to an emotional wound from abuse, rejection, abandonment, betrayal, disappointment, judgment, or criticism. If you have an emotional wound, Jesus can heal you everywhere you hurt! The Bible teaches that Jesus came to heal our wounds, to bind up and heal our broken hearts, and to give us beauty for ashes and dust and the oil of joy to replace mourning (see Isa. 61:1–3).

To begin to heal, we often need to start making right choices while we are still hurting. This can be difficult and painful. We may have to do the right thing for a long time before we begin to see right results, pressing past our feelings to gain victory. For example, treating someone right who has hurt us seems unfair. After all, why should we be good to someone who has hurt us? Even though it isn't easy, we can choose to do so because Jesus told us to (see Matt. 5:38–44).

If someone has hurt me, and I am bitter about it, I open the door for the pain to continue. Bitterness is a pain in itself. It is a negative attitude that steals joy and peace. However, if I am willing to forgive and begin to pray for and bless those who

have hurt me, I will be free (see Matt. 6:14–15).

⁴⁰“If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also [for the Lord repays the offender].

⁴¹“And whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.

⁴²“Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. [Deut 15:8; Prov 24:29]

⁴³“You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR (fellow man) and hate your enemy.’ [Lev 19:18; Ps 139:21, 22]

⁴⁴“But I say to you, love [that is, unselfishly seek the best or higher good for] your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, [Prov 25:21, 22]

⁴⁵so that you may [show yourselves to] be the children of your Father who is in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on those who are evil and on those who are good, and makes the rain fall on the righteous [those who are morally upright] and the unrighteous [the unrepentant, those who oppose Him].

POWERPOINT

Matthew 5:48 commands us to be perfect as our “heavenly Father is perfect.” Until we correctly understand what Jesus is saying here, it may seem intimidating or impossible. The amplification of the verse makes clear what being *perfect* means: “growing into spiritual maturity both in mind and character, actively integrating godly values into your daily life.” *Perfect* is not something we attain; it’s something we continually aspire to and grow into. As long as we are growing with a sincere heart and love for God, He is pleased.



⁴⁶“For if you love [only] those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do that?”

47“And if you greet only your brothers [wishing them God’s blessing and peace], what more [than others] are you doing? Do not even the Gentiles [who do not know the Lord] do that?

48“You, therefore, will be perfect [growing into spiritual maturity both in mind and character, actively integrating godly values into your daily life], as your heavenly Father is perfect. [Lev 19:2]

6 “BE [VERY] careful not to do your good deeds publicly, to be seen by men; otherwise you will have no reward [prepared and awaiting you] with your Father who is in heaven.

2“So whenever you give to the poor *and* do acts of kindness, do not blow a trumpet before you [to advertise it], as the hypocrites do [like actors acting out a role] in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored *and* recognized *and* praised by men. I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, they [already] have their reward in full.

3“But when you give to the poor *and* do acts of kindness, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing [give in complete secrecy],

4so that your charitable acts will be done in secret; and your Father who sees [what is done] in secret will reward you.

5“Also, when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to pray [publicly] standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets so that they may be seen by men. I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, they [already] have their reward in full.

6“But when you pray, go into your most private room, close the door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees [what is done] in secret will reward you.

7“And when you pray, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. [1 Kin 18:25–29]

8“So do not be like them [praying as they do]; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

9“Pray, then, in this way:

‘Our Father who is in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name. [Luke 11:2–4]

10‘Your kingdom come,

Your will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

11‘Give us this day our daily bread.

12‘And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors [letting go of both the wrong and the resentment].

13‘And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]’ [Luke 11:2–4]

14“For if you forgive others their trespasses [their reckless and willful sins], your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

15“‘But if you do not forgive others [nurturing your hurt and anger with the result that it interferes with your relationship with God], then your Father will not forgive your trespasses.

16“‘And whenever you are fasting, do not look gloomy like

the hypocrites, for they put on a sad and dismal face [like actors, discoloring their faces with ashes or dirt] so that their fasting may be seen by men. I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, they [already] have their reward in full. [Is 58:5]

Speak God's Word

I will stop being worried or anxious about my life, as to what I will eat or what I will drink; nor about my body, as to what I will wear. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing.

| adapted from MATTHEW 6:25 |

¹⁷“But when you fast, put oil on your head [as you normally would to groom your hair] and wash your face

¹⁸so that your fasting will not be noticed by people, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees [what is done] in secret will reward you.

¹⁹“Do not store up for yourselves [material] treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

²⁰“But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Forgiveness Fosters Intimacy with God

Many people decide that forgiving those who have hurt them is just too hard, so they refuse to do it. Indeed, forgiving is difficult! But in making the decision not to forgive, they are making one of the most serious mistakes they can possibly make. Why is it so serious? Because not forgiving those who have sinned against us hinders our intimacy with God. Matthew 6:14–15 clearly states that if we don't forgive others, God will not forgive us our sins and iniquities. If our sins stand between us and God, we will struggle to hear His voice and feel His presence. I firmly believe that harboring unforgiveness steals our peace and our joy. It affects our health negatively and robs us of our general well-being.

The enemy will attempt to trap you in unforgiveness in order to damage your relationship with God. God wants you to forgive those who have hurt you so you can stay close to Him, find freedom, and move forward in the great plan He has for your life.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Don't Worry, Seek God

Any time we are tempted to be worried or anxious, especially concerning provision for our everyday needs, we can find help and encouragement in Matthew 6:25–33.

In verse 25, Jesus specifically instructs us to stop being perpetually uneasy, anxious, and worried. The fact that He gives such precise instruction is reason enough for us to quit torturing ourselves with negative thoughts and feelings. When we do, we are not only harming ourselves, we are also disobeying one of God's commands.

In verses 26–29, just after Jesus says to stop worrying, He offers a powerful illustration of what it's like to live without anxiety about our daily needs. All we have to do is notice how God continually feeds the birds of the air and how beautifully He keeps the lilies of the field.

Have you ever seen a bird have a nervous breakdown or a flower droop its head with worry? Of course not! Birds and flowers do not worry about getting their needs met. Just as God feeds the birds and clothes the flowers of the field, so He

will provide for those who put their faith in Him. We can trust Him for everything we need.

Jesus goes on in verse 30 to assure us that we are of such greater value to God than a blade of grass, and yet He takes care of the grass. How much more will He take care of us, His beloved children?

As Jesus continues His teaching in verses 31–32, He says we should not be anxious about our physical needs because we can find hope, peace, and confidence in the fact that God knows exactly what we need, and He promises to provide for us. When we take Matthew 6:25–32 seriously and believe the truth of this passage, we realize there truly is no reason to worry about anything.

Jesus does not stop with simply saying not to worry and making sure we know that God will provide for us. He goes on to tell us how to use the energy we might have invested in being anxious. Instead of worrying, He says that if we will seek God's Kingdom and His righteousness first, everything else we need will be provided (see Matt. 6:33).

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Help me, God, not to worry about anything, but to trust You in everything. Because You love me, You will take care of me. I trust You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Seek God's Kingdom First

Seeking God's Kingdom first is the key to living in the peace of the Lord. To seek God's Kingdom simply means to seek to know God and His ways. We are to seek (crave, pursue, and go after) God's Kingdom and His righteousness over all other things. Then everything else we need will be given to us as well (see Matt. 6:33). As believers, you and I are to seek Him rather than the fulfillment of our needs.

Matthew 6:33 not only says to seek God's Kingdom and His righteousness, but to seek His Kingdom and His righteousness "first." This means that when we have a problem, we are to run to God first. When we have a financial need, we first ask Him to meet it before doing anything else. When we have a relational problem, we seek the Holy Spirit's counsel before we talk to other people. Seeking God also means giving Him the first part of our resources and our time. When we seek God first, He will take care of everything else that concerns us.

²¹for where your treasure is, there your heart [your wishes, your desires; that on which your life centers] will be also.

²²"The eye is the lamp of the body; so if your eye is clear [spiritually perceptive], your whole body will be full of light [benefiting from God's precepts].

²³"But if your eye is bad [spiritually blind], your whole

body will be full of darkness [devoid of God's precepts]. So if the [very] light inside you [your inner self, your heart, your conscience] is darkness, how great *and* terrible is that darkness!

²⁴“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [money, possessions, fame, status, or whatever is valued more than the Lord].

²⁵“Therefore I tell you, stop being worried *or* anxious (perpetually uneasy, distracted) about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, as to what you will wear. Is life not more than food, and the body more than clothing? [Luke 12:22–31]

²⁶“Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow [seed] nor reap [the harvest] nor gather [the crops] into barns, and yet your heavenly Father keeps feeding them. Are you not worth much more than they?

²⁷“And who of you by worrying can add one hour to [the length of] his life? [Ps 39:5–7]

²⁸“And why are you worried about clothes? See how the lilies *and* wildflowers of the field grow; they do not labor nor do they spin [wool to make clothing], ²⁹yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory *and* splendor dressed himself like one of these. [1 Kin 10:4–7]

³⁰“But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive *and* green today and tomorrow is [cut and] thrown [as fuel] into the furnace, *will He* not much more *clothe* you? You of little faith!

Speak God's Word

I will seek first God's Kingdom and His righteousness. Then everything else I need will be given to me also.

| adapted from MATTHEW 6:33 |

³¹“Therefore do not worry *or* be anxious (perpetually uneasy, distracted), saying, ‘What are we going to eat?’ or ‘What are we going to drink?’ or ‘What are we going to wear?’

³²“For the [pagan] Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; [but do not worry,] for your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

³³“But first *and* most importantly seek (aim at, strive after) His kingdom and His righteousness [His way of doing and being right—the attitude and character of God], and all these things will be given to you also.

³⁴“So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

1 “DO NOT judge *and* criticize *and* condemn [others unfairly

with an attitude of self-righteous superiority as though assuming the office of a judge], so that you will not be judged [unfairly].

²“For just as you [hypocritically] judge others [when you are sinful and unrepentant], so will you be judged; and in accordance with your standard of measure [used to pass out judgment], judgment will be measured to you.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



When I ask and keep on asking, it will be given to me; when I seek and keep on seeking, I will find; when I knock and keep on knocking, the door will be opened to me. For everyone who keeps on asking receives, and he who keeps on seeking finds, and to him who keeps on knocking, it will be opened.

• adapted from Matthew 7:7–8

³“Why do you look at the [insignificant] speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice *and* acknowledge the [egregious] log that is in your own eye?

⁴“Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me get the speck out of your eye,’ when there is a log in your own eye?

⁵“You hypocrite (play-actor, pretender), first get the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.

⁶“Do not give that which is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, for they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Judgment Opens a Door to the Enemy

In my Bible, I have written next to Matthew 7:6 that I believe “that which is holy” is love. It’s very important to God that we love and think well of one another (see John 15:12; Phil. 2:3). This is why we need to learn not to be critical or judgmental toward one another.

In Matthew 7:4–5, Jesus is saying that we need to focus less on what we think is wrong with other people and more about what may be wrong in us. These words were true when Jesus first spoke them, and they are still true for us today, offering good advice for us to follow, especially since judging others opens a door for the enemy’s attack. When we judge and criticize people, we allow the enemy access to our lives by casting the holy thing (love) before pigs and dogs (the enemy’s forces) (see v. 6).

One of the best pieces of advice I have learned when tempted to judge is this: “Anywhere you don’t have a responsibility, it’s smart not to offer an opinion.”

When we refrain from judging others, we deny the enemy an opportunity to influence us.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Live the Golden Rule

As children many of us learned to recite “the golden rule”: “treat others the same way you want them to treat you” (Matt. 7:12). If you want respect, treat people with respect. If you want people to be patient with you, be patient with people. If you want people to forgive you, be quick to forgive. We learned this rule as children, but do we practice it as adults?

As a Spirit-filled believer, you can be the one to take the initiative to treat people the way you want to be treated, not the way they treat you. Don't wait for someone else to do what is right; be the one who does what is right first. Learning how to treat people well will dramatically change your life.

⁷“Ask *and* keep on asking and it will be given to you; seek *and* keep on seeking and you will find; knock *and* keep on knocking and the door will be opened to you. [Luke 11:9–13]

⁸“For everyone who keeps on asking receives, and he who keeps on seeking finds, and to him who keeps on knocking, it will be opened.

⁹“Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will [instead] give him a stone?

¹⁰“Or if he asks for a fish, will [instead] give him a snake?

¹¹“If you then, evil (sinful by nature) as you are, know how to give good *and* advantageous gifts to your children, how

much more will your Father who is in heaven [perfect as He is] give what is good *and* advantageous to those who keep on asking Him.

¹²“So then, in everything treat others the same way you want them to treat you, for this is [the essence of] the Law and the [writings of the] Prophets.

¹³“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad *and* easy to travel is the path that leads the way to destruction *and* eternal loss, and there are many who enter through it.

¹⁴“But small is the gate and narrow *and* difficult to travel is the path that leads the way to [everlasting] life, and there are few who find it. [Deut 30:19; Jer 21:8]

¹⁵“Beware of the false prophets, [teachers] who come to you dressed as sheep [appearing gentle and innocent], but inwardly are ravenous wolves. [Ezek 22:27]

¹⁶“By their fruit you will recognize them [that is, by their contrived doctrine and self-focus]. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? [Luke 6:43, 44]

¹⁷“Even so, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the unhealthy tree bears bad fruit.

POWERPOINT

To have a house built on the rock (see Matt. 7:24–25) means to live a life that is steady and unshakable, one that cannot be moved when the inevitable storms of life blow against it.

The house of our lives is not built upon the rock because we hear the Word of God. It's built upon the rock because we *obey* God's Word.



¹⁸“A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

¹⁹“Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

²⁰“Therefore, by their fruit you will recognize them [as false prophets].

²¹“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.

22“Many will say to Me on that day [when I judge them], ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, and driven out demons in Your name, and done many miracles in Your name?’

23“And then I will declare to them publicly, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME [you are banished from My presence], YOU WHO ACT WICKEDLY [disregarding My commands].’ [Ps 6:8]

24“So everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, will be like a wise man [a far-sighted, practical, and sensible man] who built his house on the rock. [Luke 6:47–49]

25“And the rain fell, and the floods *and* torrents came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.

26“And everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not do them, will be like a foolish (stupid) man who built his house on the sand.

27“And the rain fell, and the floods *and* torrents came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great *and* complete was its fall.”

28When Jesus had finished [speaking] these words [on the mountain], the crowds were astonished *and* overwhelmed at His teaching;

29for He was teaching them as one who had authority [to teach entirely of His own volition], and not as their scribes [who relied on others to confirm their authority].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Worship First

In Matthew 8:2, the leper needed healing and presented Jesus with a simple, straightforward observation: "Lord, if You are willing, You are able to make me clean (well)." But before he asked Jesus to heal him, he "bowed down before Him." In other words, he worshiped Jesus before asking Him to meet his need.

People often go to Jesus for healing, freedom, a breakthrough, or some other divine intervention, and the first words they speak are about what they want from Him. They immediately begin praying, "Lord, I need healing. I can't stand this pain anymore." Or, "Lord, I have to get a check in the mail. You know I can't pay the utility bill." Or, "Lord, I can't handle the stress of this situation anymore. You've got to do something!"

The story of the leper includes a strong message we can easily overlook: We need to worship God for Who He is before we ask Him to do anything for us. In our prayers, praise needs to come before petition.

The Bible teaches that we are to ask God for what we need, but we miss so much in our relationship with God if we start making requests right away and skip the privilege of praising and worshipping Him, thanking Him in advance for hearing and answering our prayers.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Faith, Not Fear

Jesus said to the centurion, “Go; it will be done for you as you have believed” (Matt. 8:13). These words contain a powerful lesson for us today: We will have what we believe. Whatever we believe in our hearts and think on in our minds may well manifest in our lives. In other words, our beliefs have creative power. Let me illustrate this by using faith and fear.

By faith, God created the world we live in. By faith, Sarah conceived and gave birth to a child, even though she was far past childbearing age. By faith, Samson killed a thousand men with only a donkey’s jawbone. Throughout history, people of God sang His praises by faith while being persecuted or even burned at the stake.

Faith is leaning entirely on God “with absolute confidence in His power, wisdom, and goodness” (Col. 1:4). Faith believes that something good will happen. It believes that God can do what would otherwise be impossible. Faith trusts God for what it cannot yet see. Faith contains creative power.

Just as faith has creative power, fear does too. Fear believes

that something bad will happen. Most of us have seen that when someone consistently thinks something negative will take place, it usually does. Quite often I would learn about a bad situation in someone's life and later hear them say, "I was afraid this was going to happen."

I am not suggesting that we are in danger every time a fear presents itself. I simply believe that when a person persists in thinking and saying that bad things are going to happen to them, they often do. Fearful thoughts and words can block our ability to hear from God, causing us to act foolishly because fear keeps us from being able to receive and follow His wisdom.

To live victoriously, we need to be led by God, which requires being led by faith, not led by fear. We receive God's promises through faith. We allow the enemy to work in our lives when we live in fear.

Let me encourage you to ask yourself what you believe in every area of your life. Are you believing for good things, or are you fearful that bad things will happen? Believe that God's power is in you and that God is working in your life right now!

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Heavenly Father, You call me to live in faith, not fear. I choose today to develop a mind-set of faith, believing for good things to happen. Help me not to live in fear; but to always trust Your goodness and Your love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

8 WHEN JESUS came down from the mountain, large crowds followed Him.

²And a leper came up to Him and bowed down before Him, saying, “Lord, if You are willing, You are able to make me clean (well).” [Mark 1:40–44; Luke 5:12–14]

³Jesus reached out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

⁴And Jesus said to him, “See that you tell no one [about this]; but go, show yourself to the priest [for inspection] and present the offering that Moses commanded, as a testimony (evidence) to them [of your healing].” [Lev 14:2]

⁵As Jesus went into Capernaum, a centurion came up to Him, begging Him [for help], [Luke 7:1–10]

⁶and saying, “Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, with intense *and* terrible, tormenting pain.”

⁷Jesus said to him, “I will come and heal him.”

⁸But the centurion replied to Him, “Lord, I am not worthy to have You come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed.

⁹“For I also am a man subject to authority [of a higher rank], with soldiers subject to me; and I say to one, ‘Go!’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come!’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does it.”

¹⁰When Jesus heard this, He was amazed and said to those who were following Him, “I tell you truthfully, I have not found

such great faith [as this] with anyone in Israel.

¹¹“I say to you that many [Gentiles] will come from east and west, and will sit down [to feast at the table, and enjoy God’s promises] with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven [because they accepted Me as Savior], ¹²while the sons *and* heirs of the kingdom [the descendants of Abraham who will not recognize Me as Messiah] will be thrown out into the outer darkness; in that place [which is farthest removed from the kingdom] there will be weeping [in sorrow and pain] and grinding of teeth [in distress and anger].” [Ps 107:2, 3; Is 49:12; 59:19; Mal 1:11]

¹³Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go; it will be done for you as you have believed.” And the servant was restored to health at that very hour.

¹⁴When Jesus went into Peter’s house [in Capernaum], He saw Peter’s mother-in-law lying sick in bed with a fever. [Mark 1:29–34; Luke 4:38–41]

¹⁵He touched her hand and the fever left her; and she got up and served Him.

¹⁶When evening came, they brought to Him many who were under the power of demons; and He cast out the *evil* spirits with a word, and restored to health all who were sick [exhibiting His authority as Messiah], ¹⁷so that He fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: “HE HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES [upon Himself] AND CARRIED AWAY OUR DISEASES.” [Is 53:4]

¹⁸Now when Jesus saw a crowd around Him, He gave orders to cast off for the other side *of the Sea of Galilee*.

¹⁹Then [on His way to board the boat] a scribe [who was a

respected and authoritative interpreter of the Law] came and said to Him, “Master, I will accompany You [as Your student] wherever You go.” [Luke 9:57–60]

²⁰Jesus replied to him, “Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.” [Dan 7:13; Mark 8:31, 38; Luke 12:8; John 1:51; Acts 7:56]

²¹Another of the disciples said to Him, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father (collect my inheritance).” [Luke 9:59, 60]

²²But Jesus said to him, “Follow Me [believing in Me as Master and Teacher], and allow the [spiritually] dead to bury their own dead.”

²³When He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. [Mark 4:36–41; Luke 8:22–25]

²⁴And suddenly a violent storm arose on the sea, so that the boat was being covered by the waves; but Jesus was sleeping.

²⁵And the disciples went and woke Him, saying, “Lord, save us, we are going to die!”

²⁶He said to them, “Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?” Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was [at once] a great *and* wonderful calm [a perfect peacefulness].

²⁷The men wondered in amazement, saying, “What kind of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?”

²⁸When He arrived at the other side in the country of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming out of the tombs met Him. *They were* so extremely fierce *and* violent that no one could pass by that way. [Mark 5:1–17; Luke 8:26–37]

²⁹And they screamed out, “What business do we have [in common] with each other, Son of God? Have You come to torment us before the appointed time [of judgment]?” [Judg 11:12; 2 Sam 16:10; Matt 25:41; Mark 5:7; Luke 4:34; Rev 20:10]

³⁰Some distance from them a large herd of pigs was grazing.

³¹The demons *began* begging Him, “If You drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs.”

³²And He said to them, “Go!” So they came out [of the men] and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and died in the water.

³³The herdsmen ran away, and went to the city and reported everything, including what had happened to the men under the power of demons.

³⁴And the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and as soon as they saw Him, they begged Him to leave their region.

9 AND JESUS, getting into a boat, crossed over *the Sea of Galilee* and came to [Capernaum] His own city.

²They brought to Him a man who was paralyzed, lying on a stretcher. Seeing their [active] faith [springing from confidence in Him], Jesus said to the paralytic, “Do not be afraid, son; your sins are forgiven [the penalty is paid, the guilt removed, and you are declared to be in right standing with God].” [Mark 2:3–12; Luke 5:18–26]

³And some of the scribes said to themselves, “This *man* blasphemes [by claiming the rights and prerogatives of God]!”

⁴But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, “Why do you

think evil in your hearts?

⁵“For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven *and* the penalty paid,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? [Both are possible for God; both are impossible for man.]

⁶“But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority *and* the power on earth to forgive sins”—then He said to the paralytic, “Get up, pick up your stretcher and go home.”

⁷And he got up and went home [healed and forgiven].

⁸When the crowds saw this, they were awestruck, and glorified God *and* praised Him, who had given such authority *and* power to men.

⁹As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man named Matthew (Levi) sitting in the tax collector’s booth; and He said to him, “Follow Me [as My disciple, accepting Me as your Master and Teacher and walking the same path of life that I walk].” And Matthew got up and followed Him. [Mark 2:14–22; Luke 5:27–39]

¹⁰Then as Jesus was reclining *at the table* in Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and sinners [including non-observant Jews] came and ate with Him and His disciples.

¹¹When the Pharisees saw this, they asked His disciples, “Why does your Master eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

¹²But when Jesus heard *this*, He said, “Those who are healthy have no need for a physician, but [only] those who are sick.

¹³“Go and learn what this [Scripture] means: ‘I DESIRE COMPASSION [for those in distress], AND NOT [animal] SACRIFICE,’ for I did not come to call [to repentance] the [self-

proclaimed] righteous [who see no need to change], but sinners [those who recognize their sin and actively seek forgiveness].” [Hos 6:6; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32]

¹⁴Then the disciples of John [the Baptist] came to Jesus, asking, “Why do we and the Pharisees often fast [as a religious exercise], but Your disciples do not fast?”

¹⁵And Jesus replied to them, “Can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

¹⁶“But no one puts a piece of unshrunk (new) cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and a worse tear results.

¹⁷“Nor is new wine put into old wineskins [that have lost their elasticity]; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the [fermenting] wine spills and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, so both are preserved.”

¹⁸While He was saying these things to them, a ruler (synagogue official) entered [the house] and kneeled down *and* worshiped Him, saying, “My daughter has just now died; but come and lay Your hand on her, and she will live.” [Mark 5:22–43; Luke 8:41–56]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Think and Talk Yourself into Victory

How do our thoughts and words affect our habits? In my opinion, they are the starting point for breaking all bad habits and forming all good habits. In fact, thinking and speaking negatively is a bad habit in itself—and it's one we need to break by beginning to think and speak positively.

You can literally think and talk yourself into victory or defeat. Not only do you have the things you think and say, but you can also have anything God says you can have in His Word. Jesus told people they would have what they believed, even sight for the blind men (see Matt. 9:27–30). They simply had to believe—to renew their minds to think as God thinks (see Rom. 12:2; Col. 3:10)—and they would receive the blessings God wanted them to have. So can you!

¹⁹Jesus got up and *began* to accompany the ruler, with His disciples.

²⁰Then a woman who had suffered from a hemorrhage for twelve years came up behind Him and touched the [tassel] fringe of His outer robe; [Matt 14:36]

²¹for she had been saying to herself, “If I only touch His outer robe, I will be healed.”

²²But Jesus turning and seeing her said, “Take courage, daughter; your [personal trust and confident] faith [in Me] has

made you well.” And at once the woman was [completely] healed.

²³When Jesus came to the ruler’s house, and saw the flute players [who were professional, hired mourners] and the [grieving] crowd making an uproar, ²⁴He said, “Go away; for the girl is not dead, but is sleeping.” And they laughed *and* jeered at Him.

²⁵But when the crowd had been sent outside, Jesus went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up.

²⁶And the news about this spread throughout all that district.

²⁷As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed Him, screaming loudly, “Have mercy *and* compassion on us, Son of David (Messiah)!”

²⁸When He went into the house, the blind men came up to Him, and Jesus said to them, “Do you believe [with a deep, abiding trust] that I am able to do this?” They said to Him, “Yes, Lord.”

²⁹Then He touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith [your trust and confidence in My power and My ability to heal] it will be done to you.”

³⁰And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them: “See that no one knows this!”

³¹But they went out and spread the news about Him throughout that whole district.

³²While they were going away, a mute, demon-possessed man was brought to Jesus.

³³And when the demon was driven out [by Jesus], the

mute man spoke; and the crowds wondered in amazement, saying, “Never before has anything like this [miracle] been seen in Israel.”

³⁴But the Pharisees were saying, “He casts out the demons by [the power of] the ruler of demons.”

³⁵Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages [in Galilee], teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news (gospel) of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness [His words and His works reflecting His Messiahship].

³⁶When He saw the crowds, He was moved with compassion *and* pity for them, because they were dispirited and distressed, like sheep without a shepherd. [Zech 10:2]

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

How To Deal with Criticism

Everyone who is successful in life has to deal with criticism from time to time. Occasionally, being criticized can lead to a battle in our minds because we may wonder for a moment if the one criticizing us is right in some way. We need to understand that people judge and criticize for various reasons that are more often associated with who they are than with who we are or what we are doing. Sometimes people criticize us because they do not understand our hopes, dreams, or the ways we go about reaching our goals. At other times they become critical because they cannot see what we see, do not understand what we know, or have not been through what we have experienced. At still other times, people speak critically against us because they are simply jealous of us. Whatever the source, criticism can be painful. Learning to deal with it in a godly way is a great testimony to the people around us.

In Matthew 10:14, Jesus teaches the disciples how to handle the criticism they faced from people who rejected their message. His advice: “Shake it off.” He said, “Whoever does

not welcome you, nor listen to your message, as you leave that house or city, shake the dust [of it] off your feet [in contempt, breaking all ties].”

Jesus Himself was often criticized, and He usually ignored it (see Matt. 27:11–12). Often the best way to respond to criticism is to say nothing and to keep moving forward. If you must deal with it for some reason, here are some suggestions for handling it in a godly way:

- ◆ Don't be defensive. God is your defense and your vindicator.
- ◆ Don't become angry or upset. Keep your peace.
- ◆ Don't fall into the trap of pride and wonder how that person could possibly find anything to criticize in you.
- ◆ Don't retaliate with criticism against your criticizer.
- ◆ Don't assume the criticism is wrong without being willing to examine yourself.
- ◆ Don't assume the criticism is right and feel guilty without consulting God.
- ◆ Forgive your criticizer completely.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Thank You, God, that You are always for me and never against me. You will not criticize me. If I am not doing something in a way that pleases You, I can trust Your Holy Spirit to guide me to change. In Jesus' name. Amen.

³⁷Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is [indeed] plentiful, but the workers are few.

³⁸“So pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.”

10 JESUS SUMMONED His twelve disciples and gave them authority *and* power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. [Mark 6:7; Luke 9:1]

²Now these are the names of the twelve apostles (special messengers, personally chosen representatives): first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; [Mark 3:16–19; Luke 6:13–16]

³Philip and Bartholomew (Nathanael); Thomas and Matthew (Levi) the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus (Judas, not Iscariot);

⁴Simon the Cananaean (Zealot), and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him.

⁵Jesus sent out these twelve, instructing them: “Do not go among the Gentiles, and do not go into a city of the Samaritans;

⁶but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

⁷“And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’

⁸“Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

⁹“Do not take gold, or silver, or [even] copper money in your money belt,

¹⁰or a provision bag for your journey, or even two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker deserves his support.

¹¹“Whatever city or village you enter, ask who in it is worthy [who welcomes you and your message], and stay at his house until you leave [that city].

¹²“As you go into the house, give it your greeting [that is, ‘Peace be to this house’].

¹³“If [the family living in] the house is worthy [welcoming you and your message], give it your [blessing of] peace [that is, a blessing of well-being and prosperity, the favor of God]. But if it is not worthy, take back your *blessing of* peace.

POWERPOINT

A balanced attitude is always the best policy. We are to always use wisdom and discernment in our dealings with others. In fact, we are to be “wise as serpents, and innocent as doves” (Matt. 10:16). We don’t have to totally open our hearts to everyone we meet without using any caution. On the other hand, we don’t have to look at everyone with a negative, suspicious eye, always expecting them to take advantage of us. We can be wise and innocent at the same time.



¹⁴“Whoever does not welcome you, nor listen to your message, as you leave that house or city, shake the dust [of it] off your feet [in contempt, breaking all ties]. [Mark 6:11; Acts 13:51]

¹⁵“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that city [since it rejected the Messiah’s messenger].

¹⁶“Listen carefully: I am sending you out like sheep among wolves; so be wise as serpents, and innocent as doves [have no self-serving agenda]. [Gen 3:1]

¹⁷“Beware of men [whose nature is to act in opposition to God], for they will hand you over to the courts and flog you in their synagogues;

¹⁸and you will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles.

¹⁹“But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given you within that [very] hour; [Mark 13:11–13; Luke 21:12–19]

²⁰for it is not you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

²¹“Brother will betray brother to death, and the father his child; and children will rise up *and* rebel against their parents and cause them to be put death.

²²“And you will be hated by everyone because of [your association with] My name, but it is the one who has patiently persevered *and* endured to the end who will be saved.

²³“When they persecute you in one city [because of your faith in Me], flee to the next; for I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, you will not finish *going through* all the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

²⁴“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor is a bond-servant above his master.

25“It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the bond-servant like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul (Satan), how much more [will they speak evil of] the members of his household. [2 Kin 1:2]

26“So do not be afraid of them, for nothing is hidden that will not be revealed [at the judgment], or kept secret that will not be made known [at the judgment]. [Mark 4:22; Luke 12:2–9]

27“What I say to you in the dark (privately), tell in the light (publicly); and what you hear *whispered* in your ear, proclaim from the housetops [to many people].

28“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; but rather be afraid of Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

29“Are not two little sparrows sold for a copper coin? And yet not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will.

30“But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered [for the Father is sovereign and has complete knowledge].

31“So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

32“Therefore, the one who confesses *and* acknowledges Me before men [as Lord and Savior, affirming a state of oneness with Me], that one I will also confess *and* acknowledge before My Father who is in heaven.

33“But the one who denies *and* rejects Me before men, that one I will also deny *and* reject before My Father who is in heaven.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, for the way
You care about me. The very
hairs of my head are all
numbered, for You are
sovereign and have complete
knowledge.*

• adapted from Matthew 10:30

34“Do not think that I have come to bring peace on the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword [of division between belief and unbelief]. [Luke 12:51–53]

35“For I have come to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; **36**and A MAN’S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS [own] HOUSEHOLD [when one believes and another does not]. [Mic 7:6]

37“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than

Me is not worthy of Me. [Luke 14:26]

³⁸“And he who does not take his cross [expressing a willingness to endure whatever may come] and follow Me [believing in Me, conforming to My example in living and, if need be, suffering or perhaps dying because of faith in Me] is not worthy of Me.

³⁹“Whoever finds his life [in this world] will [eventually] lose it [through death], and whoever loses his life [in this world] for My sake will find it [that is, life with Me for all eternity]. [Matt 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; 17:33; John 12:25]

⁴⁰“He who receives *and* welcomes you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. [Mark 9:37; Luke 10:16; John 13:20]

⁴¹“He who receives *and* welcomes a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward; and he who receives a righteous (honorable) man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man’s reward.

⁴²“And whoever gives to one of these little ones [these who are humble in rank or influence] even a cup of cold water to drink because he is my disciple, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward.”

11 WHEN JESUS had finished giving instructions to His twelve disciples, He went on from there to teach and to preach in their [Galilean] cities.

²Now when John [the Baptist] in prison heard about the activities of Christ, he sent *word* by his disciples [Luke 7:18–35]

³and asked Him, “Are You the Expected One (the Messiah), or should we look for someone else [who will be the promised One]?” [Gen 49:10; Num 24:17; Ps 40:7; 118:26; Is 59:20]

⁴Jesus answered, “Go and report to John what you hear and see:

⁵the BLIND RECEIVE [their] SIGHT and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed [by healing] and the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. [Is 35:5, 6; 61:1]

⁶“And blessed [joyful, favored by God] is he who does not take offense at Me [accepting Me as the Messiah and trusting confidently in My message of salvation].” [Luke 7:23]

⁷As these men were going away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: “What did you go out in the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind [which is commonplace]?

⁸“What did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft *clothing* [entirely unsuited for the harsh desert]? Those who wear soft *clothing* are in the palaces of kings!

⁹“But what did you [really] go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one [more eminent, more remarkable, and] far more than a prophet [who foretells the future].

¹⁰“This is the one of whom it is written [by the prophet Malachi],

‘BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.’ [Mal 3:1]

¹¹“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, among those born of women there has not risen *anyone* greater than John

the Baptist; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater [in privilege] than he.

¹²“From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violent assault, and violent men seize it by force [as a precious prize].

¹³“For all the prophets and the Law prophesied up until John.

¹⁴“And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is [the fulfillment of] Elijah [as the messenger] who was to come [before the kingdom]. [Mal 4:5]

¹⁵“He who has ears to hear, let him hear *and* heed My words.

¹⁶“But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like little children sitting in the market places, who call to the others,

¹⁷and say ‘We piped the flute for you [playing wedding], and you did not dance; we wailed sad dirges [playing funeral], and you did not mourn *and* cry aloud.’

¹⁸“For John came neither eating nor drinking [with others], and they say, ‘He has a demon!’

¹⁹“The Son of Man came eating and drinking [with others], and they say, ‘Look! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners [including non-observant Jews]!’ Yet wisdom is justified *and* vindicated by her deeds [in the lives of those who respond to Me].”

²⁰Then He began to denounce [the people in] the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent [and change their hearts and lives].

²¹“Woe (judgment is coming) to you, Chorazin! Woe to

you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon [cities of the Gentiles], they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes [their hearts would have been changed and they would have expressed sorrow for their sin and rebellion against God].

²²“Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for [the pagan cities of] Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you.

POWERPOINT

If I were to paraphrase Matthew 11:28, I would say something like this: “It’s time to step off the treadmill of performance and acceptance, trying to earn your way into My love and favor. Just come to Me. Trust My love for you and be assured that you are not accepted because of what you can do, but because of what I have done for you. Breathe a sigh of relief, don’t stress out over your faults; just relax.”



KEYS to a Victorious Life

Living Freely and Lightly

In The Message version of Matthew 11:29–30, Jesus says, “Come to me.... Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

Living “freely and lightly” in the “unforced rhythms of grace” sounds good, doesn’t it? I’m sure you have had enough heavy burdens in your life; I have too, and I have learned the importance of enjoying the freedom Jesus offers us. It’s nice to know you don’t have to worry about things, figure out everything, or carry the burdens in your life. It is actually quite refreshing when I realize I don’t need to know everything about everything!

We need to become comfortable with saying, “I don’t know the answer to this dilemma, and I’m not going to worry about anything because God is in control. I trust Him. I’m going to rest in Him and live freely and lightly!”

²³“And you, Capernaum, are you to be exalted to heaven [for your apathy and unresponsiveness]? You will descend to Hades (the realm of the dead); for if the miracles done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

²⁴“But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment, than for you.”

²⁵At that time Jesus said, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth [I openly and joyfully acknowledge Your great wisdom], that You have hidden these things [these spiritual truths] from the wise and intelligent and revealed them to infants [to new believers, to those seeking God’s will and purpose].

²⁶“Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.

²⁷“All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one fully knows *and* accurately understands the Son except the Father; and no one fully knows *and* accurately understands the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son [deliberately] wills to reveal *Him*.

²⁸“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavily burdened [by religious rituals that provide no peace], and I will give you rest [refreshing your souls with salvation].

²⁹“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me [following Me as My disciple], for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST (renewal, blessed quiet) FOR YOUR SOULS. [Jer 6:16]

³⁰“For My yoke is easy [to bear] and My burden is light.”

12 AT THAT particular time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples were hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat them. [Deut 23:25; Mark 2:23–28; Luke 6:1–5]

²But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, “Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath.” [Ex 20:10; 23:12; Deut 5:14]

³He said to them, “Have you not read [in the Scriptures] what David did when he was hungry, he and those who accompanied him—[Lev 24:9; 1 Sam 21:1–6]

⁴how he went into the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests only?

⁵“Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break [the sanctity of] the Sabbath and yet are innocent? [Num 28:9, 10]

⁶“But I tell you that something greater than the temple is here.

⁷“And if you had only known what this statement means, ‘I DESIRE COMPASSION [for those in distress], AND NOT [animal] SACRIFICE,’ you would not have condemned the innocent. [Hos 6:6; Matt 9:13]

⁸“For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

⁹Leaving there, He went into their synagogue. [Mark 3:1–6; Luke 6:6–11]

¹⁰A man *was there* whose hand was withered. And they asked Jesus, “Is it lawful *and* permissible to heal on the Sabbath?”—*they asked this* so that they might accuse Him *and* bring charges into court.

¹¹But He said to them, “What man is there among you who, if he has only one sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out?

¹²“How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful *and* permissible to do good on the Sabbath.”

¹³Then He said to the man, “Reach out your hand!” The

man reached out and it was restored, as normal *and* healthy as the other.

¹⁴But the Pharisees went out and conspired against Him, *discussing* how they could destroy Him.

¹⁵Being aware of this, Jesus left there. Many followed Him, and He healed all of them [who were sick],

¹⁶and warned them not to tell [publicly] who He was.

¹⁷*This was* to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁸“BEHOLD, MY SERVANT WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN; MY BELOVED IN WHOM MY SOUL IS WELL-PLEASED;
I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT UPON HIM, AND HE WILL PROCLAIM JUSTICE TO THE NATIONS.

¹⁹“HE WILL NOT QUARREL, NOR CRY OUT LOUDLY;
NOR WILL ANYONE HEAR HIS VOICE IN THE STREETS.

²⁰“A BATTERED REED HE WILL NOT BREAK,
AND A SMOLDERING WICK HE WILL NOT EXTINGUISH,
UNTIL HE LEADS JUSTICE TO VICTORY.

²¹“AND IN HIS NAME THE GENTILES (all the nations of the world) WILL HOPE [with confidence].” [Is 42:1–4]

²²Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that the mute man both spoke and saw. [Mark 3:22–27; Luke 11:14, 15]

²³All the people wondered in amazement, and said, “Could this be the Son of David (the Messiah)?”

²⁴But the Pharisees heard it and said, “This man casts out demons only by [the help of] Beelzebul (Satan) the prince of the demons.”

²⁵Knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, “Any kingdom that is divided against itself is being laid waste; and no city or house divided against itself will [continue to] stand.

²⁶“If Satan casts out Satan [that is, his demons], he has become divided against himself *and* disunited; how then will his kingdom stand?

²⁷“If I cast out the demons by [the help of] Beelzebul (Satan), by whom do your sons drive them out? For this reason they will be your judges.

²⁸“But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you [before you expected it].

²⁹“Or how can anyone go into a strong man’s house and steal his property unless he first overpowers *and* ties up the strong man? Then he will ransack *and* rob his house. [Is 49:24, 25; Mark 3:27]

³⁰“He who is not with Me [once and for all on My side] is against Me; and he who does not [unequivocally] gather with Me scatters. [Luke 9:50; 11:23]

³¹“Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy [every evil, abusive, injurious speaking, or indignity against sacred things] will be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the [Holy] Spirit will not be forgiven.

³²“Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit [by attributing the miracles done by Me to Satan] will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the *age* to come. [Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10]

³³“Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the

tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is recognized *and* judged by its fruit.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

What To Say and What Not To Say

What a wonderful world we would live in if we all followed the rule that tells us to say something good or don't say anything at all. Just imagine how pleasant our homes, schools, jobs, churches, and society in general would be if everyone spoke positively all the time. It might even be the equivalent of heaven on earth!

Here is a simple rule that you can follow to guide you in your conversation: If it is good, uplifting, wholesome, and pleasant, say it all you want; if it is evil, negative, critical, and complaining, don't say it. What is in your heart will eventually come out of your mouth (see Matt. 12:34). You cannot change what you say unless you change what you think. Ask God to help you change your thoughts so there is not even a hint of wanting to say something negative.

³⁴“You brood of vipers, how can you speak good things when you are evil? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.

³⁵“The good man, from his [inner] good treasure, brings out good things; and the evil man, from his [inner] evil treasure, brings out evil things.

³⁶“But I tell you, on the day of judgment people will have to give an accounting for every careless *or* useless word they

peak.

³⁷“For by your words [reflecting your spiritual condition] you will be justified *and* acquitted of the guilt of sin; and by your words [rejecting Me] you will be condemned *and* sentenced.”

³⁸Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign (attesting miracle) from You [proving that You are what You claim to be].”

³⁹But He replied and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation [that is morally unfaithful to God] craves *and* demands a [miraculous] sign; but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah; [Luke 11:29–32]

⁴⁰for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. [Jon 1:17]

⁴¹“The men of Nineveh will stand up [as witnesses] at the judgment against this generation, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and now, something greater than Jonah is here. [Jon 3:5]

⁴²“The Queen of the South (Sheba) will stand up [as a witness] at the judgment against this generation, and will condemn it because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon; and now, something greater than Solomon is here. [1 Kin 10:1; 2 Chr 9:1]

⁴³“Now when the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, it roams through waterless (dry, arid) places in search of rest, but it does not find it.

⁴⁴“Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when it arrives, it finds *the place* unoccupied,

swept, and put in order.

⁴⁵“Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and make their home there. And the last condition of that man becomes worse than the first. So will it also be with this wicked generation.”

⁴⁶While He was still talking to the crowds, it happened that His mother and brothers stood outside, asking to speak to Him. [Mark 3:31–35; Luke 8:19–21]

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Fruit Comes from the Inside

One church member said about another member who was considered “the gossip” of the church: “One thing about her, she’s not prejudiced—she talks about everyone.” I felt sad for this woman. She had allowed Satan to fill her mind with critical, harsh thoughts and was probably critical of herself as well.

“The gossip” of the church was only speaking what was already inside her heart. Jesus said, “For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart” (Matt. 12:34). Kind or judgmental words come out of our mouth because we first nurtured them in our mind.

People often promise to speak better of others and to gossip less. They really try, but nothing changes because they are trying to only change their words without first changing their thoughts. It won’t work because they are trying to effect a change in a way opposite from what it should be. What they need to do is look inward and ask, “What is going on inside me?” When their thoughts are right, their words will also be right.

Jesus said, “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is recognized *and* judged by its fruit” (Matt. 12:33). The same is true of our lives. Everything begins with a thought. If we allow negative, unkind thoughts to fill our minds, they will produce bad, negative fruit.

It’s easy to see the fruit of people’s lives—the result of what’s going on inside. We can learn a lot about a person’s character simply by listening to their conversation.

If we believe God truly loves us and we enjoy fellowship with Him every day, we are planting good seeds in our heart. The more good seeds we plant, the more good fruit we produce. The more we think kind and loving thoughts, the more we view others as being kind and loving.

The more we open ourselves to the Spirit’s positive and loving thoughts, and the more we read God’s Word, the more good fruit we produce on the inside—and that good fruit shows itself in our behavior toward others. Always remember that if things become right on the inside, they will come out right on the outside.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Dear God, forgive me for the harsh things I’ve said about others and for allowing harsh thoughts to fill my mind. I know I can’t make myself more loving, but You can. Please help me focus on healthy, positive thoughts. Amen.

POWERPOINT

You can always tell God how you feel and ask for His help and strength, but talking about negative feelings just to be talking or to “vent” is not helpful. In Matthew 12:36,

Jesus cautions against speaking “careless *or* useless” words. If you find yourself speaking or feeling negatively for quite a while, asking for prayer or advice from a trusted friend can be a good idea. If you need to talk with someone about an unpleasant situation, do so in a healthy way that will bring about a positive solution instead of speaking careless words that will not serve a godly purpose.



⁴⁷Someone said to Him, “Look! Your mother and Your

brothers are standing outside asking to speak to You.”

⁴⁸But Jesus replied to the one who told Him, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?”

⁴⁹And stretching out His hand toward His disciples [and all His other followers], He said, “Here are My mother and My brothers!

⁵⁰“For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven [by believing in Me, and following Me] is My brother and sister and mother.”

13 THAT SAME day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting beside the sea [of Galilee]. [Mark 4:1–20; Luke 8:4–15]

²But such large crowds gathered around Him that He got into a boat and sat there [positioning Himself as a teacher], while the whole crowd stood on the shore.

³He told them many things in parables, saying, “Listen carefully: a sower went out to sow [seed in his field];

⁴and as he sowed, some *seed* fell beside the road [between the fields], and the birds came and ate it.

⁵“Other seed fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil; and at once they sprang up because they had no depth of soil.

⁶“But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

⁷“Other seed fell among thorns, and thorns came up and choked them out.

⁸“Other seed fell on good soil and yielded grain, some a

hundred times as much [as was sown], some sixty [times as much], and some thirty.

⁹“He who has ears [to hear], let him hear *and* heed My words.”

¹⁰Then the disciples came to Him and asked, “Why do You speak to the crowds in parables?”

¹¹Jesus replied to them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. [Mark 4:11]

¹²“For whoever has [spiritual wisdom because he is receptive to God’s word], to him *more* will be given, and he will be richly *and* abundantly supplied; but whoever does not have [spiritual wisdom because he has devalued God’s word], even what he has will be taken away from him. [Matt 25:29; Mark 4:25; Luke 8:18]

¹³“This is the reason I speak to the crowds in parables: because while [having the power of] seeing they do not see, and while [having the power of] hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand *and* grasp [spiritual things].

¹⁴“In them the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says,

‘YOU WILL HEAR *and* KEEP ON HEARING, BUT NEVER UNDERSTAND;

AND YOU WILL LOOK *and* KEEP ON LOOKING, BUT NEVER COMPREHEND;

¹⁵FOR THIS NATION’S HEART HAS GROWN HARD,
AND WITH THEIR EARS THEY HARDLY HEAR,
AND THEY HAVE [tightly] CLOSED THEIR EYES,
OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES,

AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS,
AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART, AND TURN [to Me]
AND I WOULD HEAL THEM [spiritually].’ [Is 6:9]

¹⁶“But blessed [spiritually aware, and favored by God] are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. [Luke 10:23, 24]

¹⁷“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, many prophets and righteous men [who were honorable and in right standing with God] longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

¹⁸“Listen then to the [meaning of the] parable of the sower: [Mark 4:2–20; Luke 8:4–15]

¹⁹“When anyone hears the word of the kingdom [regarding salvation] and does not understand *and* grasp it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.

²⁰“The one on whom seed was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and at once welcomes it with joy;

²¹yet he has no [substantial] root in himself, but is only temporary, and when pressure or persecution comes because of the word, immediately he stumbles *and* falls away [abandoning the One who is the source of salvation].

²²“And the one on whom seed was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the worries *and* distractions of the world and the deceitfulness [the superficial pleasures and delight] of riches choke the word, and it yields no fruit.

²³“And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil,

this is the one who hears the word and understands *and* grasps it; he indeed bears fruit and yields, some a hundred times [as much as was sown], some sixty [times as much], and some thirty.” [Mark 4:2–20; Luke 8:4–15]

²⁴“Jesus gave them another parable [to consider], saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field.

²⁵“But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed *weeds [resembling wheat] among the wheat, and went away.

²⁶“So when the plants sprouted and formed grain, the weeds appeared also.

²⁷“The servants of the owner came to him and said, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? Then how does it have weeds in it?’

²⁸“He replied to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants asked him, ‘Then do you want us to go and pull them out?’

²⁹“But he said, ‘No; because as you pull out the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them.

³⁰“Let them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, “First gather the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; but gather the wheat into my barn.””

³¹He gave them another parable [to consider], saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; [Mark 4:30–32; Luke 13:18, 19]

³²and of all the seeds [planted in the region] it is the smallest, but when it has grown it is the largest of the garden herbs and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR FIND

SHELTER IN ITS BRANCHES.” [Ezek 17:23]

³³He told them another parable, “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and worked into three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.” [Gen 18:6; Luke 13:21]

³⁴All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables, and He said nothing to them without [using] a parable.

³⁵*This was* to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet:

“I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH IN PARABLES;

I WILL UTTER THINGS [unknown and unattainable] THAT HAVE BEEN HIDDEN [from mankind] SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.” [Ps 78:2]

³⁶Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him saying, “Explain [clearly] to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

³⁷He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man,

³⁸and the field is the world; and [as for] the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the weeds are the sons of the evil *one*;

³⁹and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels.

⁴⁰“So just as the weeds are gathered up and burned in the fire, so will it be at the end of the age.

⁴¹“The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend [those things by which people are led into sin], and all who practice evil [leading others into sin], ⁴²and will throw them into the furnace

of fire; in that place there will be weeping [over sorrow and pain] and grinding of teeth [over distress and anger].

⁴³“Then THE RIGHTEOUS [those who seek the will of God] WILL SHINE FORTH [radiating the new life] LIKE THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears [to hear], let him hear *and* heed My words. [Dan 12:3]

⁴⁴“The kingdom of heaven is like a [very precious] treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid again; then in his joy he goes and sells all he has and buys that field [securing the treasure for himself].

⁴⁵“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,

⁴⁶and upon finding a single pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

⁴⁷“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet which was lowered into the sea, and gathered *fish* of every kind,

⁴⁸and when it was full, they dragged it up on the beach; and they sat down and sorted out the good *fish* into baskets, but the worthless ones they threw away.

⁴⁹“So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous

⁵⁰and throw the wicked into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping [over sorrow and pain] and grinding of teeth [over distress and anger].

⁵¹“Have you understood all these things [in the lessons of the parables]?” They said to Jesus, “Yes.”

⁵²He said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like the head of

a household, who brings out of his treasure things that are new *and* fresh and things that are old *and* familiar.”

⁵³When Jesus had finished these parables, He left there.

⁵⁴And after coming to [Nazareth] His hometown, He *began* teaching them in their synagogue, and they were astonished, and said, “Where did this Man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers [what is the source of His authority]? [Mark 6:1–6; Luke 4:16, 23]

⁵⁵“Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And are not His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?

⁵⁶“And His sisters, are they not [living here] among us? Where then did this Man get all this [wisdom and power]?”

⁵⁷And they took offense at Him [refusing to believe in Him]. But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.”

⁵⁸And He did not do many miracles there [in Nazareth] because of their unbelief.

14 AT THAT time Herod [Antipas], the tetrarch [who governed a portion of Palestine including Galilee and Perea], heard the reports about Jesus, [Luke 9:7–9]

²and said to his attendants, “This is John the Baptist; he has been raised from the dead, and that is why the miraculous powers are at work in him.”

³For Herod had John arrested and bound him and put him in prison [at the fortress of Machaerus, east of the Jordan, to keep him away] because of Herodias, the wife of his brother

Philip, [Mark 6:17; Luke 3:19]

⁴for John had said to him, “It is not lawful (morally right) for you to have her [living with you as your wife].” [Lev 18:16; 20:21]

⁵Although Herod wished to have him put to death, he feared the people, for they regarded John as a prophet.

⁶But when Herod’s birthday came, [his niece Salome], the daughter of Herodias danced [immodestly] before them and pleased *and* fascinated Herod, ⁷so much that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked.

⁸She, being coached by her mother [Herodias], said, “Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist.”

⁹The king was distressed, but because of his oaths, and because of his dinner guests, he ordered it to be given her.

¹⁰He sent and had John beheaded in the prison.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Spend Time Alone with God

One of the most important keys to victory in your daily life is to spend time alone with God, as Jesus did (see Matt. 14:23).

Jesus took regular times away from His busy life and ministry for prayer and fellowship with God. Any time He started feeling weary, He apparently knew that the key to being refreshed and restored was to get away by Himself, talk with God, and enjoy times of solitude. Afterward, He was ready to minister again.

This is a good reminder to us all. We are wise to step away from our busy schedules and spend quiet time alone with God when we feel mentally, physically, or emotionally drained. We should not allow ourselves to become burned out, but seek to be refreshed as we spend focused time with God and no one else.

¹¹His head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother [Herodias].

¹²And John's disciples came and took away the body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus.

¹³When Jesus heard *about John*, He left there privately in a boat and went to a secluded place. But when the crowds heard of this, they followed Him on foot from the cities. [Mark 6:32–44; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:1–13]

¹⁴When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and felt [profound] compassion for them and healed their sick.

¹⁵When evening came, the disciples came to Him and said, “This is an isolated place and the hour is already late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.”

¹⁶But Jesus said to them, “They do not need to go away; you give them *something* to eat!”

¹⁷They replied, “We have nothing here except five loaves and two fish.”

¹⁸He said, “Bring them here to Me.”

¹⁹Then He ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and He took the five loaves and the two fish and, looking up toward heaven, He blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples *gave them* to the people, ²⁰and they all ate and were satisfied. They picked up twelve full baskets of the leftover broken pieces.

²¹There were about 5,000 men who ate, besides women and children.

²²Immediately He directed the disciples to get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side [of the Sea of Galilee], while He sent the crowds away. [Mark 6:45–52; John 6:15–21]

²³After He had dismissed the crowds, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. When it was evening, He was there alone.

²⁴But the boat [by this time] was already a **long* distance from land, tossed *and* battered by the waves; for the wind was against them.

²⁵ And in the fourth watch of the night (3:00–6:00 a.m.) Jesus came to them, walking on the sea. [Mark 6:48; John 6:19]

²⁶ When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in fear.

²⁷ But immediately He spoke to them, saying, “Take courage, it is I! Do not be afraid!” [Ex 3:14]

²⁸ Peter replied to Him, “Lord, if it is [really] You, command me to come to You on the water.”

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

True Faith

When the disciples saw Jesus walking in the middle of the night on the top of the waves of the stormy Sea of Galilee, they thought He was a ghost (see Matt. 14:26). Then Jesus cried out, “Take courage, it is I! Do not be afraid!” (v. 27). This is the powerful moment in the story. Did they eagerly climb out of the boat and join Him atop the crashing waves? Or did they huddle in fear, reminding themselves that human beings cannot walk on water?

Peter was the only disciple who responded to Jesus in true faith. For Peter to say, “Lord, if it is [really] You, command me to come to You on the water” was a tremendous act of trust (v. 28). It was a defining moment that highlighted Peter’s courage, great faith and belief in Jesus as the Son of God.

Peter could have easily said, “Lord, I see You walking on water, but I doubt I can do that.” Instead Peter asked if he could come and walk on the water too. Do you have that kind of faith?

I cite this example of faith simply to emphasize the triumph

of a man who dared to believe and took a step of faith and did the impossible. Peter walked on water!

After a short while, Peter grew frightened and began to sink. Jesus said to Peter, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” But Jesus also reached out His hand and helped Peter even in those moments of weakness. I believe that Jesus was pleased that Peter took a step of faith, even though he didn’t behave perfectly.

Rather than see these as words of rebuke, what if you see them as Jesus’ great encouragement, not just to Peter, but also to you? What if you view this event as Jesus saying to you, “You started so well. You believed in Me and got out of the boat. *You did it!* You walked on water just as I did. Though you allowed doubt to enter and you began to sink, you can begin again. Together we will succeed.”

This story is a powerful reminder that Jesus will always reach out to you and take care of you. He doesn’t want you to focus on your failures, but on your successes!

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord Jesus, please forgive my lack of faith. Increase my faith in Your Word, and help me to trust You enough to follow Your leading. When the circumstances around me threaten to pull me into deep waters of doubt, help me to focus on You. Amen.

²⁹He said, “Come!” So Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus.

³⁰But when he saw [the effects of] the wind, he was frightened, and he began to sink, and he cried out, “Lord, save me!”

³¹Immediately Jesus extended His hand and caught him, saying to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”

³²And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

³³Then those in the boat worshiped Him [with awe-inspired reverence], saying, “Truly You are the Son of God!”

³⁴When they had crossed over [the sea], they went ashore at Gennesaret.

³⁵And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent *word* throughout all the surrounding district and brought to Him all who were sick;

³⁶and they begged Him to let them merely touch the fringe of His robe; and all who touched it were perfectly restored.
[Matt 9:20]

15 THEN SOME Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem came to Jesus and said, ²“Why do Your disciples violate the tradition (religious laws) handed down by the [Jewish] elders? For Your disciples do not [ceremonially] wash their hands before they eat.”

³He replied to them, “Why also do you violate the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition [handed

down by the elders]?

⁴“For God said [through Moses], ‘HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER,’ and, ‘HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF *or* INSULTS *or* TREATS IMPROPERLY FATHER OR MOTHER IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH.’ [Ex 20:12; 21:17; Lev 20:9; Deut 5:16]

⁵“But you say, ‘If anyone says to his father or mother, “Whatever [money or resource that] I have that would help you is [already dedicated and] given *to God*,”

⁶he is not to honor his father or his mother [by helping them with their need].’ So by this you have invalidated the word of God [depriving it of force and authority and making it of no effect] for the sake of your tradition [handed down by the elders].

⁷“You hypocrites (play-actors, pretenders), rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you when he said,

⁸‘THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS,
BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.

⁹‘BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME,
FOR THEY TEACH AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.’” [Is 29:13]

¹⁰After Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said, “Listen and understand *this*:

¹¹It is not what goes into the mouth of a man that defiles *and* dishonors him, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles *and* dishonors him.”

¹²Then the disciples came and said to Jesus, “Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard *you say this?*”

¹³He answered, “Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant will be torn up by the roots. [Is 60:21]

¹⁴“Leave them alone; they are blind guides [leading blind followers]. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”

¹⁵Peter asked Him, “Explain this parable [about what defiles a person] to us.”

¹⁶And He said, “Are you still so dull [and unable to put things together]?”

¹⁷“Do you not understand that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated?”

¹⁸“But whatever [word] comes out of the mouth comes from the heart, and this is what defiles *and* dishonors the man.

¹⁹“For out of the heart come evil thoughts *and* plans, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false testimonies, slanders (verbal abuse, irreverent speech, blaspheming).

²⁰“These are the things which defile *and* dishonor the man; but eating with [ceremonially] unwashed hands does not defile the man.”

²¹After leaving there, Jesus withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. [Mark 7:24–30]

²²And a Canaanite woman from that district came out and *began* to cry out [urgently], saying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David (Messiah); my daughter is cruelly possessed by a demon.”

²³But He did not say a word in answer to her. And His disciples came and asked Him [repeatedly], “Send her away,

because she keeps shouting out after us.”

²⁴He answered, “I was commissioned by God *and* sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

²⁵But she came and *began* to kneel down before Him, saying, “Lord, help me!”

²⁶And He replied, “It is not good (appropriate, fair) to take the children’s bread and throw it to the pet dogs.”

²⁷She said, “Yes, Lord; but even the pet dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their [young] masters’ table.”

²⁸Then Jesus answered her, “Woman, your faith [your personal trust and confidence in My power] is great; it will be done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was healed from that moment.

²⁹Jesus went on from there and passed along by [the eastern shore of] the Sea of Galilee. Then He went up on the hillside and was sitting there.

³⁰And great crowds came to Him, bringing with them the lame, crippled, blind, mute, and many others, and they put them down at His feet; and He healed them.

³¹So the crowd was amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they praised *and* glorified the God of Israel.

³²Then Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, “I feel compassion for the crowd, because they have been with Me now three days and have nothing [left] to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, because they might faint [from exhaustion] on the way [home].” [Mark 8:1–21]

³³The disciples said to Him, “Where are we to get enough bread in this isolated place to feed so large a crowd?”

³⁴And Jesus asked them, “How many loaves [of bread] do you have?” They replied, “Seven, and a few small fish.”

³⁵He directed the crowd to sit down on the ground,

³⁶and He took the seven loaves and the fish; and when He had given thanks, He broke them and started giving them to the disciples, and the disciples [gave them] to the people.

³⁷And they all ate and were satisfied, and they gathered up seven full baskets of the broken pieces that were left over.

³⁸[Among] those who ate were 4,000 men, not counting women and children.

³⁹Then Jesus sent the crowds away, got into the boat and went to the district of Magadan.

16 NOW THE Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and testing Jesus [to get something to use against Him], they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven [which would support His divine authority].

²But He replied to them, “When it is evening, you say, ‘*It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.*’

³“And in the morning, ‘*It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and has a threatening look.*’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but cannot interpret the signs of the times?

⁴“An evil and [morally] unfaithful generation craves a [miraculous] sign; but no sign will be given to it, except the sign of [the prophet] Jonah.” Then He left them and went away. [Jon 3:4, 5]

⁵When the disciples reached the other side *of the sea*, they realized that they had forgotten to bring bread.

⁶Jesus said to them, “Watch out and be on your guard against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

⁷They began to discuss this among themselves, saying, “*He said that* because we did not bring bread.”

⁸But Jesus, aware of this, said, “You men of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves that you have no bread?”

⁹“Do you still not understand or remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you picked up?”

¹⁰“Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many large baskets you picked up?”

¹¹“How is it that you fail to understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

¹²Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the [false] teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

¹³Now when Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” [Mark 8:27–29; Luke 9:18–20]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Words Establish Faith

When Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, he was releasing with his mouth the faith that was in his heart (see Matt. 16:16). The prayer and confession of what we know in our hearts, revealed by the Holy Spirit, is powerful and strengthens our faith.

We establish the faith that is in our heart by the words we speak, as the apostle Paul writes in Romans 10:10: “and with the mouth he acknowledges and confesses [his faith openly], resulting in and confirming [his] salvation.”

This is why prayer is so important. We establish the truths we believe inwardly when we talk about them outwardly. This is why confessing Scripture in prayer is so very powerful. When we speak the Word of God, we are establishing things in the spiritual realm by the words we speak in the physical realm. And that which is established spiritually will be manifested physically.

You and I should continually confess the Word of God in every circumstance, believing in our heart and confessing with our mouth what God has said about us in His Word. Heaven’s power is available to us when we confess in the physical or natural realm what God has already done for us in the spiritual realm.

¹⁴And they answered, “Some say John the Baptist; others, Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah, or [just] one of the prophets.”

¹⁵He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

¹⁶Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed), the Son of the living God.”

¹⁷Then Jesus answered him, “Blessed [happy, spiritually secure, favored by God] are you, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood (mortal man) did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

¹⁸“And I say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades (death) will not overpower it [by preventing the resurrection of the Christ]. [Eph 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col 1:18]

¹⁹“I will give you the keys (authority) of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind [forbid, declare to be improper and unlawful] on earth will have [already] been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose [permit, declare lawful] on earth will have [already] been loosed in heaven.” [Is 22:22; Matt 18:18]

²⁰Then He gave the disciples strict orders to tell no one that He was the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed).

²¹From that time on Jesus began to show His disciples [clearly] that He must go to Jerusalem, and endure many things at the hands of the elders and the chief priests and scribes (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court), and be killed, and be raised [from death to life] on the third day. [Mark 8:31–9:1; Luke 9:22–27]

²²Peter took Him aside [to speak to Him privately] and began to reprimand Him, saying, “May God forbid it! This will

never happen to You.”

²³But Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on things of God, but on things of man.”

²⁴Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to follow Me [as My disciple], he must deny himself [set aside selfish interests], and take up his cross [expressing a willingness to endure whatever may come] and follow Me [believing in Me, conforming to My example in living and, if need be, suffering or perhaps dying because of faith in Me].

²⁵“For whoever wishes to save his life [in this world] will [eventually] lose it [through death], but whoever loses his life [in this world] for My sake will find it [that is, life with Me for all eternity].

²⁶“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world [wealth, fame, success], but forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

²⁷“For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory *and* majesty of His Father with His angels, and THEN HE WILL REPAY EACH ONE IN ACCORDANCE WITH WHAT HE HAS DONE. [Ps 62:12]

²⁸“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

17 SIX DAYS later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John the brother of James, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. [Mark 9:2–8; Luke 9:28–36]

²And His appearance changed dramatically in their

presence; and His face shone [with heavenly glory, clear and bright] like the sun, and His clothing became as white as light.

³And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Jesus.

⁴Then Peter began to speak and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good *and* delightful *and* auspicious that we are here; if You wish, I will put up three [sacred] tents here—one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

⁵While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased *and* delighted! Listen to Him!” [Ps 2:7; Is 42:1]

⁶When the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were terrified.

⁷But Jesus came and touched them and said, “Get up, and do not be afraid.”

⁸And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone.

⁹And as they were going down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, “Do not tell anyone what you have seen until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

POWERPOINT

In Matthew 17:5, at the moment of Jesus' transfiguration, God said about Him: "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased *and* delighted!" I believe everyone who wants to gain victory in life needs to know that God speaks the same message to him or her. As His dearly beloved children, we each need to know that God is pleased with us personally and individually. God is not pleased with you because you do everything right. He is pleased with you because you put your faith in Jesus, the One Who did everything right for you.



¹⁰The disciples asked Him, "Then why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"

¹¹He answered and said, “Elijah is coming and will restore all things;

¹²but I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not recognize him, but did to him as they wished. The Son of Man is also going to suffer at their hands.”

¹³Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist. [Mal 4:5]

¹⁴When they approached the crowd, a man came up to Jesus, kneeling before Him and saying, [Mark 9:14–27; Luke 9:37–42]

¹⁵“Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic (moonstruck) and suffers terribly; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water.

¹⁶“And I brought him to Your disciples, and they were not able to heal him.”

¹⁷And Jesus answered, “You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me.”

¹⁸Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed at once.

¹⁹Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and asked, “Why could we not drive it out?”

²⁰He answered, “Because of your little faith [your lack of trust and confidence in the power of God]; for I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, if you have [living] faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and [if it is God’s will] it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. [Mark 11:23; Luke 17:6; 1 John 5:14]

²¹“[But this kind of demon does not go out except by prayer and fasting.]”

²²When they were gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed *and* handed over to men [who are His enemies]; ²³and they will kill Him, and He will be raised [from death to life] on the third day.” And they were deeply grieved *and* distressed.

²⁴When they arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the half-shekel [temple tax] went up to Peter and said, “Does not your teacher pay the half-shekel?” [Ex 30:13; 38:26]

²⁵Peter answered, “Yes.” And when he came home, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do earthly rulers collect duties or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?”

²⁶When Peter said, “From strangers,” Jesus said to him, “Then the sons are exempt [from taxation].

²⁷“However, so that we do not offend them, go to the sea and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel. Take it and give it to them [to pay the temple tax] for you and Me.”

18 AT THAT time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” [Mark 9:33–37; Luke 9:46–48]

²He called a little child and set him before them,

³and said, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, unless you repent [that is, change your inner self—your old

way of thinking, live changed lives] and become like children [trusting, humble, and forgiving], you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

⁴“Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

⁵“Whoever receives *and* welcomes one child like this in My name receives Me;

⁶but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble *and* sin [by leading him away from My teaching], it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone [as large as one turned by a donkey] hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. [Mark 9:42; Luke 17:2]

⁷“Woe (judgment is coming) to the world because of stumbling blocks *and* temptations to sin! It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to the person on whose account *or* through whom the stumbling block comes! [Luke 17:1]

⁸“If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble *and* sin, cut it off and throw it away from you [that is, remove yourself from the source of temptation]; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into everlasting fire.

⁹“If your eye causes you to stumble *and* sin, pluck it out and throw it away from you [that is, remove yourself from the source of temptation]; it is better for you to enter life with only one eye, than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fiery hell.

¹⁰“See that you do not despise *or* think less of one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven

[are in the presence of and] continually look upon the face of My Father who is in heaven. [Acts 12:15; Heb 1:14]

¹¹“[For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.]

¹²“What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them gets lost, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountain and go in search of the one that is lost? [Luke 15:4–7]

¹³“And if it turns out that he finds it, I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that did not get lost.

¹⁴“So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones be lost.

¹⁵“If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens *and* pays attention to you, you have won back your brother.

¹⁶“But if he does not listen, take along with you one or two others, so that EVERY WORD MAY BE CONFIRMED BY THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The Power of Agreement

I believe the particular kind of prayer that Jesus describes in Matthew 18:19 is to be prayed by two or more people on earth who are committed to being of one mind and in harmony with one another. This prayer is not for people who generally live in strife and disunity but then decide they should agree together for a miracle because they are in a desperate situation. God honors the prayers of those who pay the price to live in harmony and unity.

The prayer power of believers multiplies when we choose to be in harmony with one another. There will be times in life when what we are up against is bigger than what we can handle by ourselves. At such times, we are wise to pray together with someone who is in agreement with us.

If you feel you have nobody in your life with whom you can agree in prayer, don't despair. You and the Holy Spirit can agree. He is here on the earth with you, and He is in you through your faith in Jesus.

There is power in agreement! Make the decision to do your best to live in harmony with those around you and to expect great things as you pray together.

¹⁷“If he pays no attention to them [refusing to listen and obey], tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to

the church, let him be to you as a Gentile (unbeliever) and a tax collector. [Lev 19:17; Deut 19:15]

18“*I assure you and most solemnly say to you, whatever you bind [forbid, declare to be improper and unlawful] on earth shall have [already] been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose [permit, declare lawful] on earth shall have [already] been loosed in heaven.* [Matt 16:19]

19“*Again I say to you, that if two ^{*}believers on earth agree [that is, are of one mind, in harmony] about anything that they ask [within the will of God], it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.* [1 John 5:14]

20“*For where two or three are gathered in My name [meeting together as My followers], I am there among them.”* [Ex 3:14]

21Then Peter came to Him and asked, “Lord, how many times will my brother sin against me and I forgive him *and* let it go? Up to seven times?”

22Jesus answered him, “I say to you, not up to seven times, but seventy times seven.

23“*Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves.*

24“*When he began the accounting, one who owed him 10,000 talents was brought to him.*

25“*But because he could not repay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and his children and everything that he possessed, and payment to be made.*

26“*So the slave fell on his knees and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.’*

27“*And his master’s heart was moved with compassion and*

he released him and forgave him [canceling] the debt.

²⁸“But that same slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and *began* choking him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe!’

²⁹“So his fellow slave fell on his knees and begged him earnestly, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’

³⁰“But he was unwilling and he went and had him thrown in prison until he paid back the debt.

³¹“When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and they went and reported to their master [with clarity and in detail] everything that had taken place.

³²“Then his master called him and said to him, ‘You wicked *and* contemptible slave, I forgave all that [great] debt of yours because you begged me.

³³‘Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave [who owed you little by comparison], as I had mercy on you?’

³⁴“And in wrath his master turned him over to the torturers (jailers) until he paid all that he owed.

³⁵“My heavenly Father will also do the same to [every one of] you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”

19 NOW WHEN Jesus had finished saying these things, He left Galilee and went into the part of Judea that is beyond the Jordan; ²and large crowds followed Him, and He healed them there.

³And Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, “Is

it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?"

⁴He replied, "Have you never read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE,

⁵and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED INSEPARABLY TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'? [Gen 1:27; 2:24; Mark 10:7]

⁶"So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate."

⁷The Pharisees said to Him, "Why then did Moses command us to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND HER AWAY?" [Deut 24:1-4]

⁸He said to them, "Because your hearts were hard *and* stubborn Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way.

⁹"I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

¹⁰The disciples said to Jesus, "If the relationship of a man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry."

¹¹But He said to them, "Not all men can accept this statement, but *only* those to whom [the capacity to receive] it has been given.

¹²"For there are eunuchs who have been born that way from their mother's womb [making them incapable of consummating a marriage]; and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men [for royal service]; and there are eunuchs who have made themselves so for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it."

¹³Then children were brought to Jesus so that He might place His hands on them [for a blessing] and pray; but the disciples reprimanded them.

¹⁴But He said, “Leave the children alone, and do not forbid them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

¹⁵After placing His hands on them [for a blessing], He went on from there.

¹⁶And someone came to Him and said, “Teacher, what [essentially] good thing shall I do to obtain eternal life [that is, eternal salvation in the Messiah’s kingdom]?” [Lev 18:5; Mark 10:17–30; Luke 18:18–30]

¹⁷Jesus answered, “Why are you asking Me about what is [essentially] good? There is *only* One who is [essentially] good; but if you wish to enter into *eternal* life, keep the commandments.” [Luke 10:28]

¹⁸He said to Jesus, “Which commandments?” And Jesus answered, “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER; YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY; YOU SHALL NOT STEAL; YOU SHALL NOT GIVE FALSE TESTIMONY; [Ex 20:12–16; Deut 5:16–20]

¹⁹HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER; and LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF” [that is, unselfishly seek the best or higher good for others]. [Lev 19:18; Matt 22:39]

²⁰The young man said to Him, “I have kept all these things [from my youth]; what do I still lack?” [Luke 18:21]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

We Have the Faith We Need

I sometimes hear people say, “I just don’t have enough faith for that.” Similarly, the disciples asked Jesus why they couldn’t deliver a boy from a demon. He answered, “Because of your little faith ... for I assure you and most solemnly say to you, if you have [living] faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and [if it is God’s will] it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you” (Matt. 17:20).

The truth is that we all have the faith we need to do whatever God’s will is for us; but, the key to success is where we place that faith. If you put your faith in yourself or in other people, you will be disappointed. If you put your faith in God, you will be amazed at what He can do through you. Remember: “with God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26).

²¹Jesus answered him, “If you wish to be perfect [that is, have the spiritual maturity that accompanies godly character with no moral or ethical deficiencies], go and sell what you have and give [the money] to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me [becoming My disciple, believing and trusting in Me and walking the same path of life that I walk].”

²²But when the young man heard this, he left grieving *and*

distressed, for he owned much property *and* had many possessions [which he treasured more than his relationship with God].

²³Jesus said to His disciples, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, it is difficult for a rich man [who clings to possessions and status as security] to enter the kingdom of heaven.

²⁴“Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man [who places his faith in wealth and status] to enter the kingdom of God.”

²⁵When the disciples heard this, they were completely astonished *and* bewildered, saying, “Then who can be saved [from the wrath of God]?”

²⁶But Jesus looked at them and said, “With people [as far as it depends on them] it is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” [Gen 18:14; Job 42:2]

²⁷Then Peter answered Him, saying, “Look, we have given up everything and followed You [becoming Your disciples and accepting You as Teacher and Lord]; what then will there be for us?”

²⁸Jesus said to them, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, in the renewal [that is, the Messianic restoration and regeneration of all things] when the Son of Man sits on His glorious throne, you [who have followed Me, becoming My disciples] will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

²⁹“And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name’s sake will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal

life.

³⁰“But many *who are* first [in this world] will be last [in the world to come]; and the last, first.

20 “FOR THE kingdom of heaven is like the owner of an estate who went out in the morning at dawn to hire workmen for his vineyard.

²“When he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard.

³“And he went out about the third hour (9:00 a.m.) and saw others standing idle in the market place;

⁴and he said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right (an appropriate wage).’ And they went.

⁵“He went out about the sixth hour (noon) and the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.), and did the same thing.

⁶“And about the eleventh hour (5:00 p.m.) he went out and found others standing *around*, and he said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day?’

⁷“They answered him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He told them, ‘You go into the vineyard also.’

⁸“When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last [to be hired] and ending with the first [to be hired].’ [Lev 19:13; Deut 24:15]

⁹“Those who had been *hired* at the eleventh hour (5:00 p.m.) came and received a denarius each [a day’s wage].

¹⁰“Now when the first [to be hired] came, they thought they would get more; but each of them also received a denarius.

¹¹“When they received it, they protested *and* grumbled at the owner of the estate,

¹²saying, ‘These men who came last worked [only] one hour, and yet you have made them equal [in wages] to us who have carried [most of] the burden and [worked in] the scorching heat of the day.’

¹³“But the owner of the estate replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no injustice. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?’

¹⁴“Take what belongs to you and go, but I choose to give to this last man [hired] the same as I give to you.

¹⁵“Am I not lawfully permitted to do what I choose with what is mine? Or is your eye ^{*}envious because I am generous?’

¹⁶“So those who are last [in this world] shall be first [in the world to come], and those who are first, last.”

¹⁷As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve [disciples] aside, and along the way He said to them,

¹⁸“Listen carefully: we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and scribes (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court), and they will [judicially] condemn Him *and* sentence Him to death,

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Thank You, Jesus, that You did not come to be served, but to serve and to give Your life as a ransom for many, paying the price to set them free from the penalty of sin.

• adapted from Matthew 20:28

¹⁹and will hand Him over to the Gentiles (Roman authorities) to be mocked and scourged and crucified, and He will be raised [to life] on the third day.”

²⁰Then [Salome] the mother of Zebedee’s children [James and John] came up to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down [in respect], asked a favor of Him [Mark 10:35–45]

²¹And He said to her, “What do you wish?” She answered Him, “Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit [in positions of honor and authority] one on Your right and one on Your left.”

²²But Jesus replied, “You do not realize what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup [of suffering] that I am about to drink?” They answered, “We are able.”

²³He said to them, “You will drink My cup [of suffering]; but to sit on My right and on My left this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father.”

²⁴And when the [other] ten heard this, they were resentful and angry with the two brothers.

²⁵But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles have absolute power *and* lord it

over them, and their great men exercise authority over them [tyrannizing them]. [Mark 10:42–45; Luke 22:25–27]

²⁶“It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant,

²⁷and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your [willing and humble] slave;

²⁸just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many [paying the price to set them free from the penalty of sin].”

²⁹As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him. [Mark 10:46–52; Luke 18:35–43]

³⁰And two blind men were sitting by the road, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, “Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David (Messiah)!”

³¹The crowd sternly told them to be quiet, but they cried out all the more, “Lord, Son of David (Messiah) have mercy on us!”

³²Jesus stopped and called them, and asked, “What do you want Me to do for you?”

³³They answered Him, “Lord, *we want* our eyes to be opened.”

³⁴Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him [as His disciples].

21 WHEN THEY approached Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples [ahead], [Mark 11:1–10; Luke 19:29–38; John 12:12–15]

²saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and at once you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me.

³“If anyone says anything to you, you should say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and without delay the owner will send them [with you].”

⁴This happened so that what was spoken by the prophet would be fulfilled, saying:

⁵“TELL THE DAUGHTER OF ZION (the people of Jerusalem),
‘BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING TO YOU,
GENTLE AND MOUNTED ON A DONKEY,
EVEN ON A COLT, THE FOAL OF A BEAST OF BURDEN.’” [Is 62:11;
Zech 9:9]

⁶Then the disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them,
⁷and they brought the donkey and the colt, and placed their coats on them; and Jesus sat on the coats.

⁸Most of the crowd spread their coats on the road [as before a king], while others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them on the road.

⁹The crowds that went ahead of Him, and those that followed Him, were shouting [in praise and adoration],

“Hosanna to the Son of David (Messiah);
BLESSED [praised, glorified] IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME
OF THE LORD; Hosanna in the highest [heaven]!” [Ps
118:26]

¹⁰When He entered Jerusalem, all the city was trembling [with excitement], saying, “Who is this?”

¹¹And the crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee.”

¹²And Jesus entered the temple [grounds] and drove out [with force] all who were buying and selling [birds and animals for sacrifice] in the temple *area*, and He turned over the tables of the moneychangers [who made a profit exchanging foreign money for temple coinage] and the chairs of those who were selling doves [for sacrifice]. [Mark 11:15–18; Luke 19:45–47; John 2:14–16]

¹³Jesus said to them, “It is written [in Scripture], ‘MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER’; but you are making it a ROBBERS’ DEN.” [Is 56:7; Jer 7:11]

¹⁴And the blind and the lame came to Him in [the porticoes and courts of] the temple *area*, and He healed them.

¹⁵But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful *and* miraculous things that Jesus had done, and *heard* the boys who were shouting in [the porticoes and courts of] the temple [in praise and adoration], “Hosanna to the Son of David (the Messiah),” they became indignant ¹⁶and they said to Him, “Do You hear what these *children* are saying?” And Jesus replied to them, “Yes; have you never read [in the Scripture], ‘OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF INFANTS AND NURSING BABIES YOU HAVE PREPARED *and* PROVIDED PRAISE FOR YOURSELF’?” [Ps 8:2]

¹⁷Then He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.

¹⁸Now early in the morning, as Jesus was coming back to the city, He was hungry. [Mark 11:12–14, 20–24]

¹⁹Seeing a lone fig tree at the roadside, He went to it and found nothing but leaves on it; and He said to it, “Never again will fruit come from you.” And at once the fig tree withered.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Good Words and Actions Bear Good Fruit

When the fig tree has leaves, it also has fruit under its leaves. Jesus saw the leaves on the fig tree and went to it for something to eat because He was hungry. When He saw that it had leaves but no fruit, He cursed it (see Matt. 21:19).

Our words and actions should bear good fruit (see Matt. 7:15–20). If we appear to have good fruit, it is important that we actually have it, because people will be watching to see if we are genuine. God has chosen us to be His ambassadors (see 2 Cor. 5:20), and we represent Him well when there is evidence of good fruit in our lives. It isn't enough to just have a Jesus sticker on our car and a cross hanging around our neck displaying our Christianity—we also need the good fruit to back it up.

²⁰When the disciples saw it, they were astonished and asked, “How is it that the fig tree has withered away all at once?”

²¹Jesus replied to them, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, if you have faith [personal trust and confidence in Me] and do not doubt *or* allow yourself to be drawn in two directions, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ it will happen [if God wills it]. [1 John 5:14]

²²“And whatever you ask for in prayer, believing, you will receive.”

²³When He entered the temple *area*, the chief priests and elders of the people came to Him as He was teaching and said, “By what [kind of] authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority [to exercise this power]?” [Mark 11:27–33; Luke 20:1–8]

²⁴Jesus replied to them, “I will also ask you a question, and if you tell Me the answer, then I will tell you by what authority I do these things.

²⁵“The baptism of John—from where did it come? From heaven [that is, ordained by God] or from men?” And they *began* debating among themselves [considering the implications of their answer], saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Then why did you not believe John?’

²⁶“But if we say, ‘From men,’ we are afraid of the [response of the] crowd; for they all regard John as a prophet.”

²⁷So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And He said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what [kind of] authority I do these things.”

²⁸“What do you think? There was a man who had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’

²⁹“And he answered, ‘I will not’; but afterward he regretted it *and* changed his mind and went.

³⁰“Then the man came to the second son and said the same thing; and he replied, ‘I *will*, sir’; but he did not go.

³¹“Which of the two did the will of the father?” The chief priests and elders replied, “The first one.” Jesus said to them,

“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you that the tax collectors and the prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you.

³²“For John came to you [walking] in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did believe him; and you, seeing this, did not even change your mind afterward and believe him [accepting what he proclaimed to you].

³³“Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT AND DUG A WINE PRESS IN IT, AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to tenant farmers and went on a journey [to another country]. [Is 5:1–7; Mark 12:1–12; Luke 20:9–19]

³⁴“When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his [share of the] fruit.

³⁵“But the tenants took his servants and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third.

³⁶“Again he sent other servants, more than the first time; and they treated them the same way.

³⁷“Finally he sent his own son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son *and* have regard for him.’

³⁸“But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This [man] is the heir; come on, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’

³⁹“So they took the son and threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

⁴⁰“Now when the owner of the vineyard comes back, what will he do to those tenants?”

⁴¹They said to Him, “He will put those despicable men to a

miserable end, and rent out the vineyard to other tenants [of good character] who will pay him the proceeds at the *proper* seasons.”

⁴²Jesus asked them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

‘THE [very] STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED *and*
THREW AWAY, HAS BECOME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE;
THIS IS THE LORD’S DOING,
AND IT IS MARVELOUS *and* WONDERFUL IN OUR EYES’? [Ps
118:22, 23]

⁴³“Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to [another] people who will produce the fruit of it.

⁴⁴“And he who falls on this Stone will be broken to pieces; but he on whom it falls will be crushed.” [Is 8:14, 15; Dan 2:34, 35]

⁴⁵When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was talking about them.

⁴⁶And although they were trying to arrest Him, they feared the people, because they regarded Jesus as a prophet.

22 JESUS SPOKE to them again in parables, saying,

²“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son.

³“And he sent his servants to call those who had [previously] been invited to the wedding feast, but they refused to come.

⁴“Then he sent out some other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited, “Look, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fattened calves are butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast.” ’

⁵“But they paid no attention [they disregarded the invitation, treating it with contempt] and went away, one to his farm, another to his business.

⁶“The rest [of the invited guests] seized his servants and mistreated them [insulting and humiliating them] and killed them.

⁷“The king was enraged [when he heard this], and sent his soldiers and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

⁸“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding [feast] is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy.

⁹“So go to the main highways that lead out of the city, and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’

¹⁰“Those servants went out into the streets and gathered together all *the people* they could find, both bad and good; so the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests [sitting at the banquet table].

¹¹“But when the king came in to see the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed [appropriately] in wedding clothes,

¹²and he said, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without wearing the wedding clothes [that were provided for you]?’ And the man was speechless *and* without excuse.

¹³“Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him into the darkness outside; in that place there will be weeping [over sorrow and pain] and grinding of

teeth [over distress and anger].’

¹⁴“For many are called (invited, summoned), but few are chosen.”

¹⁵Then the Pharisees went and conspired together plotting how to trap Him by [distorting] what He said. [Mark 12:13–17; Luke 20:20–26]

¹⁶They sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that You are sincere and that You teach the way of God truthfully, without concerning Yourself about [what] anyone [thinks or says of Your teachings]; for You are impartial *and* do not seek anyone’s favor [and You treat all people alike, regardless of status].

¹⁷“Tell us then, what do You think? Is it permissible [according to Jewish law and tradition] to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?”

¹⁸But Jesus, aware of their malice, asked, “Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites?”

¹⁹“Show me the coin used for the poll-tax.” And they brought Him a denarius [a day’s wage].

²⁰And Jesus said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?”

²¹They said, “[The Emperor Tiberius] Caesar’s.” Then He said to them, “Then pay to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and to God the things that are God’s.”

²²When they heard this, they were caught off guard, and they left Him and went away.

²³On that day some Sadducees, who say that there is no resurrection [of the dead], came to Him and asked Him a question, [Mark 12:18–27; Luke 20:27–40]

²⁴saying, “Teacher, Moses said, ‘IF A MAN DIES, LEAVING NO CHILDREN, HIS BROTHER AS NEXT OF KIN SHALL MARRY HIS WIDOW, AND RAISE CHILDREN FOR HIS BROTHER.’ [Deut 25:5]

²⁵“Now there were seven brothers among us; the first married and died, and having no children left his wife to his brother.

²⁶“The second also [died childless], and the third, down to the seventh.

²⁷“Last of all, the woman died.

²⁸“So in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had *married* her.”

²⁹But Jesus replied to them, “You are all wrong because you know neither the Scriptures [which teach the resurrection] nor the power of God [for He is able to raise the dead].

³⁰“For in the resurrection neither do *men* marry nor are *women* given in marriage, but they are like angels in heaven [who do not marry nor produce children].

³¹“But as to the resurrection of the dead—have you not read [in the Scripture] what God said to you:

³²‘I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB’? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” [Ex 3:6]

³³When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.

³⁴Now when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced (muzzled) the Sadducees, they gathered together. [Mark 12:28–31; Luke 10:25–28]

³⁵One of them, a lawyer [an expert in Mosaic Law], asked

Jesus *a question*, to test Him:

³⁶“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” [Mark 12:28]

³⁷And Jesus replied to him, “‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ [Deut 6:5]

³⁸“This is the first and greatest commandment.

³⁹“The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF [that is, unselfishly seek the best or higher good for others].’ [Lev 19:18; Matt 19:19]

⁴⁰“The whole Law and the [writings of the] Prophets depend on these two commandments.”

⁴¹Now while the Pharisees were [still] gathered together, Jesus asked them a question: [Mark 12:35–37; Luke 20:41–44]

⁴²“What do you [Pharisees] think of the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed)? Whose Son is He?” They said to Him, “*The son of David.*”

⁴³Jesus asked them, “How is it then that David by the inspiration of the Spirit, calls Him ‘Lord,’ saying,

⁴⁴‘THE LORD (the Father) SAID TO MY LORD (the Son, the Messiah), “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES UNDER YOUR FEET” ’? [Ps 110:1]

⁴⁵“So then, if David calls Him (the Son, the Messiah) ‘Lord,’ how is He David’s son?”

⁴⁶No one was able to say a word to Him in answer, nor from that day on did anyone dare to question Him again.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

What Do You Say About Yourself?

Listening to yourself can be quite an education. Do you say negative and unkind things about yourself? If so, it is because deep in your heart you have a bad attitude toward yourself that will negatively affect your joy and all your relationships. God doesn't want you to say bad things about yourself; He wants you to love and respect yourself so you can love and respect others (see Matt. 22:39). You cannot give away what you don't already have inside yourself.

God loves us unconditionally, and since God Who is perfect loves us, surely we can love ourselves. We all make mistakes and want to change, and we should work with the Holy Spirit toward those changes. Through Christ we can love and value ourselves even while we are imperfect. The better you get along with yourself, the better you will get along with others.

23 THEN JESUS spoke to the crowds and to His disciples,

²saying: “The scribes and Pharisees have seated themselves in Moses’ chair [of authority as teachers of the Law];

³so practice and observe everything they tell you, but do not do as they do; for they preach [things], but do not practice them.

⁴“The scribes and Pharisees tie up heavy loads [that are hard to bear] and place them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves will not lift a finger [to make them lighter].

⁵“They do all their deeds to be seen by men; for they make their phylacteries (tefillin) wide [to make them more conspicuous] and make their tassels long. [Ex 13:9; Num 15:38; Deut 6:8]

⁶“They love the place of distinction *and* honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues [those on the platform near the scrolls of the Law, facing the congregation], ⁷and to be greeted [with respect] in the market places *and* public forums, and to have people call them Rabbi.

⁸“But do not be called Rabbi (Teacher); for One is your Teacher, and you are all [equally] brothers.

⁹“Do not call *anyone* on earth [who guides you spiritually] your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.

¹⁰“Do not *let yourselves* be called leaders *or* teachers; for One is your Leader (Teacher), the Christ.

¹¹“But the greatest among you will be your servant.

POWERPOINT

Perfectionism is a cold and sterile symptom of a legalistic mind-set, such as the Pharisees possessed (see Matt. 23:2–7).

They were great at making others feel as though they did not measure up. This is the opposite of grace, and perhaps that is why Jesus so vehemently opposed the Pharisees' attitude and behavior. God does not expect us to be perfect. It is precisely because we are not perfect that He sent Jesus to save us and gave the Holy Spirit to help us in our daily lives.



¹²“Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be raised to honor.

¹³“But woe (judgment is coming) to you, [self-righteous]

scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven in front of people; for you do not enter yourselves, nor do you allow those who are [in the process of] entering to do so. [Luke 11:52]

¹⁴“[Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you swallow up widows’ houses, and to cover it up you make long prayers; therefore you will receive the greater condemnation.]

¹⁵“Woe to you, [self-righteous] scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel over sea and land to make a single proselyte (convert to Judaism), and when he becomes a convert, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.

¹⁶“Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears [an oath] by the sanctuary of the temple, that is nothing (non-binding); but whoever swears [an oath] by the gold of the temple is obligated [as a debtor to fulfill his vow and keep his promise].’

¹⁷“You fools and blind men! Which is more important, the gold or the sanctuary of the temple that sanctified the gold? [Ex 30:29]

¹⁸“And [you scribes and Pharisees say], ‘Whoever swears [an oath] by the altar, that is nothing (non-binding), but whoever swears [an oath] by the offering on it, he is obligated [as a debtor to fulfill his vow and keep his promise].’

KEYS to a Victorious Life

A Very Bad Attitude

The religious leaders during the time of Jesus' ministry were hypocritical, and Jesus told them so. They taught others what they should do, but then did not do what they themselves taught. They loaded people down with religious rules but wouldn't lift a finger to help them. Some of the deepest hurts in my life, and perhaps in yours too, have come from religious, rule-keeping people who did not walk in love. They knew all the so-called "rules" of Christianity, but seemed to lack a loving relationship with the Lord.

People who think they have no faults easily find fault in others. But if we recognize our need for forgiveness and grace, we can show forgiveness and grace to those around us. If we know we need mercy and patience from God, we will be able to be merciful and patient with others. Giving away what we have never received from the Lord is impossible. If we receive mercy from the Lord for our own failings, we will be able to give mercy more freely to others.

A religious attitude is one of the worst mind-sets anyone can have. It always comes across to others as critical and as though the one who has it feels superior to others, believing he or she is better and more pleasing to God than anyone else. People with a religious attitude do their good works in ways that will be noticed. Their motives for doing good are self-serving.

Let's pray that God will reveal to us all the beauty of relationship and intimacy with Him and the power of true righteousness. Jesus did not die so we would merely keep rules; He died to give us a relationship with Himself, to forgive us when we sin, and to set us free to live in His grace and mercy.

POWERPOINT

Matthew 23 contains strong words from Jesus directed to the Pharisees. Though He was quite angry earlier in the chapter, by verse 37 He is weeping over the people of Jerusalem with compassion and mercy. Thankfully, the symbol of Christianity is the cross and not a set of scales. God does not weigh and measure our faults and then charge us accordingly. He chose to pay the penalty with His own Son (see Eph. 2:4-5).



¹⁹“You [spiritually] blind men, which is more important, the offering, or the altar that sanctifies the offering?

²⁰“Therefore, whoever swears [an oath] by the altar, swears both by it and by everything [offered] on it.

²¹“And whoever swears [an oath] by the sanctuary of the

temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells within it. [1 Kin 8:13; Ps 26:8]

²²“And whoever swears [an oath] by heaven, swears both by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it.

²³“Woe to you, [self-righteous] scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you give a tenth (tithe) of your mint and dill and cumin [focusing on minor matters], and have neglected the weightier [more important moral and spiritual] provisions of the Law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the [primary] things you ought to have done without neglecting the others.

²⁴“You [spiritually] blind guides, who strain out a gnat [consuming yourselves with miniscule matters] and swallow a camel [ignoring and violating God’s precepts]! [Lev 11:24; 27:30; Mic 6:8]

²⁵“Woe to you, [self-righteous] scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of extortion *and* robbery and self-indulgence (unrestrained greed).

²⁶“You [spiritually] blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the plate [examine and change your inner self to conform to God’s precepts], so that the outside [your public life and deeds] may be clean also.

²⁷“Woe to you, [self-righteous] scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which look beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean.

²⁸“So you, also, outwardly seem to be just *and* upright to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

[Ps 5:9]

²⁹“Woe to you, [self-righteous] scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build tombs for the prophets and decorate *and* adorn the monuments of the righteous,³⁰ and you say, ‘If we had been *living* in the days of our fathers, we would not have joined them in *shedding* the blood of the prophets.’

³¹“So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets.

³²“Fill up, then, the [allotted] measure *of the guilt* of your fathers’ *sins*.

³³“You serpents, you spawn of vipers, how can you escape the penalty of hell?

³⁴“Therefore, take notice, I am sending you prophets and wise men [interpreters, teachers] and scribes [men educated in the Mosaic Law and the writings of the prophets]; some of them you will kill and *even* crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues, and pursue *and* persecute from city to city,³⁵ so that on you will come *the guilt of* all the blood of the righteous shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah [the priest], the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. [Gen 4:8; 2 Chr 24:21; Luke 11:51]

³⁶“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, [the judgment for] all these things [these vile and murderous deeds] will come on this generation. [2 Chr 36:15, 16]

³⁷“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who murders the prophets and stones [to death] those [messengers] who are sent to her [by God]! How often I wanted to gather your children together [around Me], as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and

you were unwilling. [Luke 13:34, 35]

³⁸“Listen carefully: your house is being left to you desolate [completely abandoned by God and destitute of His protection]! [1 Kin 9:6, 7; Jer 22:5]

³⁹“For I say to you, you will not see Me again [ministering to you publicly] until you say, ‘BLESSED [to be celebrated with praise] IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’” [Ps 118:26]

24 JESUS LEFT the temple *area* and was going on His way when His disciples came up to Him to call His attention to the [magnificent and massive] buildings of the temple. [Mark 13; Luke 21:5–36]

²And He said to them, “Do you see all these things? I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, not one stone here will be left on another, which will not be torn down.”

³While Jesus was seated on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, and said, “Tell us, when will this [destruction of the temple] take place, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end (completion, consummation) of the age?”

⁴Jesus answered, “Be careful that no one misleads you [deceiving you and leading you into error].

⁵“For many will come in My name [misusing it, and appropriating the strength of the name which belongs to Me], saying, ‘I am the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed),’ and they will mislead many.

⁶“You will *continually* hear of wars and rumors of wars. See

that you are not frightened, for *those things* must take place, but that is not yet the end [of the age].

⁷“For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.

Speak God's Word

*I will be careful that no one
misleads me, deceiving me
and leading me into error.*

| adapted from MATTHEW 24:4 |

⁸“But all these things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs [of the intolerable anguish and the time of unprecedented trouble].

⁹“Then they will hand you over to [endure] tribulation, and will put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.

¹⁰“At that time many will be offended *and* repelled [by their association with Me] *and* will fall away [from the One whom they should trust] and will betray one another [handing over believers to their persecutors] and will hate one another.

¹¹“Many false prophets will appear and mislead many.

¹²“Because lawlessness is increased, the love of most people will grow cold.

¹³“But the one who endures *and* bears up [under suffering] to the end will be saved.

¹⁴“This good news of the kingdom [the gospel] will be preached throughout the whole world as a testimony to all the

nations, and then the end [of the age] will come.

¹⁵“So when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION [the appalling sacrilege that astonishes and makes desolate], spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the Holy Place (let the reader understand), [Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11]

¹⁶then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains [for refuge].

¹⁷“Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things that are in his house [because there will not be enough time].

¹⁸“Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his coat.

¹⁹“And woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

²⁰“Pray that your flight [from persecution and suffering] will not be in winter, or on a Sabbath [when Jewish laws prohibit travel].

²¹“For at that time there will be a great tribulation (pressure, distress, oppression), such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will [again]. [Dan 12:1; Joel 2:2]

²²“And if those days [of tribulation] had not been cut short, no human life would be saved; but for the sake of the elect (God’s chosen ones) those days will be shortened.

²³“Then if anyone says to you [during the great tribulation], ‘Look! Here is the Christ,’ or ‘There *He is*,’ do not believe *it*.

²⁴“For false Christs and false prophets will appear and they will provide great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if

possible, even the elect (God's chosen ones).

²⁵“Listen carefully, I have told you in advance.

²⁶“So if they say to you, ‘Look! He is in the wilderness,’ do not go out there, or, ‘Look! He is in the inner rooms [of a house],’ do not believe it.

²⁷“For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming [in glory] of the Son of Man [everyone will see Him clearly].

²⁸“Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will flock together. [Job 39:30]

²⁹“Immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT PROVIDE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. [Is 13:10; 34:4; Joel 2:10, 11; Zeph 1:15]

³⁰“And at that time the sign of the Son of Man [coming in His glory] will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth [and especially Israel] will mourn [regretting their rebellion and rejection of the Messiah], and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN with power and great glory [in brilliance and splendor]. [Dan 7:13; Rev 1:7]

³¹“And He will send His angels with A LOUD TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect (God's chosen ones) from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. [Is 27:13; Zech 9:14]

³²“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its young shoots become tender and it puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near; [Mark 13:28, 29; Luke 21:29–31]

³³so you, too, when you see all these things [taking place], know for certain that He is near, right at the door.

³⁴“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, this generation [the people living when these signs and events begin] will not pass away until all these things take place.

³⁵“Heaven and earth [as now known] will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

³⁶“But of that [exact] day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son [in His humanity], but the Father alone.

³⁷“For the coming of the Son of Man (the Messiah) will be just like the days of Noah.

³⁸“For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the [very] day when Noah entered the ark,

³⁹and they did not know *or* understand until the flood came and swept them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be [unexpected judgment]. [Gen 6:5–8; 7:6–24]

⁴⁰“At that time two men will be in the field; one will be taken [for judgment] and one will be left.

⁴¹“Two women *will be* grinding at the mill; one will be taken [for judgment] and one will be left.

⁴²“So be alert [give strict attention, be cautious and active in faith], for you do not know which day [whether near or far] your Lord is coming.

⁴³“But understand this: If the head of the house had known what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. [Luke 12:39, 40]

⁴⁴“Therefore, you [who follow Me] must also be ready;

because the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him.

⁴⁵“Who then is the faithful and wise servant whom his master has put in charge of his household to give the others [in the house] their food *and* supplies at the proper time? [Luke 12:42–46]

⁴⁶“Blessed is that [faithful] servant when his master returns and finds him doing so.

⁴⁷“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

⁴⁸“But if that servant is evil and says in his heart, ‘My master is taking his time [he will not return for a long while],’

⁴⁹and begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards;

⁵⁰the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour of which he is not aware,

⁵¹and will cut him in two and put him with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping [over sorrow and pain] and grinding of teeth [over distress and anger].

25 “THEN THE kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins, who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.

²“Five of them were foolish [thoughtless, silly, and careless], and five were wise [far-sighted, practical, and sensible].

³“For when the foolish took their lamps, they did not take any [extra] oil with them,

⁴but the wise took flasks of oil along with their lamps.

⁵“Now while the bridegroom was delayed, they all began to nod off, and they fell asleep.

⁶“But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Look! The bridegroom [is coming]! Go out to meet *him*.’

⁷“Then all those virgins got up and put their own lamps in order [trimmed the wicks and added oil and lit them].

⁸“But the foolish *virgins* said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are going out.’

⁹“But the wise replied, ‘No, otherwise there will not be enough for us and for you, *too*; go instead to the dealers and buy *oil* for yourselves.’

¹⁰“But while they were going away to buy *oil*, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut *and* locked.

¹¹“Later the others also came, and said, ‘Lord, Lord, open [the door] for us.’

¹²“But He replied, ‘I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, I do not know you [we have no relationship].’

¹³“Therefore, be on the alert [be prepared and ready], for you do not know the day nor the hour [when the Son of Man will come].

¹⁴“For it is just like a man who was *about* to take a journey, and he called his servants together and entrusted them with his possessions. [Luke 19:12–27]

¹⁵“To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and then he went on his journey.

16“‘The one who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he [made a profit and] gained five more.

17“‘Likewise the one who had two [made a profit and] gained two more.

18“‘But the one who had received the one went and dug *a hole* in the ground and hid his master’s money.

19“‘Now after a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.

20“‘And the one who had received the five talents came and brought him five more, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted to me five talents. See, I have [made a profit and] gained five more talents.’

21“‘His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful *and* trustworthy over a little, I will put you in charge of many things; share in the joy of your master.’

22“‘Also the one who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have [made a profit and] gained two more talents.’

23“‘His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful *and* trustworthy over a little, I will put you in charge of many things; share in the joy of your master.’

24“‘The one who had received one talent also came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a harsh *and* demanding man, reaping [the harvest] where you did not sow and gathering where you did not scatter *seed*.

25“‘So I was afraid [to lose the talent], and I went and hid

your talent in the ground. See, you have what is your own.'

²⁶“But his master answered him, ‘You wicked, lazy servant, you knew that I reap [the harvest] where I did not sow and gather where I did not scatter *seed*.

²⁷“Then you ought to have put my money with the bankers, and at my return I would have received my *money* back with interest.

²⁸“So take the talent away from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.’

²⁹“For to everyone who has [and values his blessings and gifts from God, and has used them wisely], more will be given, and [he will be richly supplied so that] he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have [because he has ignored or disregarded his blessings and gifts from God], even what he does have will be taken away. [Matt 13:12; Luke 19:26]

³⁰“And throw out the worthless servant into the outer darkness; in that place [of grief and torment] there will be weeping [over sorrow and pain] and grinding of teeth [over distress and anger].

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Be Faithful to What God Gives You

Jesus often taught life lessons through people illustrations such as the Parable of the Talents. It describes a man who gave certain amounts of money to three of his servants with the instruction to invest it (see Matt. 25:14–30). A *talent* was said to have been worth more than a thousand dollars in Jesus’ day.

The landowner distributed the money according to each person’s ability (see v. 15). He only gave them what they were capable of handling. The two men to whom he gave the most money invested wisely, doubled their investments, and were richly rewarded.

The third man—the one with the least ability—was given the least amount of responsibility, and still failed. Worse, he tried to justify his failure by blaming the master! He said that because the master was a harsh man, he was afraid and hid the talent (see v. 25). Fear caused the man to do nothing.

The owner responded, “Then you ought to have put my

money with the bankers, and at my return I would have received my *money* back with interest” (v. 27). The man would never have made as much profit as the other two, but all that the owner asked was for him to do what he could do.

This illustrates one way the devil snares us. He causes us to compare ourselves with others, with how much they have—whether it’s money, talent, natural ability, or some other resource. Another snare is to tell us that other people are given more opportunities than we will ever have. God doesn’t ask us to do what someone else can do. He asks us to use the gifts and abilities that He has given to us.

God has a plan for each of us. A life of faith and obedience to God’s Word causes His plan to unfold before our eyes. Clutching what little we have in fear causes us to give up on our dreams and God’s plan for our lives.

When we listen to the devil, we believe that everything we try will fail. If we listen to God, we will hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (v. 21). It is not how much we accomplish that is important, but it’s being faithful to the ability God has given us that makes the difference.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Loving and caring Father; I pray that You will make me faithful to fulfill Your plan for my life. In the name of Jesus, I thank You for helping me to resist the enemy who is always seeking to steal what You have given me. Amen.

³¹“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory *and* majesty and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. [Rev 20:4–6]

³²“All the nations will be gathered before Him [for judgment]; and He will separate them from one another, as a shepherd separates his sheep from the goats; [Ezek 34:17]

³³and He will put the sheep on His right [the place of honor], and the goats on His left [the place of rejection].

³⁴“Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father [you favored of God, appointed to eternal salvation], inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

³⁵‘For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me *something* to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in;

³⁶*I was naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me [with help and ministering care]; I was in prison, and you came to Me [ignoring personal danger].’ [Is 58:7]*

³⁷“Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink?

³⁸‘And when did we see You as a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You?

³⁹‘And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’

⁴⁰“The King will answer and say to them, ‘I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, to the extent that you did it for one

of these brothers of Mine, *even* the least *of them*, you did it for Me.’ [Prov 19:17]

⁴¹“Then He will say to those on His left, ‘Leave Me, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels (demons); ⁴²for I was hungry, and you gave Me *nothing* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink;

⁴³I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me [with help and ministering care].’

⁴⁴“Then they also [in their turn] will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or as a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to You?’

⁴⁵“Then He will reply to them, ‘I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, to the extent that you did not do it for one of the least of these [my followers], you did not do it for Me.’ [Prov 14:31; 17:5]

⁴⁶“Then these [unbelieving people] will go away into eternal (unending) punishment, but those who are righteous *and* in right standing with God [will go, by His remarkable grace] into eternal (unending) life.” [Dan 12:2]

26 WHEN JESUS had finished this discourse, He said to His

disciples, ²“You know that the Passover is coming in two days, and the Son of Man is to be betrayed *and* handed over for crucifixion.” [Mark 14:1, 2; Luke 22:1, 2]

³Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the courtyard of the [elegant home of the Jewish]

high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, ⁴and plotted together to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill Him.

⁵But they said, “It must not be during the festival (Passover), otherwise there might be a riot among the people.”

⁶Now when Jesus was [back] in Bethany, at the home of Simon the leper, [Mark 14:3–9; John 12:1–8]

⁷a woman came to Him with an alabaster vial of very expensive perfume and she poured it on Jesus’ head as He reclined *at the table*.

⁸But when the disciples saw it they were indignant *and* angry, saying, “Why all this waste [of money]?”

⁹“For this *perfume* might have been sold at a high price and *the money* given to the poor.”

¹⁰But Jesus, aware [of the malice] of this [remark], said to them, “Why are you bothering the woman? She has done a good thing to Me.

¹¹“For you always have the poor with you; but you will not always have Me. [Deut 15:11; Mark 14:7]

¹²“When she poured this perfume on My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial.

¹³“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, wherever this gospel [of salvation] is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told in memory of her [for her act of love and devotion].”

¹⁴Then one of the twelve [disciples], who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests

¹⁵and said, “What are you willing to give me if I hand Jesus over to you?” And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver. [Ex

21:32; Zech 11:12]

¹⁶And from that moment Judas *began* looking for an opportune time to betray Jesus. [Mark 14:10, 11; Luke 22:3–6; John 6:71]

¹⁷Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread (Passover Week) the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?” [Mark 14:12–16; Luke 22:7–13]

¹⁸He said, “Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, “My time [to suffer and atone for sin] is near; I *am* to keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.”’”

¹⁹[Accordingly] the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover. [Deut 16:5–8]

²⁰When evening came, Jesus was reclining *at the table* with the twelve disciples. [Mark 14:17–21]

²¹And as they were eating, He said, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you that one of you will betray Me.”

²²Being deeply grieved *and* extremely distressed, each one of them began to say to Him, “Surely not I, Lord?”

²³Jesus answered, “He who has dipped his hand in the bowl with Me [as a pretense of friendship] will betray Me.

²⁴“The Son of Man is to go [to the cross], just as it is written [in Scripture] of Him; but woe (judgment is coming) to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had never been born.” [Ps 41:9]

²⁵And Judas, the betrayer, said, “Surely it is not I, Rabbi?” Jesus said to him, “You have said it yourself.”

²⁶Now as they were eating Jesus took bread, and after blessing it, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” [Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:17–20; 1 Cor 11:23–25]

²⁷And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you;

²⁸for this is My blood of the [new and better] covenant, which [ratifies the agreement and] is being poured out for many [as a substitutionary atonement] for the forgiveness of sins. [Ex 24:6–8]

²⁹“But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.”

³⁰After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

³¹Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of Me this night [disillusioned about Me, confused, and some even ashamed of Me], for it is written [in the Scriptures], ‘I WILL STRIKE THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK WILL BE SCATTERED.’ [Zech 13:7]

³²“But after I am raised [to life], I will go ahead of you [leading the way] to Galilee.”

³³Peter replied to Him, “Though they all fall away because of You [and doubt and disown You], I will never fall away!” [Mark 14:29–31; Luke 22:33, 34; John 13:37, 38]

³⁴Jesus said to him, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, this night, before a rooster crows, you will [completely] deny Me three times.”

³⁵Peter said to Jesus, “Even if I have to die with You, I will

not deny You!” And all the disciples said the same thing.

³⁶Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane (olive-press), and He told His disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” [Mark 14:32–42; Luke 22:40–46]

³⁷And taking with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee [James and John], He began to be grieved and greatly distressed.

³⁸Then He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, so that I am almost dying *of sorrow*. Stay here and stay awake *and* keep watch with Me.”

³⁹And after going a little farther, He fell face down and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible [that is, consistent with Your will], let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.”

⁴⁰And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “So, you *men* could not stay awake *and* keep watch with Me for one hour?

⁴¹“Keep *actively* watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Watch and Pray

Fear attacks everyone. It is Satan's way of tormenting and preventing us from enjoying the life Jesus died to give us. If we accept the fears that Satan offers and give voice to them, we open the door for the enemy and close the door to God.

To help combat fear, we can believe and confess as David and the writer of Hebrews boldly confess: "THE LORD IS MY HELPER [in time of need], I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?" (Heb. 13:6).

Satan seeks to weaken us through fear, but God strengthens us as we fellowship with Him in prayer. The Bible teaches us to watch and pray: "Keep actively watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the body is weak" (Matt. 26:41). The major point of this passage is that while we are praying for God's protection, we are to be watching for the attacks that the enemy will launch against our minds and our emotions. And when these attacks are detected, to pray immediately. We must remember that it is when we pray that power is released against the enemy—not when we think about praying later.

Watch and pray about everything. I believe you will find this decision to be one that will produce abundant joy and peace for your everyday living. Resisting the enemy with prayer and faith is necessary in order to experience real victory over him

(see 1 Pet. 5:9).

⁴²He went away a second time and prayed, saying, “My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done.”

⁴³Again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.

⁴⁴So, leaving them again, He went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words once more.

⁴⁵Then He returned to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Listen, the hour [of My sacrifice] is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners [whose way and nature is to oppose God].

⁴⁶“Get up, let us go. Look, My betrayer is near!”

⁴⁷As Jesus was still speaking, Judas [Iscariot], one of the twelve [disciples], came up accompanied by a large crowd with swords and clubs, [who came as representatives] from the chief priests and elders of the people. [Mark 14:43–50; Luke 22:47–53; John 18:3–11]

⁴⁸Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him.”

⁴⁹Immediately Judas went to Jesus and said, “Greetings (rejoice), Rabbi!” And he kissed Him [in a deliberate act of betrayal].

⁵⁰Jesus said to Judas, “Friend, do what you came for.” Then they came and seized Jesus and arrested Him.

⁵¹And one of those who were with Jesus reached out and drew his sword, and struck [Malchus] the slave of the high

priest and cut off his ear. [Mark 14:47; Luke 22:50; John 18:10]

⁵²Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back in its place; for all those who *habitually* draw the sword will die by the sword. [Gen 9:6]

⁵³“Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will immediately provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?

⁵⁴“How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen this way?”

⁵⁵At that moment Jesus said to the crowds, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as *you would* against a robber? Day after day I used to sit in the porches *and* courts of the temple teaching, and you did not arrest Me.

⁵⁶“But all this has taken place so that the Scriptures of the prophets would be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples deserted Him and fled.

⁵⁷Those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court) had gathered [illegally] together. [Mark 14:53–65; Luke 22:66–71; John 18:12f, 19–24]

⁵⁸But Peter followed Him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the [elegant home of the Jewish] high priest, and went inside, and sat with the guards to see the outcome.

⁵⁹Now the chief priests and the whole Council (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court) tried to get false witnesses to testify against Jesus, so that they might [have a reason to] put Him to death.

⁶⁰They found none, even though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward,

⁶¹and testified, “This man said, ‘I am able to tear down the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’”

⁶²The high priest stood up and said to Jesus, “Have You no answer to give? What is it that these men are testifying against You?”

⁶³But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, “I call on You to swear a binding oath by the living God, that you tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.”

⁶⁴Jesus said to him, “You have [in fact] said it; but more than that I tell you [regardless of what you do with Me now], in the future you will see [Me revealed as] THE SON OF MAN SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.” [Ps 110:1; Dan 7:13]

⁶⁵Then the high priest tore his robes [in mock horror] and exclaimed, “He has blasphemed [by making Himself God’s equal]! What further need have we of witnesses *or* evidence? See, you have now heard the blasphemy. [Lev 24:16; Num 14:6]

⁶⁶“What do you think?” They answered, “He deserves to be put to death.”

⁶⁷Then they spat in His face and struck Him with their fists; and some slapped Him, [Is 50:6]

⁶⁸saying, “Prophecy to us, You Christ (Messiah, Anointed); who was it that struck You?”

⁶⁹Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came up to him and said, “You too were with Jesus the Galilean.” [Mark 14:66–72; Luke 22:55–62; John 18:16–18, 25–27]

⁷⁰But he denied it before them all, saying, “I do not know

what you are talking about.”

⁷¹And when he had gone out to the gateway, another *servant-girl* saw him and she said to the bystanders, “This man was with Jesus the Nazarene.”

⁷²And again he denied it with an oath, “I do not know the man.”

⁷³After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Surely you are one of them too; for even your [Galilean] accent gives you away.”

⁷⁴Then he began to curse [that is, to invoke God’s judgment on himself] and swear [an oath], “I do not know the man!” And at that moment a rooster crowed.

⁷⁵And Peter remembered the [prophetic] words of Jesus, when He had said, “Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly [in repentance].

27 WHEN IT was morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court) conferred together against Jesus, [plotting how] to put Him to death [since under Roman rule they had no power to execute anyone]; ²so they bound Him, and led Him away and handed Him over to Pilate the governor [of Judea, who had the authority to condemn prisoners to death].

³When Judas, His betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was gripped with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, [Ex 21:32]

⁴saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” They replied, “What is that to us? See to that yourself!”

⁵And throwing the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary, he left; and went away and hanged himself.

⁶The chief priests, picking up the pieces of silver, said, “It is not lawful to put these in the treasury [of the temple], because it is the price of blood.”

⁷So after consultation they used the money to buy the Potter’s Field as a burial place for strangers.

⁸Therefore that piece of ground has been called the Field of Blood to this day.

⁹Then the words spoken by Jeremiah the prophet were fulfilled: “AND THEY TOOK THE THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER, THE PRICE OF HIM ON WHOM A PRICE HAD BEEN SET by the sons of Israel; [Jer 18:1, 2; 19:1–15; 32:6–9]

¹⁰AND THEY GAVE THEM FOR THE POTTER’S FIELD, AS THE LORD DIRECTED ME.” [Zech 11:13]

¹¹Now Jesus stood before [Pilate] the governor, and the governor asked Him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” [In affirmation] Jesus said to him, “*It is as you say.*” [Mark 15:2–5; Luke 23:2, 3; John 18:29–37]

¹²But when the charges were brought against Him by the chief priests and elders, He did not answer. [Is 53:7]

¹³Then Pilate said to Him, “Do You not hear how many things they are testifying against You?”

¹⁴But Jesus did not reply to him, not even to a single accusation, so that the governor was greatly astonished.

¹⁵Now at the feast [of the Passover] the governor was in

the habit of setting free any one prisoner whom the people chose. [Mark 15:6–15; Luke 23:18–25; John 18:39–19:16]

¹⁶And at that time they were holding a notorious prisoner [guilty of insurrection and murder], called Barabbas.

¹⁷So when they had assembled [for this purpose], Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to set free for you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?”

¹⁸For Pilate knew that it was because of jealousy that the chief priests and elders had handed Jesus over to him.

¹⁹While he was seated on the judgment seat, his wife sent him a *message*, saying, “Have nothing to do with that righteous *and* innocent Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him.”

²⁰But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to put Jesus to death.

²¹The governor said to them, “Which of the two do you wish me to set free for you?” And they said, “Barabbas.”

²²Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all replied, “Let Him be crucified!”

²³And he said, “Why, what has He done that is evil?” But they continued shouting all the louder, “Let Him be crucified!” [Mark 15:14; Luke 23:4, 14, 22; John 18:39; 19:4, 6]

²⁴So when Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but rather that a riot was breaking out, he took water and washed his hands [to ceremonially cleanse himself of guilt] in the presence of the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this [righteous] Man’s blood; see *to that* yourselves.” [Deut 21:6–9; Ps 26:6]

²⁵And all the people answered, “Let [the responsibility for]

His blood be on us and on our children!” [Josh 2:19]

²⁶So he set Barabbas free for them; but after having Jesus severely whipped (scourged), he handed Him over to be crucified.

²⁷Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium, and they gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him. [Mark 15:16–20; John 19:1–3]

²⁸They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on Him [as a king’s robe].

²⁹And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and put a reed in His right hand [as a scepter]. Kneeling before Him, they ridiculed Him, saying, “Hail (rejoice), King of the Jews!”

³⁰They spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him *repeatedly* on the head.

³¹After they finished ridiculing Him, they stripped Him of the *scarlet* robe and put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.

³²Now as they were coming out, they found a man of Cyrene named Simon, whom they forced into service to carry the cross of Jesus. [Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26]

³³And when they came to a place called Golgotha, which means Place of a Skull, [Mark 15:22–32; Luke 23:33–43; John 19:17–24]

³⁴they offered Him wine mixed with gall (myrrh, a bitter-tasting narcotic) to drink; but after tasting it, He refused to drink it.

³⁵And when they had crucified Him, they divided His clothes among them by casting lots. [Ps 22:18]

³⁶Then sitting down there, they *began* to keep watch over Him [to guard against any rescue attempt].

³⁷And above His head they put the accusation against Him which read, “THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

³⁸At the same time two robbers were crucified with Jesus, one on the right and one on the left.

³⁹Those who passed by were hurling abuse at Him *and* jeering at Him, wagging their heads [in scorn and ridicule], [Ps 22:7, 8; 109:25]

⁴⁰and they said [tauntingly], “You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself [from death]! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

⁴¹In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, mocked Him, saying,

⁴²“He saved others [from death]; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him *and* acknowledge Him.

⁴³“HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD RESCUE *Him* now, IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” [Ps 22:8]

⁴⁴The robbers who had been crucified with Him also began to insult Him in the same way.

⁴⁵Now from the sixth hour (noon) there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.). [Mark 15:33–41; Luke 23:44–49]

⁴⁶About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud [agonized] voice, “ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?” that is, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?” [Ps 22:1]

⁴⁷When some of the bystanders there heard it, they *began*

saying, “This man is calling for Elijah.”

⁴⁸Immediately one of them ran, and took a sponge, soaked it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink. [Ps 69:21; Mark 15:36f; Luke 23:36; John 19:29, 30]

⁴⁹But the rest said, “Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him [from death].”

⁵⁰And Jesus cried out again with a loud [agonized] voice, and gave up His spirit [voluntarily, sovereignly dismissing and releasing His spirit from His body in submission to His Father’s plan]. [John 10:18]

⁵¹And [at once] the veil [of the Holy of Holies] of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; the earth shook and the rocks were split apart. [Ex 26:31–35]

⁵²The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints (God’s people) who had fallen asleep [in death] were raised [to life];

⁵³and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection, they entered the holy city (Jerusalem) and appeared to many people.

⁵⁴Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, they were terribly frightened *and* filled with awe, and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

⁵⁵There were also many women there looking on from a distance, who had accompanied Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him.

⁵⁶Among them was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and [Salome] the mother of Zebedee’s sons [James and John].

⁵⁷When it was evening, there came a rich man from

Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus.
[Mark 15:42–47; Luke 23:50–56; John 19:38–42]

⁵⁸He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus [so that he might bury Him], and Pilate ordered that it be given *to him*.

⁵⁹And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth (burial wrapping),

⁶⁰and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock; and he rolled a large stone over the entrance of the tomb and went away.

⁶¹And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb.

⁶²The next day, that is, *the day* after the [day of] preparation [for the Sabbath], the chief priests and the Pharisees assembled before Pilate, ⁶³and said, “Sir, we have remembered that when He was still alive that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise [from the dead].’

⁶⁴“Therefore, give orders to have the tomb made secure *and* safeguarded until the third day, otherwise His disciples may come and steal Him *away* and tell the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last deception [the reporting of His resurrection] will be worse than the first [the reporting that He is the Messiah].”

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

You Can Choose Your Thoughts

In Matthew 28:18, Jesus appeared to His disciples and told them that God the Father had given Him all authority in heaven and on earth. He then charged them to go into the world and make disciples of all nations (see Matt. 28:19–20).

This took place after the resurrection, and Matthew records that Jesus' disciples worshiped Jesus the instant they realized they were seeing Him in person (see Matt. 28:17). Then Matthew adds one sad, negative statement to this significant story: "but some doubted."

How could that be? Had they not seen the lame walk, the blind eyes opened, the demon-possessed delivered and healed? Had they not seen Jesus die on the cross? Did they not even notice His nail-scarred hands?

The answer to all these questions, of course, is yes. Yet even these special, anointed, and handpicked followers of Christ struggled with doubt and unbelief. Is it any wonder then that Jesus referred to the importance of faith on so many occasions? Why would He urge them not to doubt? It was

because He knew the temptation Satan would bring against them.

Jesus spoke to them of faith: “if you have faith [personal trust and confidence in Me] and do not doubt *or* allow yourself to be drawn in two directions, you will... say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea, ’ it will happen [if God wills it]” (Matt. 21:21).

His point is that when we believe and do not doubt, we can see God accomplish miracles. Faith is a gift of God, but doubt is a choice. Doubt is a result of thoughts that are directly opposed to God’s Word. That is why it is so important for us to know the Word of God. When we know it, we are able to discern the devil’s lies. Doubt is just another part of the devil’s arsenal of weapons against our minds.

We have the option to decide whether to accept or reject thoughts that come into our minds. This means that when doubt knocks on the door of our minds, we can invite it in or dismiss it. The choice is ours. We can believe or we can doubt. The path of believing leads to the blessings of God.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord Jesus, I have allowed doubt to enter my mind and I have allowed Satan to torture me through my thoughts. Now I ask You to fill me with faith and enable me to push away such thoughts. I declare that my faith is in You. Amen.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Jesus Is Always with You

A major problem facing people today is loneliness. There are many causes that produce feelings of loneliness. Some of those who suffer most from loneliness are the shy and extremely timid; those who feel misunderstood; those in leadership; the divorced and unmarried; the widowed; the elderly; those who feel rejected and “odd”; the abused; those who must relocate or change employment—the list goes on and on.

Loneliness often manifests itself as an inner ache, a vacuum or a craving for affection. Its side effects include feelings of emptiness, uselessness, or purposelessness. A more serious side effect is often depression, which, in some cases, can lead to suicide.

It may not always be possible to keep from being alone, but that does not mean you have to feel lonely or lonesome. In Matthew 28:20, Jesus reassures us that He is with us “always [remaining with you perpetually—regardless of circumstance, and on every occasion], even to the end of the age.” He understands what you are going through and has promised to be with you in every trial. When you feel lonely, speak out in faith and say emphatically, “I am not alone, for God is with me!”

⁶⁵Pilate said to them, “You have a guard [of soldiers]; go

[with them], make the tomb as secure as you know how.”

⁶⁶So they went and made the tomb secure, and along with [stationing] a guard of soldiers [to be on watch] they set a seal on the stone.

28 NOW AFTER the Sabbath, near dawn of the first *day* of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. [Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–10, John 20:1–8]

²And a great earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone [from the opening of the tomb], and sat on it.

³The angel’s appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were as white as snow.

⁴The guards shook, paralyzed with fear [at the sight] of him and became like dead men [pale and immobile].

⁵But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified.

⁶“He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said [He would]. Come! See the place where He was lying.

⁷“Then go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee [as He promised]. There you will see Him; behold, I have told you.”

⁸So the women left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell [the good news to] the disciples.

⁹And *as they went*, suddenly, Jesus met them, saying, “Rejoice!” And they went to Him and took hold of His feet [in homage] and worshiped Him [as the Messiah].

¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell My brothers to leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me [just as I promised].”

¹¹While they were on their way, some of the [Roman] guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened.

¹²And when the chief priests had gathered with the elders and had consulted together [to develop a plan of deception], they gave a sufficient sum of money [as a bribe] to the soldiers, ¹³and said, “You say this, ‘His disciples came at night and stole Him while we were sleeping.’”

¹⁴“And if the governor (Pilate) hears about it, we will calm him down and keep you out of trouble.”

¹⁵So they took the money [they were paid for lying] and did as they were instructed; and this [fabricated] story was widely spread among the Jews, and is to the present day.

¹⁶Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated.

¹⁷And when they saw Him, they worshiped *Him*; but some doubted [that it was really He].

¹⁸Jesus came up and said to them, “All authority (all power of absolute rule) in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.

¹⁹“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations [help the people to learn of Me, believe in Me, and obey My words], baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe everything that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always [remaining with you perpetually—regardless of circumstance, and on

every occasion], even to the end of the age.”

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Jesus, for being
with me always and
remaining with me—
regardless of circumstance
and on every occasion, even
to the end of the age.*

• adapted from Matthew 28:20

Mark

Author: | Mark

Date: | Possibly
AD 55–65

While Mark's Gospel is not as long as the other three Gospels, it is filled with information about Jesus' life and ministry. Mark offers his account of Jesus in clear, simple language. One of his key messages is the importance of having faith. In the battle we often experience in our mind, we sometimes think that truth and deception are fighting against each other or that right and wrong are contending for victory in our thoughts. Often, though, the real war is between faith and reason. Will we use our natural mind to make a decision, or will we rely on faith and trust God to lead us to do something that might not seem logical?

As you read the Gospel of Mark, I encourage you to allow it to stir up your faith in God and reinforce your belief that there is nothing He cannot do!

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM MARK:

The more time you spend thinking about the Word, the more ability you will have to obey it (see Mark 4:24).

When you are struggling with doubt or fear, remember that all things are possible for those who believe in Jesus (see Mark 9:23).

Instead of wondering how things are going to turn out, exercise your faith for a good outcome (see Mark 11:22–24).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM MARK:

Your sins are forgiven. | Mark 2:5

Do not be afraid; only keep on believing [in Me and my power]. | Mark 5:36

Whatever things you ask for in prayer [in accordance with God's will], believe [with confident trust] that you have received them, and they will be given to you. | Mark 11:24

YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL (life), AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND (thought, understanding), AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH. | Mark 12:30

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

MARK

1 THE BEGINNING of the [facts regarding the] good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

²As it is written *and* forever remains in the [writings of the] prophet Isaiah:

“BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY—[Mal 3:1]

³A VOICE OF ONE SHOUTING IN THE WILDERNESS,
‘PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD,
MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!’” [Is 40:3]

⁴John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins [that is, requiring a change of one’s old way of thinking, turning away from sin and seeking God and His righteousness].

⁵And all the country of Judea and all the people of Jerusalem were *continually* going out to him; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.

⁶John wore clothing made of camel’s hair and had a [wide] leather band around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. [Lev 11:22; 2 Kin 1:8]

⁷And he was preaching, saying, “After me comes He who is mightier [more powerful, more noble] than I, and I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the straps of His sandals [even as His slave].

⁸“As for me, I baptized you [who came to me] with water [only]; but He will baptize you [who truly repent] with the Holy Spirit.”

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. [Matt 3:13–17; Luke 3:21, 22; John 1:32]

¹⁰Immediately coming up out of the water, he (John) saw the heavens torn open, and the Spirit like a dove descending on Him (Jesus);

¹¹and a voice came out of heaven saying: “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased *and* delighted!” [Ps 2:7; Is 42:1]

¹²Immediately the [Holy] Spirit forced Him out into the wilderness.

¹³He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted [to do evil] by Satan; and He was with the wild animals, and the angels ministered *continually* to Him.

¹⁴Now after John [the Baptist] was arrested *and* taken into custody, Jesus went to Galilee, preaching the good news of [the kingdom of] God, ¹⁵and saying, “The [appointed period of] time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent [change your inner self—your old way of thinking, regret past sins, live your life in a way that proves repentance; seek God’s purpose for your life] and believe [with a deep, abiding trust] in the good news [regarding salvation].”

¹⁶As Jesus was walking by the shore of the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon [Peter] and Simon's brother, Andrew, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen.

¹⁷And Jesus said to them, "Follow Me [as My disciples, accepting Me as your Master and Teacher and walking the same path of life that I walk], and I will make you fishers of men."

¹⁸Immediately they left their nets and followed Him [becoming His disciples, believing and trusting in Him and following His example].

¹⁹Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John, who were also in the boat mending *and* cleaning the nets.

²⁰Immediately Jesus called to them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired workers, and went away to follow Him [becoming His disciples, believing and trusting in Him and following His example].

²¹They went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath Jesus went into the synagogue and *began* to teach. [Luke 4:31–37]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Expect To Enjoy Your Day

In the early morning Jesus got up and went to a secluded place to pray (see Mark 1:35). Many times the way your day starts determines the way it will go all day long. This is why the enemy tries so hard to get us in a bad frame of mind early in the morning. Have you found the enemy trying to frustrate you, using something—anything—to get your mind full of negative thoughts before your day has really started? He tries to get you upset about all the things you have to do that day, reminds you of the things people do that you don't like, suggests that you should feel sorry for yourself because you are not appreciated as you should be, and many other things.

You can make up your mind early in the morning to enjoy each aspect of your day, whether everything goes the way you planned or not. The mind is the battlefield. Start choosing right thoughts early in the morning, and you will begin to walk in victory, enjoying every day.

²²They were completely amazed at His teaching; because He was teaching them as one having [God-given] authority, and not as the scribes.

²³Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out [terribly from the depths of his throat],

²⁴saying, “What business do You have with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!”

²⁵Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet (muzzled, silenced), and come out of him!”

²⁶The unclean spirit threw the man into convulsions, and screeching with a loud voice, came out of him.

²⁷They were all so amazed that they debated *and* questioned each other, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits (demons), and they obey Him.”

²⁸Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere throughout the district surrounding Galilee.

²⁹And immediately they left the synagogue and went into the house of Simon [Peter] and Andrew, accompanied by James and John. [Matt 8:14–17; Luke 4:38–41]

³⁰Now Simon’s mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and immediately they told Him about her.

³¹Jesus went to her, and taking her by the hand, raised her up; and the fever left her, and she *began* to serve them [as her guests].

³²Now when evening came, after the sun had set [and the Sabbath Day had ended, in a steady stream] they were bringing to Him all who were sick and those who were under the power of demons, ³³until [it seemed as though] the whole city had gathered together at the door.

³⁴And Jesus healed many who were suffering with various diseases; and He drove out many demons, but would not allow

the demons to speak, because they knew Him [recognizing Him as the Son of God].

³⁵Early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left [the house], and went out to a secluded place, and was praying there.

³⁶Simon [Peter] and his companions searched [everywhere, looking anxiously] for Him,

³⁷and they found Him and said, “Everybody is looking for You!”

³⁸He replied, “Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so I may preach there also; that is why I came [from the Father].”

³⁹So He went throughout Galilee, preaching [the gospel] in their synagogues and casting out demons.

⁴⁰And a leper came to Him, begging Him and falling on his knees before Him, saying, “If You are willing, You are able to make me clean.” [Matt 8:2–4; Luke 5:12–14]

⁴¹Moved with compassion [for his suffering], Jesus reached out with His hand and touched him, and said to him, “I am willing; be cleansed.”

⁴²The leprosy left him immediately and he was cleansed [completely healed and restored to health].

⁴³And Jesus [deeply moved] admonished him sternly and sent him away immediately,

⁴⁴saying to him, “See that you tell no one anything [about this]; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your purification what Moses commanded, as proof to them [that you are really healed].” [Lev 13:45; 14:2–32]

⁴⁵But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news [of his healing], to such an extent that Jesus

could no longer openly enter a city [where He was known], but stayed out in the unpopulated places; yet people were still coming to Him from everywhere.

2 JESUS RETURNED to Capernaum, and a few days later the news went out that He was at home. [Matt 4:13]

²So many people gathered together that there was no longer room [for them], not even near the door; and Jesus was discussing with them the word [of God].

³Then they came, bringing to Him a paralyzed man, who was being carried by four men. [Matt 9:2–8; Luke 5:18–26]

⁴When they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Jesus; and when they had dug out an opening, they let down the mat on which the paralyzed man was lying.

⁵When Jesus saw their [active] faith [springing from confidence in Him], He said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

⁶But some of the scribes were sitting there debating in their hearts [the implication of what He had said],

**A Prayer To
Renew Your
Mind**



*Lord Jesus, I know that You,
the Son of Man, have the
authority and power on earth
to forgive sins.*

• adapted from Mark 2:10

⁷“Why does this man talk that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins [remove guilt, nullify sin’s penalty, and assign righteousness] except God alone?”

⁸Immediately Jesus, being fully aware [of their hostility] *and* knowing in His spirit that they were thinking this, said to them, “Why are you debating *and* arguing about these things in your hearts?”

⁹“Which is easier, to say to the paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven’; or to say, ‘Get up, and pick up your mat and walk’?”

¹⁰“But so that you may know that the Son of Man has the authority *and* power on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the paralyzed man, ¹¹“I say to you, get up, pick up your mat and go home.”

¹²And he got up and immediately picked up the mat and went out before them all, so that they all were astonished and they glorified *and* praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

¹³Jesus went out again along the [Galilean] seashore; and all the people were coming to Him, and He was teaching them.

¹⁴As He was passing by, He saw Levi (Matthew) the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax collector's booth, and He said to him, "Follow Me [as My disciple, accepting Me as your Master and Teacher and walking the same path of life that I walk]." And he got up and followed Him [becoming His disciple, believing and trusting in Him and following His example]. [Matt 9:9-17; Luke 5:27-39]

¹⁵And it happened that Jesus was reclining *at the table* in Levi's house, and many tax collectors and sinners [including non-observant Jews] were eating with Him and His disciples; for there were many of them and they were following Him.

¹⁶When the scribes [belonging to the sect] of the Pharisees saw that Jesus was eating with the sinners [including non-observant Jews] and tax collectors, they asked His disciples, "Why does He eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that You did
not come to call the*

righteous, but You came to call sinners who recognize their sin and humbly seek forgiveness.

• adapted from Mark 2:17

¹⁷When Jesus heard this, He said to them, “Those who are healthy have no need of a physician, but [only] those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners [who recognize their sin and humbly seek forgiveness].”

¹⁸Now John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting [as a ritual]; and they came and asked Jesus, “Why are John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fasting, but Your disciples are not doing so?”

¹⁹Jesus answered, “The attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast while the bridegroom is [still] with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

²⁰“But the days will come when the bridegroom is [forcefully] taken away from them, and they will fast at that time.

²¹“No one sews a patch of unshrunk (new) cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and the tear becomes worse.

²²“No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the [fermenting] wine will [expand and] burst the skins, and the wine is lost as well as the wineskins. But new wine must be put into new wineskins.”

²³One Sabbath He was walking along [with His disciples] through the grainfields, and as they went along, His disciples began picking the heads of grain. [Deut 23:25; Matt 12:1–8; Luke 6:1–5]

²⁴The Pharisees said to Him, “Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?”

²⁵Jesus said to them, “Have you never read [in the Scriptures] what David did when he was in need and was hungry, he and his companions; [1 Sam 21:1–6]

²⁶how he went into the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the sacred bread, which is not lawful for anyone but the priests to eat, and how he also gave it to the men who were with him?” [1 Sam 21:1–6]

²⁷Jesus said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. [Ex 23:12; Deut 5:14]

²⁸“So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath [and He has authority over it].”

3 AGAIN JESUS went into a synagogue; and a man was there whose hand was withered. [Matt 12:9–14; Luke 6:6–11]

²The Pharisees were watching Jesus *closely to see* if He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him [in the Jewish high court].

³He said to the man whose hand was withered, “Get up and come forward!”

⁴He asked them, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save a life or to kill?” But they kept silent.

⁵After looking around at them with anger, grieved at the hardness *and* arrogance of their hearts, He told the man, “Hold out your hand.” And he held it out, and his hand was [completely] restored.

⁶Then the Pharisees went out and immediately *began* conspiring with the Herodians [to plot] against Him, as to how they might [fabricate some legal grounds to] put Him to death.

⁷Jesus withdrew to the sea with His disciples; and a large crowd from Galilee followed Him; and *also people* from Judea, ⁸and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and [from the region] beyond the Jordan, and around Tyre and Sidon; a vast number of people came to Him because they were hearing about all [the things] that He was doing.

⁹And He told His disciples to have a small boat stand ready for Him because of the many people, so that they would not crowd Him;

¹⁰for He had healed many, and as a result all who had diseases pressed around Him to touch Him.

¹¹Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they fell down before Him and screamed out, “You are the Son of God!”

¹²Jesus sternly warned them [again and again] not to tell who He was.

¹³He went up on the hillside and called those whom He Himself wanted *and* chose; and they came to Him.

¹⁴And He appointed twelve [disciples], so that they would be with Him [for instruction] and so that He could send them out to preach [the gospel as apostles—that is, as His special messengers, personally chosen representatives], ¹⁵and to have

authority *and* power to cast out demons.

¹⁶He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom He gave the name Peter), [Matt 10:2–4; Luke 6:13–16]

¹⁷and James, the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (to them He gave the name Boanerges, that is, “Sons of Thunder”);

¹⁸and [He also appointed] Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew (Nathanael), and Matthew (Levi the tax collector), and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus (Judas the son of James), and Simon the Zealot; ¹⁹and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him.

²⁰Then He came to a house [in Capernaum], and a crowd formed again, so [many people] that Jesus and His disciples could not even eat a meal [together].

²¹When His own family heard this they went to take custody of Him; for they were saying, “He is out of His mind.”

²²The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul (Satan),” and “He is driving out the demons by the [power of the] ruler of the demons.” [Matt 12:22–37; Luke 11:14–28]

²³So He called them to Himself and spoke to them in parables, “How can Satan drive out Satan?

²⁴“If a kingdom is divided [split into factions and rebelling] against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

²⁵“And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

²⁶“And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end.

²⁷“But no one can go into a strong man’s house and steal his property unless he first overpowers *and* ties up the strong man, and then he will ransack *and* rob his house. [Is 49:24, 25; Matt 12:29]

²⁸“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and all the abusive *and* blasphemous things they say; ²⁹but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit *and* His power [by attributing the miracles done by Me to Satan] never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an everlasting sin [a sin which is unforgivable in this present age as well as in the age to come]”—[Matt 12:32; Luke 12:10]

³⁰[Jesus said this] because the scribes and Pharisees were [attributing His miracles to Satan by] saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”

³¹Then His mother and His brothers arrived, and standing outside they sent *word* to Him and called for Him. [Matt 12:46–50; Luke 8:19–21]

³²A crowd was sitting around Him, and they said to Him, “Look! Your mother and Your brothers are outside asking for You.”

³³And He replied, “Who are My mother and My brothers?”

³⁴Looking at those who were sitting in a circle around Him, He said, “Here are My mother and My brothers!

³⁵For whoever does the will of God [by believing in Me, and following Me], he is My brother and sister and mother.”

4 AGAIN JESUS began to teach beside the sea [of Galilee]. And a very large crowd gathered around Him, so He got into a boat [anchoring it a short distance out] on the sea and sat down; and the whole crowd was by the sea on the shore. [Matt 13:1–15; Luke 8:4–15]

²And He taught them many things in parables, and in His teaching He said to them,

³“Listen! A sower went out to sow *seed*;

⁴and as he was sowing, some *seed* fell by the road, and the birds came and ate it up.

⁵“Other *seed* fell on rocks where there was not much soil; and immediately a plant sprang up because the soil had no depth.

⁶“And when the sun came up, the plant was scorched; and because it had no root, it dried up *and* withered away.

⁷“Other *seed* fell among thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no grain.

⁸“And other *seed* fell into good soil, and as the plants grew and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundred times [as much as had been sown].”

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

What Kind of Soil Are You?

The wisdom of Mark 4:1–8 provides a wonderful illustration of four types of Christian believers, teaching us how each responds to hearing God's Word.

The first type of Christian hears God's Word, but Satan (represented by the birds) comes immediately and takes away the message that was sown into his or her heart (see Mark 4:3–4). Many times these people struggle to focus; they are easily distracted and often offended by something, which causes them to stumble and fall.

The second type of Christian hears the Word and receives it with joy. Because these believers are not deeply rooted in God's Word, they do not act on the truth they hear (see Mark 4:5–6). They may have a great deal of intellectual knowledge about God or even have many scriptures memorized, but their knowledge has not become revelation in their life. When trouble comes to them, their biblical or theological knowledge does not help them; they become resentful or indignant. Sometimes, they even fall away from the faith.

The third type of Christian also hears God's Word, but the cares of life, the distractions and deceitfulness of riches, and the craving for things of the world tempt them strongly and choke the Word in them (see Mark 4:7). They are not single-minded and passionate for the things of God, and this is their downfall.

Finally in Mark 4:8, we read that the seed sown into well-adapted soil is the seed that bears fruit. This soil represents mature Christians, who are the ones who hear the Word, welcome it, receive it, accept it—and bear fruit. To bear fruit means to do something worthwhile with the time, talent, and resources that God has given you. One way to bear fruit is to do good things for other people. Fruit also refers to the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which includes love, joy, peace, patience, humility, and self-control (see Gal. 5:22–23). These are character traits that represent Jesus in an honorable way to the world. We are God's ambassadors on earth and as such we should represent Him well.

We all need to be growing continually in our spiritual lives, making sure our hearts are the type of soil that receives the seed of God's Word eagerly, allows it to grow well, and ultimately bears fruit.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord God, help my heart to be good soil for Your Word. When I hear or read Your Word, I want to welcome it, embrace it, and bear good fruit as a result. In Jesus' name. Amen.

⁹And He said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear *and* heed My words.”

¹⁰As soon as He was alone, those who were around Him, together with the twelve [disciples], *began* asking Him about [the interpretation of] the parables.

¹¹He said to them, “The mystery of the kingdom of God has been given to you [who have teachable hearts], but those who are outside [the unbelievers, the spiritually blind] get everything in parables, ¹²so that THEY WILL CONTINUALLY LOOK BUT NOT SEE, AND THEY WILL CONTINUALLY HEAR BUT NOT UNDERSTAND, OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT TURN [from their rejection of the truth] AND BE FORGIVEN.” [Is 6:9, 10; Matt 13:11–15]

¹³Then He said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand *and* grasp the meaning of all the parables? [Matt 13:18–23; Luke 8:11–15]

¹⁴“The sower sows the word [of God, the good news regarding the way of salvation].

¹⁵“These [in the first group] are the ones along the road where the word is sown; but when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them.

¹⁶“In a similar way these [in the second group] are the ones on whom seed was sown on rocky ground, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy [but accept it only superficially]; ¹⁷and they have no real root in themselves, so they endure only for a little while; then, when trouble or persecution comes because of the word, immediately they [are offended and displeased at being associated with Me and]

stumble *and* fall away.

¹⁸“And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word,

¹⁹but the worries *and* cares of the world [the distractions of this age with its worldly pleasures], and the deceitfulness [and the false security or glamour] of wealth [or fame], and the passionate desires for all the other things creep in and choke out the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

²⁰“And those [in the last group] are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word [of God, the good news regarding the way of salvation] and accept it and bear fruit—thirty, sixty, and a hundred times as much [as was sown].”

²¹He said to them, “A lamp is not brought in to be put under a basket or under a bed, is it? Is it not [brought in] to be put on the lampstand? [Matt 5:15; Luke 8:16; 11:33]

²²“For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been kept secret, but that it would come to light [that is, things are hidden only temporarily, until the appropriate time comes for them to be known]. [Matt 10:26–33; Luke 12:2–9]

²³“If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear *and* heed My words.”

²⁴Then He said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear. By your own standard of measurement [that is, to the extent that you study spiritual truth and apply godly wisdom] it will be measured to you [and you will be given even greater ability to respond]—and more will be given to you besides.

²⁵“For whoever has [a teachable heart], to him *more*

[understanding] will be given; and whoever does not have [a yearning for truth], even what he has will be taken away from him.” [Matt 13:12; 25:29; Luke 8:18]

²⁶Then He said, “The kingdom of God is like a man who throws seed on the ground;

²⁷and he goes to bed at night and gets up every day, and [in the meantime] the seed sprouts and grows; how [it does this], he does not know.

²⁸“The earth produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head [of grain], then the mature grain in the head.

POWERPOINT

Jesus said that if we love Him, we will obey Him (see John 14:15). But we cannot obey Him if we do not truly listen to what He wants to say to us. The way we truly hear and listen to Bible teaching determines what we receive from it. The Bible says that the measure of thought and study we give to the truth that we hear is the measure of virtue and knowledge we will receive from it (see Mark 4:24).



KEYS to a Victorious Life

Hold Your Peace

In Mark 4:36–40, Jesus rebuked the disciples because they did not hold their peace in the storm. I think it's fair to say that a battle of fear and anxiety was raging in their minds, and they did not fight it very well.

As the rain fell and the wind blew, they were fearful, worried, and upset; and all along, Jesus was sleeping peacefully in the back of the boat. They went to Him and cried out, "Jesus! There's a terrible storm going on. Don't you care that we are perishing?"

Jesus quickly handled the situation. He turned to the terrified disciples and said to them, "Why are you so fearful?" In other words, "There is nothing to fear. I AM is with you" (see John 8:58).

Jesus is always with us, in every situation we face. The believer who experiences God's peace through His Son can have peace even in the midst of life's storms. During those times, we do not have to know what God is going to do or when He is going to do it. We simply need to know that He is there with us in the storms of life and that He will take care of everything that concerns us. Remaining peaceful during trials and difficulties is very powerful. Hold your peace and let God work miracles for you.

²⁹“But when the crop ripens, he immediately puts in the sickle [to reap], because [the time for] the harvest has come.”

³⁰And He said, “How shall we ^{*}picture the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use to illustrate *and* explain it? [Matt 13:31, 32; Luke 13:18, 19]

³¹“It is like a mustard seed, which, when it is sown on the ground, even though it is smaller than all the [other] seeds that are [sown] on the soil, ³²yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden herbs; and it puts out large branches, so that THE BIRDS OF THE SKY are able to MAKE NESTS *and* LIVE UNDER ITS SHADE.” [Ps 104:12; Ezek 17:23; 31:6]

³³With many such parables, Jesus spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear *and* understand it;

³⁴and He did not say *anything* to them without [using] a parable; He did, however, explain everything privately to His own disciples.

³⁵On that [same] day, when evening had come, He said to them, “Let us go over to the other side [of the Sea of Galilee].”

³⁶So leaving the crowd, they took Him with them, just as He was, in the boat. And other boats were with Him. [Matt 8:23–27; Luke 8:22–25]

³⁷And a fierce windstorm began to blow, and waves were breaking over the boat, so that it was already being swamped.

³⁸But Jesus was in the stern, asleep [with His head] on the [sailor’s leather] cushion. And they woke Him and said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are about to die?”

³⁹And He got up and [sternly] rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Hush, be still (muzzled)!” And the wind died down

[as if it had grown weary] and there was [at once] a great calm [a perfect peacefulness].

⁴⁰Jesus said to them, “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith *and* confidence [in Me]?”

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Jesus Calms Every Storm

Sometime before the story of Peter's walking on the water with Jesus, the disciples were caught in a raging windstorm on the Sea of Galilee. In this incident Jesus was in the boat with them and sleeping (see Mark 4:35–41). Afraid the boat was sinking, they woke Jesus, Who got up and rebuked and calmed the storm. Then He asked them all, including Peter, "Do you still have no faith *and* confidence [in Me]?" (v. 40).

Later, when Jesus walked on the waves of the sea, He spoke to the frightened disciples, "Take courage, it is I. Do not be afraid!" (Matt. 14:27). Those few words were meant to assure them that His presence and power were there to take care of them. Only Peter responded, perhaps bolstered in his faith by having seen Jesus calm the storm earlier.

Peter exercised his faith. He believed and stepped out and started walking toward the Master. Peter was the only one of the disciples willing to get out of the boat. He did walk on water for a while, but then as he looked at the waves and wind, he took his focus off Jesus and began to sink. Even then Jesus

reached out His hand to help him.

But that's not the end of the story. After Jesus and Peter climbed back into the boat, another miracle took place: the storm ceased. The storms of life will always cease eventually when we place our trust in God. In difficulty, I always say, "This too will pass," and that encourages me.

Matthew 14:33 tells us that *after* the storm, the other disciples worshiped Jesus. I would certainly hope so! Look at the miracles they witnessed. They had already witnessed the miracle of Jesus' calming the other storm. This second storm came, the winds blew, and Jesus came to them, walking on the water. He tried to calm their fears, but they were not ready to hear Him. Only after Peter exhibited his faith and Jesus calmed the storm were the disciples able to say, "Truly You are the Son of God!"

Saying those words took the disciples a long time. They had to witness many things before they worshiped. Let's be sure that You and I are always ready to trust and worship God, believing by faith instead of requiring proof.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord Jesus, sometimes I'm like the fearful disciples, requiring all kinds of proof before I can believe You. Help me trust You right away in each situation I face in life. Thank You for loving me and encouraging me at all times. Amen.

⁴¹They were filled with great fear, and said to each other, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”

5 THEY CAME to the other side of the sea, to the region of the Gerasenes. [Matt 8:28–34; Luke 8:26–37]

²When Jesus got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him,

³and the man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with chains.

⁴For he had often been bound with shackles [for the feet] and with chains, and he tore apart the chains and broke the shackles into pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue *and* tame him.

⁵Night and day he was constantly screaming *and* shrieking among the tombs and on the mountains, and cutting himself with [sharp] stones.

⁶Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him [in homage];

POWERPOINT

In Mark 5:1–6, Jesus and the disciples encountered a man who suffered from demonic oppression that caused him many serious problems. In the midst of his torment, he recognized Jesus. As soon as he saw Him, he fell to his knees and worshiped Him. By the end of the story, Jesus had cast the demons out of him and the man went on his way completely free from the enemy's influence. No matter how many problems you may face, if you will begin to worship the Lord on a regular basis He will bring you through the difficulties and into a place of freedom and victory. Worship is powerful, and it can be viewed as warfare against the enemy.



⁷and screaming with a loud voice, he said, “What business do we have in common with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore you by God [swear to me], do not torment me!” [Matt 8:29; Luke 4:34]

⁸For Jesus had been saying to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!”

⁹He was asking him, “What is your name?” And he replied, “My name is Legion; for we are many.”

¹⁰And he *began* begging Him repeatedly not to send them out of the region.

¹¹Now there was a large herd of pigs grazing there on the mountain.

¹²And *the demons* begged Him, saying, “Send us to the pigs so that we may go into them!”

¹³Jesus gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out [of the man] and entered the pigs. The herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea; and they were drowned [one after the other] in the sea.

¹⁴The herdsmen [tending the pigs] ran away and reported it in the city and in the country. And *the people* came to see what had happened.

¹⁵They came to Jesus and saw the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the man who had [previously] had the “legion” [of demons]; and they were frightened.

¹⁶Those who had seen it described [in detail] to the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man, and [told them all] about the pigs.

¹⁷So the people began to beg with Jesus to leave their region.

¹⁸As He was stepping into the boat, the [Gentile] man who had been demon-possessed was begging with Him [asking] that he might go with Him [as a disciple].

¹⁹Jesus did not let him [come], but [instead] He said to him, “Go home to your family and tell them all the great things that the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you.”

²⁰So he [obeyed and] went away and began to publicly proclaim in Decapolis [the region of the ten Hellenistic cities] all the great things that Jesus had done for him; and all the people were astonished.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Don't Listen to Discouragement

In Mark 5:36, Jesus overheard what the synagogue officials said, but He ignored them. This verse helps me to remember that we absolutely should not listen to the negative things people say to us. Sometimes people achieve greatness and do the most amazing things simply because they believe they can do it and they refuse to listen to those who tell them differently. God's Word inspires hope, faith, and success, while the negative words that we listen to lead to discouragement, defeat, and failure.

Have you missed opportunities to do great things because you paid too much attention to the discouraging words of others? It is not too late. You can begin this very moment to erase the negative comments people have made by confessing God's Word about yourself and your future until those opportunities become realities in your life.

You can defeat every negative thought that comes to your mind and every evil statement made about you as you wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. To wield the sword means to study the Word of God, meditate on it, believe it, apply it to your life in practical ways, speak it, and let it guide all your actions.

²¹When Jesus had again crossed over in the boat to the

other side [of the sea], a large crowd gathered around Him; and so He stayed by the seashore.

²²One of the synagogue officials named Jairus came up; and seeing Him, fell at His feet [Matt 9:18–26; Luke 8:41–56]

²³and begged anxiously with Him, saying, “My little daughter is at the point of death; [please] come and lay Your hands on her, so that she will be healed and live.”

²⁴And Jesus went with him; and a large crowd followed Him and pressed in around Him [from all sides].

²⁵A woman [in the crowd] had [suffered from] a hemorrhage for twelve years,

²⁶and had endured much [suffering] at the hands of many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but instead had become worse.

²⁷She had heard [reports] about Jesus, and she came up behind Him in the crowd and touched His outer robe.

²⁸For she thought, “If I just touch His clothing, I will get well.”

²⁹Immediately her flow of blood was dried up; and she felt in her body [and knew without any doubt] that she was healed of her suffering.

³⁰Immediately Jesus, recognizing in Himself that power had gone out from Him, turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched My clothes?”

³¹His disciples said to Him, “You see the crowd pressing in around You [from all sides], and You ask, ‘Who touched Me?’”

³²Still He kept looking around to see the woman who had done it.

³³And the woman, though she was afraid and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth.

³⁴Then He said to her, “Daughter, your faith [your personal trust and confidence in Me] has restored you to health; go in peace and be [permanently] healed from your suffering.”

³⁵While He was still speaking, some people came from the synagogue official’s house, saying [to Jairus], “Your daughter has died; why bother the Teacher any longer?”

³⁶Overhearing what was being said, Jesus said to the synagogue official, “Do not be afraid; only keep on believing [in Me and my power].”

³⁷And He allowed no one to go with Him [as witnesses], except Peter and James and John the brother of James.

³⁸They came to the house of the synagogue official; and He looked [with understanding] at the uproar *and* commotion, and people loudly weeping and wailing [in mourning].

³⁹When He had gone in, He said to them, “Why make a commotion and weep? The child has not died, but is sleeping.”

⁴⁰They *began* laughing [scornfully] at Him [because they knew the child was dead]. But He made them all go outside, and took along the child’s father and mother and His own [three] companions, and entered *the room* where the child was.

⁴¹Taking the child’s hand, He said [tenderly] to her, “Talitha kum!”—which translated [from Aramaic] means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”

⁴²The little girl immediately got up and *began* to walk, for she was twelve years old. And immediately they [who witnessed the child’s resurrection] were overcome with great

wonder *and* utter amazement.

⁴³He gave strict orders that no one should know about this, and He told them to give her *something* to eat.

6 JESUS LEFT there and came to His hometown [Nazareth]; and His disciples followed Him. [Matt 13:54–58; Luke 4:16, 23]

²When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and many who listened to Him were astonished, saying, “Where did this man get these things [this knowledge and spiritual insight]? What is this wisdom [this confident understanding of the Scripture] that has been given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands?”

³“Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are His sisters not here with us?” And they were [deeply] offended by Him [and their disapproval blinded them to the fact that He was anointed by God as the Messiah].

⁴Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor (respect) except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household.”

⁵And He could not do a miracle there at all [because of their unbelief] except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.

⁶He wondered at their unbelief.

And He was going around in the villages teaching.

⁷And He called the twelve [disciples] and began to send them out [as His special messengers] two by two, and gave them authority *and* power over the unclean spirits.

⁸He told them to take nothing for the journey except a mere walking stick—no bread, no [traveler’s] bag, no money in their belts—

⁹but to wear sandals; and [He told them] not to wear two tunics.

¹⁰And He told them, “Wherever you go into a house, stay there until you leave that town.

¹¹“Any place that does not welcome you or listen to you, when you leave there, shake the dust off the soles of your feet as a testimony against them [breaking all ties with them because they rejected My message].” [Matt 10:14; Acts 13:51]

¹²So they went out and preached that men should repent [that is, think differently, recognize sin, turn away from it, and live changed lives].

¹³And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many who were sick, and healing them.

¹⁴King Herod [Antipas] heard about this, for Jesus’ name *and* reputation had become well known. People were saying, “John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him.”

¹⁵But others were saying, “He is Elijah!” And others were saying, “It is a prophet, like one of the prophets [of old].”

¹⁶But when Herod heard [of it], he kept saying, “John, whom I beheaded, has risen [from the dead]!”

¹⁷For Herod himself had sent [guards] and had John arrested and shackled in prison because of Herodias, the wife of his [half-] brother Philip, because he (Herod) had married her. [Matt 14:3; Luke 3:19]

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Come Away

After a busy time of ministry, Jesus said to His disciples, “Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a little while’—for there were many [people who were continually] coming and going, and they could not even find time to eat” (Mark 6:31). No time to eat. Sound familiar?

Today we live in a noisy, high-pressure, busy world, where more is expected of most of us than we can possibly do. Most likely the world won’t change, but we can. We can combat and offset stress by seeking time alone. I really enjoy quiet times now, but there was a time when I became restless if things got quiet because I was addicted to noise and activity. I have discovered that even a short time of quiet and solitude can restore my soul to a place of rest and relieve stress. It gives me time to actually breathe deeply and re-collect my thoughts instead of letting my mind run wild in too many different directions.

My favorite times of the day for solitude are in the morning before anyone else wakes up and at night after everyone else

has gone to bed. I enjoy people very much, but some quiet time by myself in the mornings helps me get ready to be with them, and quiet time in the evenings helps me settle down at the end of the day.

We tend to think that our existence is only justified when we are *doing* something, but that is not true. We are human *beings*, not human *doings*! God doesn't love us more when we are doing something and less when we are enjoying quiet. Our busyness makes us feel important, but it doesn't make us more important to God.

I had to face the truth that I felt more acceptable when I was working than at any other time. Some of that perception came from my abusive childhood, some came from my strong, work-oriented temperament, but neither could be an excuse to not change. Whatever the reason, too much activity without any solitude was causing damage to my health and preventing me from enjoying the present.

Let's always remember to stop and say "Thank You" to our heavenly Father for revealing to us that He has not created us merely to "do," but also to "be."

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Heavenly Father, I sometimes find it easier to feel that I have worth when I'm busy doing something. Thank You for speaking to my heart the truth that You created me to be and not just to do. Help me to schedule times to be quiet with You. Amen.

¹⁸For John had been saying to Herod, “It is not lawful [under Mosaic Law] for you to have your brother’s wife.” [Lev 18:16; 20:21]

¹⁹Herodias had a grudge against John and wanted to kill him, but she could not,

²⁰because Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he *continually* kept him safe. When he heard John [speak], he was very perplexed; but he enjoyed listening to him.

²¹But an opportune time [finally] came [for Herodias]. Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his officials (nobles, courtiers) and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee.

²²Now [Salome] the daughter of Herodias came in and danced [for the men]. She pleased *and* beguiled Herod and his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, “Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you.”

²³And he swore to her, “Whatever you ask me, I will give it to you; up to half of my kingdom.” [Esth 5:3, 6]

POWERPOINT

Enjoying our lives and making the most of every moment is difficult if we do not have a healthy, balanced attitude toward work. Just as becoming too busy and overworked is a temptation for us, it could easily have been the same for Jesus and the disciples too. So many people wanted their help in Mark 6:31 that “they could not even find time to eat.”

Jesus’ response was: “Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a little while.” When you feel stressed and overworked, it would be wise to also get away to a quiet place and rest awhile. Even if all you can do is go into another room where it is quiet and stay for five minutes, it will help you gain a fresh focus on what your main goals are.



²⁴She went out and said to her mother, “What shall I ask for?” And Herodias replied, “The head of John the Baptist!”

²⁵And she rushed back to the king and asked, saying, “I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter!”

²⁶The king was deeply grieved, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests [who might have regarded him as weak], he was unwilling to [break his word and] refuse her.

²⁷So the king immediately sent for an executioner and commanded him to bring back John’s head. And he went and had John beheaded in the prison, ²⁸and brought back his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother.

²⁹When his disciples heard *about this*, they came and took away John’s body and laid it in a tomb.

³⁰The apostles [who had been sent out on a mission] gathered together with Jesus and told Him everything that they had done and taught.

³¹He said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a little while”—for there were many [people who were continually] coming and going, and they could not even find time to eat.

³²And they went away by themselves in the boat to a

secluded place. [Matt 14:13–21; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:1–13]

³³Many [people] saw them leaving, and recognized *them* and ran there together on foot from all the [surrounding] cities, and got there ahead of them.

³⁴When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd [waiting], and He was moved with compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd [lacking guidance]; and He began to teach them many things.

³⁵When the day was nearly gone, His disciples came to Him and said, “This is an isolated place, and it is already late;

³⁶send the crowds away so that they may go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.”

³⁷But He replied, “You give them something to eat!” And they asked Him, “Shall we go and buy 200 denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?” [2 Kin 4:42–44]

³⁸He said to them, “How many loaves do you have? Go look!” And when they found out, they said, “Five [loaves], and two fish.”

³⁹Then Jesus commanded them all to sit down by groups on the green grass.

⁴⁰They sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties [so that the crowd resembled an orderly arrangement of colorful garden plots].

⁴¹Taking the five loaves and two fish, He looked up to heaven and said a blessing [of praise and thanksgiving to the Father]. Then He broke the loaves and [repeatedly] gave them to the disciples to set before the people; and He divided up the two fish among them all.

⁴²They all ate and were satisfied.

⁴³And the disciples picked up twelve full baskets of the broken pieces [of the loaves], and of the fish.

⁴⁴Those who ate the loaves were five thousand men [not counting the women and children].

⁴⁵Jesus immediately insisted that His disciples get into the boat and go ahead [of Him] to the other side to Bethsaida, while He was dismissing the crowd. [Matt 14:22–32; John 6:15–21]

⁴⁶And after He said goodbye to them, He went to the mountain to pray.

⁴⁷Now when evening had come, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and Jesus was alone on the land.

⁴⁸Seeing the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night (3:00–6:00 a.m.) He came to them, walking on the sea. And [acted as if] He intended to pass by them. [Matt 14:25; John 6:19]

⁴⁹But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost, and cried out [in horror];

⁵⁰for they all saw Him and were shaken *and* terrified. But He immediately spoke with them and said, “Take courage! It is I (I AM)! Stop being afraid.” [Ex 3:14]

⁵¹Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased [as if exhausted by its own activity]; and they were completely overwhelmed,

⁵²because they had not understood [the miracle of] the loaves [how it revealed the power and deity of Jesus]; but [in

fact] their heart was hardened [being oblivious and indifferent to His amazing works].

⁵³When they had crossed over [the sea], they reached the land of Gennesaret and anchored at the shore.

⁵⁴They got out of the boat and immediately *people* recognized Him,

⁵⁵and ran throughout that surrounding countryside and began to carry around on their mats those who were sick, to any place where they heard He was.

⁵⁶And wherever He came into villages, or cities, or the countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places and pleading with Him [to allow them] just to touch the fringe (tassel with a blue cord) of His robe; and all who touched it were healed.

7 NOW THE Pharisees and some of the scribes came from Jerusalem and gathered around Him, ²and they had seen that some of His disciples ate their bread with [ceremonially] impure hands, that is, unwashed [and defiled according to Jewish religious ritual].

³(For the Pharisees and all of the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, holding firmly to the traditions of the elders;

⁴and *when they come* from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves [completely according to ritual]; and there are many other things [oral, man-made laws and traditions handed down to them] which they follow diligently, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and

copper utensils.) ⁵So the Pharisees and scribes asked Jesus, “Why do Your disciples not live their lives according to the tradition of the elders, but [instead] eat their bread with [ceremonially] unwashed hands?”

⁶He replied, “Rightly did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites (play-actors, pretenders), as it is written [in Scripture],

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Lord, I do not want to be a person who honors You with my lips while my heart is far from You. I want my heart always to be devoted to You and my words to reflect my sincere worship of You.

• adapted from Mark 7:6

**‘THESE PEOPLE HONOR ME WITH THEIR LIPS,
BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR FROM ME.**

⁷‘THEY WORSHIP ME IN VAIN [their worship is meaningless and worthless, a pretense], TEACHING THE PRECEPTS OF MEN AS DOCTRINES [giving their traditions equal weight with the Scriptures].’ [Is 29:13]

⁸“You disregard *and* neglect the commandment of God, and cling [faithfully] to the tradition of men.”

⁹He was also saying to them, “You are experts at setting aside *and* nullifying the commandment of God in order to keep your [man-made] tradition *and* regulations.

¹⁰“For Moses said, ‘HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER [with respect and gratitude]’; and, ‘HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF HIS FATHER OR MOTHER MUST BE PUT TO DEATH’; [Ex 20:12; 21:17; Lev 20:9; Deut 5:16]

¹¹but you [Pharisees and scribes] say, ‘If a man tells his father or mother, “Whatever I have that would help you is Corban, (that is to say, *already* a gift to God),” ’

¹²then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother [since helping them would violate his vow of Corban];

¹³so you nullify the [authority of the] word of God [acting as if it did not apply] because of your tradition which you have handed down [through the elders]. And you do many things such as that.”

¹⁴After He called the people to Him again, He *began* saying to them, “Listen [carefully] to Me, all of you, [hear] and understand [what I am saying]: ¹⁵there is nothing outside a man [such as food] which by going into him can defile him [morally or spiritually]; but the things which come out of [the heart of] a man are what defile *and* dishonor him.

¹⁶“If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”]

¹⁷When Jesus had left the crowd and gone into the house, His disciples asked Him about the parable.

¹⁸And He said to them, “Are you, too, so foolish *and* lacking in understanding? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile *and* dishonor him, ¹⁹since it does not enter his heart, but [only] his stomach, and [from there it] is eliminated?” (*By this, He declared all foods ceremonially clean.*)

²⁰And He said, “Whatever comes from [the heart of] a man, that is what defiles *and* dishonors him.

²¹“For from within, [that is] out the heart of men, come base *and* malevolent thoughts *and* schemes, acts of sexual immorality, thefts, murders, adulteries, ²²acts of greed *and* covetousness, wickedness, deceit, unrestrained conduct, envy *and* jealousy, slander *and* profanity, arrogance *and* self-righteousness and foolishness (poor judgment).

²³“All these evil things [schemes and desires] come from within and defile *and* dishonor the man.”

²⁴Jesus got up and left there and went to the region of Tyre [and Sidon, the coastal area of Phoenicia]. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know *about it*; but it was impossible for Him to be hidden [from the public]. [Matt 15:21–28]

²⁵Instead, after hearing about Him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately came and fell at His feet.

²⁶Now the woman was a Gentile (Greek), a Syrophenician

by nationality. And she kept pleading with Him to drive the demon out of her daughter.

²⁷He was saying to her, “First let the children [of Israel] be fed, for it is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the pet dogs (non-Jews).”

²⁸But she replied, “Yes, Lord, but even the pet dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”

²⁹And He said to her, “Because of this answer [reflecting your humility and faith], go [knowing that your request is granted]; the demon has left your daughter [permanently].”

³⁰And returning to her home, she found the child lying on the couch [relaxed and resting], the demon having gone.

³¹Soon after this Jesus left the region of Tyre, and passed through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, through the region of Decapolis [the ten Hellenistic cities].

³²They brought to Him a man who was deaf and had difficulty speaking, and they begged Jesus to place His hand on him.

³³Jesus, taking him aside by himself, away from the crowd, put His fingers into the man’s ears, and after spitting, He touched the man’s tongue [with the saliva]; ³⁴and looking up to heaven, He sighed deeply and said to the man, “Ephphatha,” which [in Aramaic] means, “Be opened *and* released!”

³⁵And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he *began* speaking plainly.

³⁶Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone; but the more He ordered them, the more widely they continued to proclaim it.

³⁷They were thoroughly astounded *and* completely

overwhelmed, saying, “He has done everything well! He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak!”

8 IN THOSE days, when there was again a large crowd [gathered before Him] and they had nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples and told them, [Matt 15:32–39]

²“I feel compassion for the crowd; they have been with Me now for three days and have nothing [left] to eat.

³“If I send them away to their homes hungry, they will faint [from exhaustion] on the road; because some of them have come a long way.”

⁴His disciples replied to Him, “Where will anyone be able to find enough bread here in this isolated place to feed these people?”

⁵He asked them, “How many loaves [of bread] do you have?” They said, “Seven.”

⁶He directed the people to sit down on the ground; and taking the seven loaves, He gave thanks and broke them, and [repeatedly] gave them to His disciples to set before them, and they served the crowd.

⁷They also had a few small fish; and when Jesus had blessed them [and given thanks], He ordered these [fish] to be set before them as well.

⁸And the people ate and were satisfied; and they picked up seven large baskets full of the broken pieces that were left over.

⁹About four thousand [men] were there [besides women and children]; and He sent them away.

¹⁰Then immediately He got into the boat with His disciples

and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

¹¹The Pharisees came out and began to argue [contentiously and debate] with Him, demanding from Him a sign from heaven, to test Him [because of their unbelief].

¹²He groaned *and* sighed deeply in His spirit and said, “Why does this generation demand a sign? I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, no sign will be given to this generation!”

¹³Leaving them, He again boarded the boat and left for the other side.

¹⁴Now the disciples had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat.

¹⁵Jesus repeatedly ordered them, saying, “Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.”

¹⁶They *began* discussing this with one another, saying, “It is because we have no bread [that He said this].”

¹⁷Jesus, aware of this [discussion], said to them, “Why are you discussing [the fact] that you have no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? [Is 6:9, 10]

¹⁸“THOUGH YOU HAVE EYES, DO YOU NOT SEE? AND THOUGH YOU HAVE EARS, DO YOU NOT HEAR *and* LISTEN [to what I have said]? And do you not remember, [Jer 5:21]

¹⁹when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up?” They answered, “Twelve.”

²⁰“And [when I broke] the seven [loaves] for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?” And they answered, “Seven.”

²¹And He was saying to them, “Do you still not understand?”

²²Then they came to Bethsaida; and some people brought a blind man to Jesus and begged Him to touch him.

²³Taking the blind man by the hand, He led him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, “Do you see anything?”

²⁴And he looked up and said, “I see people, but [they look] like trees, walking around.”

²⁵Then again Jesus laid His hands on his eyes; and the man stared intently and [his sight] was [completely] restored, and he *began* to see everything clearly.

²⁶And He sent him to his home, saying, “Do not even enter the village.”

²⁷Then Jesus and His disciples went out to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He asked His disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” [Matt 16:13–16; Luke 9:18–20]

²⁸They answered Him, “John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets.”

²⁹And He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter replied to Him, “You [in contrast to the others] are the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed).”

³⁰Then Jesus strictly warned them not to tell anyone about Him.

³¹And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must [of necessity] suffer many things and be rejected [as the Messiah] by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and must be put to death, and after three days rise [from death

to life]. [Matt 16:21–28; Luke 9:22–27]

Speak God's Word

*This is my confession of the
Lord Jesus: He is the Christ,
the Messiah, the Anointed
One.*

| adapted from MARK 8:29 |

³²He was stating the matter plainly [not holding anything back]. Then Peter took Him aside and began to reprimand Him.

³³But turning around [with His back to Peter] and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, “Get behind Me, Satan; for your mind is not set on God’s will *or* His values and purposes, but on what pleases man.”

³⁴Jesus called the crowd together with His disciples, and said to them, “If anyone wishes to follow Me [as My disciple], he must deny himself [set aside selfish interests], and take up his cross [expressing a willingness to endure whatever may come] and follow Me [believing in Me, conforming to My example in living and, if need be, suffering or perhaps dying because of faith in Me].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Die to Self, Live to Christ

In Mark 8:34, Jesus explains what is necessary in order to follow Him and be His disciple. We are to deny ourselves, which means to “set aside selfish interests.” We are to take up our cross, which The Amplified Bible says means to express “a willingness to endure whatever may come.” We are to follow Jesus, believing in Him, conforming to His example for living, and even suffering—maybe giving up our lives—because of our faith in Him.

Many mature Christians have experienced this dying to self. Some have been severely persecuted and even martyred for their faith, while others have experienced the daily dying to self that is part of spiritual growth. This includes doing God’s will when we would rather not and denying ungodly attitudes, thought patterns, and ways of acting and speaking. Anytime we sacrifice our personal desires and plans in order to follow Jesus, we experience a death to self-will.

Speaking or writing about dying to self is much easier than actually doing it. Whether death is in the spiritual or physical realm, death on any level is painful. As we embrace death to self, we find the rewards of following Jesus. Romans 8:17 promises that if we indeed share in Jesus’ suffering, we will also share in His glory.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Keep the Good Thoughts, Reject the Bad Ones

Thoughtless acts often bring mental and emotional pain to individuals and deterioration and destruction to relationships, as well as to many other areas of life. People speak thoughtless words to others, causing pain and perhaps ruining someone's day.

When Peter rebuked Jesus regarding His statement that He would suffer and be killed, Jesus responded, "Get behind Me, Satan; for your mind is not set on God's will *or* His values and purposes, but on what pleases man" (Mark 8:33). Peter's thoughtless words, from an evil source, were not pleasing to Jesus!

We do things without thinking, such as making comments at inappropriate times, making impulsive purchases, or making various commitments without seriously considering whether we can complete them. We may even practice what I call "mindless eating," eating without being fully aware that we are

doing it. How often do you walk by a candy dish at work and eat a piece without even thinking about whether it is a good choice or even something that you really want.

Solomon writes, “A soft *and* gentle *and* thoughtful answer turns away wrath, but harsh *and* painful *and* careless words stir up anger” (Prov. 15:1). How often do you need to apologize to someone, and say something such as, “I am sorry I hurt you—I just wasn’t thinking.” Our lives would be so much better if we would form the habit of thinking before speaking or taking action. It may take a lifetime of continued self-discipline to ever accomplish it completely, but at least we can start to move in the right direction.

We cannot just passively meditate on whatever happens to fall into our minds. Some thoughts are not necessarily good or evil; they are merely useless! Others are dark, very destructive, negative thoughts. Thankfully, there are also good thoughts that let the light into our mind and give us good feelings and positive energy.

When good things come into your mind, keep them and meditate on them. When bad things come into your mind, reject them as soon as you recognize them because they are not going to help you or anyone else. Let’s be committed to choosing the good and resisting the evil continually, just as God instructs us in His Word (see Deut. 30:19).

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God, I thank You for forgiving me when I’ve spoken thoughtless words and done thoughtless deeds. Help me to recognize the source of my thoughts and to choose the good

and resist the evil immediately. Amen.

³⁵“For whoever wishes to save his life [in this world] will [eventually] lose it [through death], but whoever loses his life [in this world] for My sake and the gospel’s will save it [from the consequences of sin and separation from God]. [Matt 10:39; Luke 17:33; John 12:25]

³⁶“For what does it benefit a man to gain the whole world [with all its pleasures], and forfeit his soul?

³⁷“For what will a man give in exchange for his soul *and* eternal life [in God’s kingdom]?

³⁸“For whoever is ashamed [here and now] of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”

9 AND JESUS said to them, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste (experience) death before they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.”

²Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured (changed in form) before them [and began to shine brightly with divine and regal glory]; [Matt 17:1–8; Luke 9:28–36]

³and His clothes became radiant *and* dazzling, intensely white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them.

⁴Elijah appeared to them along with Moses, and they were having a conversation with Jesus.

⁵Peter responded and said to Jesus, “Rabbi (Master), it is good for us to be here; let us make three [sacred] tents—one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

⁶For he did not [really] know what to say because they were terrified [and stunned by the miraculous sight].

⁷Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is My beloved Son. Listen to Him *and obey Him!*”

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Jesus, You are God's beloved
Son. I will listen to You and
obey You.*

• *adapted from Mark 9:7*

⁸Suddenly they looked around and no longer saw anyone with them, except Jesus alone.

⁹As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus expressly ordered them not to tell anyone what they had seen,

until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

¹⁰So they [carefully and faithfully] kept the matter to themselves, discussing *and* questioning [with one another] what it meant to rise from the dead.

¹¹They asked Him, saying, “Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first [before the Messiah comes]?” [Mal 4:5, 6]

¹²He answered them, “Elijah does come first and restores *and* reestablishes all things. And yet how is it written of the Son of Man that He will suffer many things [grief and physical distress] and be treated with contempt [utterly despised and rejected]? [Is 53:3]

¹³“But I say to you that Elijah has in fact come [already], and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written [in Scripture] of him.”

¹⁴When they came [back] to the [other nine] disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and scribes questioning *and* arguing with them. [Matt 17:14–18; Luke 9:37–42]

¹⁵Immediately, when the entire crowd saw Jesus, they were startled and *began* running up to greet Him.

¹⁶He asked them, “What are you discussing with them?”

¹⁷One of the crowd replied to Him, “Teacher, I brought You my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him unable to speak;

¹⁸and whenever it seizes him [intending to do harm], it throws him down, and he foams [at the mouth], and grinds his teeth and becomes stiff. I told Your disciples to drive it out, and they could not do it.”

¹⁹He replied, “O unbelieving (faithless) generation, how

long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you?
Bring him to Me!”

Speak God's Word

*All things are possible for me
because I believe and trust in
God!*

| adapted from MARK 9:23 |

²⁰They brought the boy to Him. When the [demonic] spirit saw Him, immediately it threw the boy into a convulsion, and falling to the ground he *began* rolling around and foaming at the mouth.

²¹Jesus asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he answered, “Since childhood.

²²“The demon has often thrown him both into fire and into water, intending to kill him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!”

²³Jesus said to him, “[You say to Me,] ‘If You can?’ All things are possible for the one who believes *and* trusts [in Me]!”

²⁴Immediately the father of the boy cried out [with a desperate, piercing cry], saying, “I do believe; help [me overcome] my unbelief.”

²⁵When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering [around them], He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You

deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again!”

²⁶After screaming out and throwing him into a terrible convulsion, it came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse [so still and pale] that many [of the spectators] said, “He is dead!”

²⁷But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him; and he stood up.

²⁸When He had gone indoors, His disciples *began* asking Him privately, “Why were we unable to drive it out?”

²⁹He replied to them, “This kind [of unclean spirit] cannot come out by anything but prayer [to the Father].”

³⁰They went on from there and *began* to go through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know it,

³¹because He was teaching His disciples [and preparing them for the future]. He told them, “The Son of Man is to be betrayed *and* handed over to men [who are His enemies], and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise [from the dead] three days later.”

³²But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him [what He meant].

³³They arrived at Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He asked them, “What were you discussing *and* arguing about on the road?” [Matt 18:1–5; Luke 9:46–48]

³⁴But they kept quiet, because on the road they had discussed *and* debated with one another which one [of them] was the greatest.

³⁵Sitting down [to teach], He called the twelve [disciples] and said to them, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be last

of all [in importance] and a servant of all.”

³⁶Taking a child, He set him before them; and taking him in His arms, He said to them,

³⁷“Whoever receives *and* welcomes one child such as this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives not [only] Me, but Him who sent Me.” [Matt 10:40; Luke 10:16; John 13:20]

³⁸John said to Him, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to stop him because he was not accompanying us [as Your disciple].” [Luke 9:49, 50]

³⁹But Jesus said, “Do not stop him; for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me.

⁴⁰“For he who is not against us is for us. [Num 11:27–29]

⁴¹“For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as followers of Christ, I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, he will not lose his reward.

⁴²“But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe *and* trust in Me to stumble [that is, to sin or lose faith], it would be better for him if a heavy millstone [one requiring a donkey’s strength to turn it] were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. [Matt 18:6; Luke 17:2]

⁴³“If your hand causes you to stumble *and* sin, cut it off [that is, remove yourself from the source of temptation]! It is better for you to enter life crippled, than to have two hands and go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, ⁴⁴[where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT PUT OUT.] [Is 66:24]

⁴⁵“If your foot causes you to stumble *and* sin, cut it off [that is, remove yourself from the source of temptation]! It

would be better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and be thrown into hell, ⁴⁶[where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT PUT OUT.] [Is 66:24]

⁴⁷“If your eye causes you to stumble *and* sin, throw it out [that is, remove yourself from the source of temptation]! It would be better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸where THEIR WORM [that feeds on the dead] DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT PUT OUT. [Is 66:24]

⁴⁹“For everyone will be salted with fire.

⁵⁰“Salt is good *and* useful; but if salt has lost its saltiness (purpose), how will you make it salty? Have salt within yourselves *continually*, and be at peace with one another.”

10 GETTING UP, He left there (Capernaum) and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan; and crowds gathered around Him again *and* accompanied Him, and as was His custom, He once more *began* to teach them.

²Pharisees came to Jesus to test Him [intending to trick Him into saying something wrong], and asked Him, “Is it lawful [according to Scripture] for a man to divorce his wife *and* send her away?”

³He replied to them, “What did Moses command you?”

⁴They said, “Moses allowed *a man* TO WRITE A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND TO SEND HER AWAY.” [Deut 24:1–4]

⁵But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of hearts [your callousness and insensitivity toward your wives

and the provision of God] he wrote you this precept.

⁶“But from the beginning of creation *God* MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE. [Gen 1:27; 5:2]

⁷“FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND HIS MOTHER [to establish a home with his wife], [Matt 19:5]

⁸AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH; so that they are no longer two, but [are united as] one flesh. [Gen 2:24]

⁹“Therefore, what God has united *and* joined together, man must not separate [by divorce].”

¹⁰In the house the disciples *began* questioning Him again about this.

¹¹And He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her;

¹²and if a woman divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.”

¹³People were bringing children to Him so that He would touch *and* bless them, but the disciples reprimanded them *and* discouraged them [from coming].

¹⁴But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and He said to them, “Allow the children to come to Me; do not forbid them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

¹⁵“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, whoever does not receive *and* welcome the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all.”

¹⁶And He took the children [one by one] in His arms and blessed them [with kind, encouraging words], placing His hands on them.

¹⁷As He was leaving on His journey, a man ran up and

kneled before Him and asked Him, “Good Teacher [You who are essentially good and morally perfect], what shall I do to inherit eternal life [that is, eternal salvation in the Messiah’s kingdom]?” [Matt 19:16–29; Luke 18:18–30]

¹⁸Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is [essentially] good [by nature] except God alone.

¹⁹“You know the commandments: ‘DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT TESTIFY FALSELY, Do not defraud, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.’” [Ex 20:12–16; Deut 5:16–20]

²⁰And he replied to Him, “Teacher, I have [carefully] kept all these [commandments] since my youth.”

²¹Looking at him, Jesus felt a love (high regard, compassion) for him, and He said to him, “You lack one thing: go and sell all your property and give [the money] to the poor, and you will have [abundant] treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me [becoming My disciple, believing and trusting in Me and walking the same path of life that I walk].”

²²But the man was saddened at Jesus’ words, and he left grieving, because he owned much property *and* had many possessions [which he treasured more than his relationship with God].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Self-Sufficient in Christ's Sufficiency

Most people have experienced some kind of difficult and painful circumstance that truly seemed impossible to them to bear. But the fact of the matter is you can do whatever you need to do in life.

As a believer in Jesus Christ, you are full of the Spirit of God, and nothing is too difficult for you if God is leading you to do it. God will not call you to do anything that He will not enable and empower you to do. If you will believe that you can do anything you need to do with God's help, you will soon see how truly capable you are in Christ!

The apostle Paul said, "I can do all things [which He has called me to do] through Him who strengthens and empowers me [to fulfill His purpose—I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency; I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him who infuses me with inner strength and confident peace]" (Phil. 4:13). You can do whatever you need to do today and every day!

²³Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who are wealthy [and cling to possessions and status as security] to enter the kingdom of God!"

²⁴The disciples were amazed *and* bewildered by His words.

But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how difficult it is [for those who place their hope and confidence in riches] to enter the kingdom of God!

²⁵“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man [who places his faith in wealth or status] to enter the kingdom of God.”

²⁶They were completely *and* utterly astonished, and said to Him, “Then who can be saved [from the wrath of God]?”

²⁷Looking at them, Jesus said, “With people [as far as it depends on them] it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.”

²⁸Peter started saying to Him, “Look, we have given up everything and followed You [becoming Your disciples and accepting You as Teacher and Lord].”

²⁹Jesus said, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, there is no one who has given up a house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake, ³⁰who will not receive a hundred times as much now in the present age—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms—along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.

³¹“But many *who are* first will be last, and the last, first.”

³²Now they were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them; and they were perplexed [at what Jesus had said], and those who were following were alarmed *and* afraid. And again He took the twelve [disciples] aside and began telling them what was going to happen to Him, ³³saying, “Listen very carefully: we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed *and* handed over to the

chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and hand Him over to the Gentiles (Romans).

³⁴“They will mock *and* ridicule Him and spit on Him, and whip (scourge) Him and kill *Him*, and three days later He will rise [from the dead].”

³⁵James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You.” [Matt 20:20, 21]

³⁶And He replied to them, “What do you want Me to do for you?”

³⁷They said to Him, “Grant that we may sit [with You], one on Your right and one on *Your* left, in Your glory [Your majesty and splendor in Your kingdom].”

³⁸But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism [of suffering and death] with which I am baptized?”

³⁹And they replied to Him, “We are able.” Jesus told them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and you will be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized.

⁴⁰“But to sit on My right or left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared [by My Father].”

⁴¹Hearing this, the [other] ten became indignant with James and John.

⁴²Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, “You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their powerful men exercise authority over them [tyrannizing them].

⁴³“But this is not how it is among you; instead, whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant,

⁴⁴and whoever wishes to be first *and* most important among you must be slave of all.

⁴⁵“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

⁴⁶Then they came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, a blind beggar, Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting beside the road [as was his custom]. [Matt 20:29–34; Luke 18:35–43]

⁴⁷When Bartimaeus heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout and say, “Jesus, Son of David (Messiah), have mercy on me!”

⁴⁸Many sternly rebuked him, telling him to keep still *and* be quiet; but he kept on shouting out all the more, “Son of David (Messiah), have mercy on me!”

⁴⁹Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” So they called the blind man, telling him, “Take courage, get up! He is calling for you.”

⁵⁰Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped up and came to Jesus.

⁵¹And Jesus said, “What do you want Me to do for you?” The blind man said to Him, “Rabboni (my Master), let me regain my sight.”

⁵²Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith [and confident trust in My power] has made you well.” Immediately he regained his sight and *began* following Jesus on the road. [Is 42:6, 7]

11 WHEN THEY were nearing Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany near the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of His disciples, [Matt 21:1–9; Luke 19:29–38; John 12:12–15]

²saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find a [donkey’s] colt tied, which has never been ridden by anyone; untie it and bring it here.

³“If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it’; and immediately he will send it here.”

⁴So they went away [to the village] and found a colt tied outside at a gate in the street, and they untied it.

⁵Some of the people who were standing there said to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?”

⁶They replied to them just as Jesus had directed, and they allowed them to go.

⁷They brought the colt to Jesus and put their coats on it, and He sat on it.

⁸And many [of the people] spread their coats on the road [as an act of tribute and homage before a new king], and others [scattered a layer of] leafy branches which they had cut from the fields [honoring Him as Messiah]. [2 Kin 9:13]

POWERPOINT

Mark 11:23 teaches us to speak to our mountains (obstacles or difficulties in life) and tell them to move. Most of us speak about our mountains instead of speaking to them. Words of faith will strengthen us to deal with the challenges that we face, but words of doubt, worry, or fear will make them seem impossible.



KEYS to a Victorious Life

Have Faith in God Constantly

Jesus cursed a fig tree because it was not bearing fruit when it should have been (see Mark 11:13–14). It had leaves, but no fruit! When the leaves appear on the fig tree, fruit is supposed to be under them. Jesus went to the fig tree because He was hungry, but found no fruit.

As Christians, and as Christ's representatives, we are to be genuine and always have good fruit to back up our claim of being believers in Him. People in the world are hungry (needy), and when they come to us for help we should always be ready to help them.

In Mark 11:20–24, as Jesus and the disciples passed by the fig tree the day after Jesus had cursed it, they seemed surprised that it had withered away. Jesus said they should have faith in God always. Do we constantly believe what God says to us in His Word, or are we like the disciples, astonished when we actually see His Word come to pass?

I encourage you to be filled with believing thoughts, not ones of wondering, doubt, and disbelief. When God says something in His Word, be filled with the expectation of seeing it come to pass. Jesus told the disciples that if they truly believed and did not doubt, they would receive from God whatever they asked for in prayer. Be careful about letting Satan fill your mind with doubt about receiving the answers to your prayers.

Keep on believing and expecting to see God's promises come to pass in your life. Even when you don't see any change, God is working on your behalf and you will see it if you don't let doubt poison your faith in Him.

⁹Those who went in front and those who were following [Him] were shouting [in joy and praise],

“Hosanna (Save, I pray)!

BLESSED (praised, glorified) IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD! [Ps 118:26]

¹⁰“Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest [heaven]!”

¹¹Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple [enclosure]; and after looking around at everything, He left for Bethany with the twelve [disciples], because it was already late [in the day].

¹²On the next day, when they had left Bethany, He was hungry. [Matt 21:18–22]

¹³Seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if He would find anything on it. But He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs.

¹⁴He said to it, “No one will ever eat fruit from you again!” And His disciples were listening [to what He said].

¹⁵Then they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple [grounds] and began driving out [with force] the people who were selling and buying [animals for sacrifice] in the temple area, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers [who made a profit exchanging foreign money for temple coinage] and the seats of those who were selling doves; [Matt 21:12–16;

Luke 19:45–47; John 2:13–16]

¹⁶and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise *or* household wares through the temple [grounds, using the temple area irreverently as a shortcut].

¹⁷He *began* to teach and say to them, “Is it not written, ‘MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS’? But you have made it a ROBBERS’ DEN.” [Is 56:7; Jer 7:11]

¹⁸The chief priests and the scribes heard this and *began* searching for a way to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, since the entire crowd was struck with astonishment at His teaching.

¹⁹When evening came, Jesus and His disciples would leave the city.

²⁰In the morning, as they were passing by, the disciples saw that the fig tree had withered away from the roots up.

²¹And remembering, Peter said to Him, “Rabbi (Master), look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered!”

²²Jesus replied, “Have faith in God [constantly].

²³“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be lifted up and thrown into the sea!’ and does not doubt in his heart [in God’s unlimited power], but believes that what he says is going to take place, it will be done for him [in accordance with God’s will]. [Matt 17:20; Luke 17:6; 1 John 5:14]

²⁴“For this reason I am telling you, whatever things you ask for in prayer [in accordance with God’s will], believe [with confident trust] that you have received them, and they will be *given* to you.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Forgiveness and Mountain-Moving Faith

One of the biggest reasons that prayer isn't answered is unforgiveness. Jesus gave His disciples the command to forgive. And then He told them plainly that if they did not forgive, neither would their Father in heaven forgive them their failings and shortcomings (see Mark 11:25–26). He was blunt with them because He knew what a stumbling block unforgiveness would be for their spiritual life.

Note that forgiveness and having faith to move mountains come in the same context (see Mark 11:20–26). There is no power in speaking to a mountain if the heart is full of unforgiveness. Yet this problem is rampant among God's people. If anything will short-circuit our faith and prevent God from answering our prayers, it's a heart full of unforgiveness and bitterness toward others. We can't pray and expect God to move mountains for us or on behalf of others if we've hardened our hearts with unforgiveness.

Jesus told Peter that he needed to be willing to forgive seven times seventy: 490 times (see Matt. 18:21–22). That number is simply representative of God's command that we should keep on forgiving no matter how many times it takes. Jesus wanted to show His disciples that forgiveness was one of the main keys to unlocking the Kingdom of God in their lives if they wanted to experience power in prayer.

Extend abundant mercy and forgiveness just as God has forgiven you in Christ.

²⁵“Whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him [drop the issue, let it go], so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions *and* wrongdoings [against Him and others].

²⁶“But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your transgressions.”]

²⁷They came again to Jerusalem. And as Jesus was walking in the [courts and porches of the] temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to Him, [Matt 21:23–27; Luke 20:1–8]

²⁸and *began* saying to Him, “By what authority are You doing these things, or who gave You this authority to do these things?”

²⁹Jesus said to them, “I will ask you one question, and you answer Me, and then I will tell you by what authority I do these things.

³⁰“Was the baptism of John [the Baptist] from heaven [that is, ordained by God] or from men? Answer Me.”

³¹They *began* discussing it with each other, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say, ‘Then why did you not believe him?’

³²“But *shall we say, ‘From men?’”—they were afraid [to answer because] of the crowd, for everyone considered John to have been a real prophet.

³³So they replied to Jesus, “We do not know.” And Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do

these things.”

12 JESUS BEGAN to speak to them [the chief priests, scribes and elders who were questioning Him] in parables: “A man PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT, AND DUG A PIT FOR THE WINE PRESS AND BUILT A TOWER; and he rented it out to tenant farmers and left the country. [Is 5:1, 2; Matt 21:33–46; Luke 20:9–19]

²“When the *harvest* season came he sent a servant to the tenants, in order to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard.

³“They took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed.

⁴“Again he sent them another servant, and they [threw stones and] wounded him in the head, and treated him disgracefully.

⁵“And he sent another, and that one they killed; then many others—some they beat and some they killed.

⁶“He still had one man left *to send*, a beloved son; he sent him last of all to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’

⁷“But those tenants said to each other, ‘This *man* is the heir! Come on, let us kill him [and destroy the evidence], and his inheritance will be ours!’

⁸“So they took him and killed him, and threw his body outside the vineyard.

⁹“What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants, and will give the vineyard to others.

¹⁰“Have you not even read this Scripture:

‘THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REGARDED AS UNWORTHY
and REJECTED, THIS [very stone] HAS BECOME THE CHIEF
CORNERSTONE

¹¹THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD,
AND IT IS MARVELOUS *and* WONDERFUL IN OUR EYES’?” [Ps
118:22, 23]

¹²And they were looking for a way to seize Him, but they were afraid of the crowd; for they knew that He spoke this parable in reference to [and as a charge against] them. And so they left Him and went away.

¹³Then they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus in order to trap Him into *making* a statement [that they could use against Him]. [Matt 22:15–22; Luke 20:20–26]

¹⁴They came and said to Him, “Teacher, we know that You are truthful and have no personal bias toward anyone; for You are not influenced by outward appearances *or* social status, but in truth You teach the way of God. Is it lawful [according to Jewish law and tradition] to pay the poll-tax to [Tiberius] Caesar, or not?

¹⁵“Should we pay [the tax] or should we not pay?” But knowing their hypocrisy, He asked them, “Why are you testing Me? Bring Me a coin (denarius) to look at.”

¹⁶So they brought one. Then He asked them, “Whose image and inscription is this?” They said to Him, “Caesar’s.”

¹⁷Jesus said to them, “Pay to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they were greatly amazed at Him.

¹⁸Some Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection)

came to Him, and *began* questioning Him, saying, [Matt 22:23–33; Luke 20:27–38]

¹⁹“Teacher, Moses wrote for us [a law] that IF A MAN’S BROTHER DIES and leaves a wife BUT LEAVES NO CHILD, HIS BROTHER IS TO MARRY THE WIDOW AND RAISE UP CHILDREN FOR HIS BROTHER. [Deut 25:5]

²⁰“There were seven brothers; the first [one] took a wife, and died leaving no children.

²¹“The second brother married her, and died leaving no children; and the third likewise;

²²and so all seven [married her and died, and] left no children. Last of all the woman died also.

²³“In the resurrection, whose wife will she be? For all seven [brothers] were married to her.”

²⁴Jesus said to them, “Is this not why you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures [that teach the resurrection] nor the power of God [who is able to raise the dead]?”

²⁵“For when they rise from the dead, they do not marry nor are they given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

²⁶“But concerning the raising of the dead, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the *passage* about the *burning* bush, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB’? [Ex 3:2–6]

²⁷“He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; you are greatly mistaken *and* you are deceiving yourselves!”

²⁸Then one of the scribes [an expert in Mosaic Law] came

up and listened to them arguing [with one another], and noticing that Jesus answered them well, asked Him, “Which commandment is first *and* most important of all?” [Matt 22:34–40; Luke 10:25–28]

Speak God's Word

*I will love the Lord my God
with all my heart, and with
all my soul, and with all my
mind, and with all my
strength. And I will love my
neighbor as I love myself.*

| *adapted from* MARK 12:30–31 |

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, God, that in Jesus
You have put my enemies
under my feet!*

• *adapted from Mark 12:36*

²⁹Jesus answered, “The first *and* most important *one* is:
‘HEAR, O ISRAEL, THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD;

³⁰AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR
HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL (life), AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND
(thought, understanding), AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.’
[Deut 6:4, 5]

³¹“This is the second: ‘YOU SHALL [unselfishly] LOVE YOUR
NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ There is no other commandment
greater than these.” [Lev 19:18]

³²The scribe said to Him, “Admirably answered, Teacher;
You truthfully stated that HE IS ONE, AND THERE IS NO OTHER
BUT HIM; ³³AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL THE HEART AND WITH
ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND WITH ALL THE STRENGTH, AND TO
[unselfishly] LOVE ONE’S NEIGHBOR AS ONESELF, is much more
than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.” [1 Sam 15:22; Hos 6:6;
Mic 6:6–8; Heb 10:8]

³⁴When Jesus saw that he answered thoughtfully *and*
intelligently, He said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom
of God.” And after that, no one would dare to ask Him any
more questions.

³⁵Jesus *began* to say, as He taught in [a portico or court of]
the temple, “How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son
of David? [Matt 22:41–46; Luke 20:41–44]

³⁶“David himself said [when inspired] by the Holy Spirit,
‘THE LORD (the Father) SAID TO MY LORD (the Son, the
Messiah), “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,
UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES UNDER YOUR FEET.”’ [Ps 110:1]

³⁷“David himself calls Him (the Son, the Messiah) ‘Lord’; so how can it be that He is David’s Son?” The large crowd enjoyed hearing Jesus *and* listened to Him with delight.

³⁸In [the course of] His teaching He was saying, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes [displaying their prominence], and *like to receive* respectful greetings in the market places,³⁹ and [they love] the chief seats in the synagogues and the places of distinction *and* honor at banquets,

⁴⁰[these scribes] who devour (confiscate) widows’ houses, and offer long prayers for appearance’s sake [to impress others]. These men will receive greater condemnation.”

⁴¹And He sat down opposite the [temple] treasury, and *began* watching how the people were putting money into the treasury. And many rich people were putting in large sums. [Luke 21:1–4]

⁴²A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a mite.

⁴³Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, this poor widow put in [proportionally] more than all the contributors to the treasury.

⁴⁴“For they all contributed from their surplus, but she, from her poverty, put in all she had, all she had to live on.”

13 AS HE was coming out of the temple [grounds], one of His disciples said to Him, “Teacher, look what ^{*}wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” [Matt 24; Luke 21:5–36]

²Jesus replied to him, “You see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left on another which will not be torn down!”

³As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked Him privately,

⁴“Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be fulfilled?”

⁵Jesus began to say to them, “Be careful *and* see to it that no one misleads you.

⁶“Many will come in My name [misusing My name or claiming to be the Messiah], saying, ‘I am *He!*’ and will deceive *and* mislead many.

⁷“When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed (frightened, troubled); *these things* must take place, but the end is not yet.

⁸“For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These things are the beginning of the birth pangs [the intolerable anguish and suffering].

⁹“But be on your guard; they will turn you over to courts, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand [as accused] before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them.

¹⁰“The gospel [that is, the good news regarding the way of salvation] must first be preached to all the [Gentile] nations. [Col 1:6, 23]

¹¹“When they take you and turn you over [to the court], do not worry beforehand about what to say, but say whatever is given to you [by God] in that hour; for it is not you who speak,

but it is the Holy Spirit [who will speak through you].

¹²“Brother will betray brother to [be put to] death, and a father [will hand over] his child; and children will rise up *and* take a stand against parents and have them put to death.

¹³“You will be hated by everyone because of [your association with] My name, but the one who [patiently perseveres empowered by the Holy Spirit and] endures to the end, he will be saved.

¹⁴“But when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION standing [in the temple sanctuary] where it ought not to be (let the reader understand) then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. [Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11]

¹⁵“Whoever is on the housetop must not go down [to enter the house], or go inside to take anything out of his house;

¹⁶whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his coat.

¹⁷“And woe to those women who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

¹⁸“Pray that it will not occur in winter,

¹⁹for at that time there will be such tribulation as has not occurred, from the beginning of the creation which God made, until now—and never will [be again].

²⁰“And if the Lord had not shortened the days, no human life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose [for Himself], He shortened the days. [Dan 12:1]

²¹“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed!)’ or, ‘Look, *He is* there!’ do not believe it;

²²for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and they

will provide signs and wonders in order to deceive, if [such a thing were] possible, even the elect [those God has chosen for Himself].

²³“But be on your guard; I have told you everything in advance.

²⁴“But in those days, after [the suffering and distress of] that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, [Is 13:10]

²⁵AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from the sky, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. [Is 34:4]

²⁶“Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory [in royal majesty and splendor]. [Dan 7:13, 14]

²⁷“And then He will send out the angels, and will gather together His elect [those He has chosen for Himself] from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.

²⁸“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: as soon as its branch becomes tender and it puts out its leaves, you recognize that summer is near. [Matt 24:32, 33; Luke 21:29–31]

²⁹“Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, know [for certain] that He is near, *right* at the door.

³⁰“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, this generation [the people living when these signs and events begin] will not pass away until all these things take place.

³¹“Heaven and earth [as now known] will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

³²“But of that [exact] day or hour no one knows, not even

the angels in heaven, nor the Son [in His humanity], but the Father *alone*.

³³“Be on guard and stay constantly alert [and pray]; for you do not know when the *appointed* time will come.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that though
heaven and earth as we know
it will pass away, Your words
will not pass away.*

• adapted from Mark 13:31

³⁴“It is like a man away on a journey, *who* when he left home put his servants in charge, each with his *particular* task, and also ordered the doorkeeper to be *continually* alert.

³⁵“Therefore, be *continually* on the alert—for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning—³⁶[stay alert,] in case he should come suddenly *and* unexpectedly and find you asleep *and* unprepared.

³⁷“What I say to you I say to everyone, ‘Be on the alert [stay awake and be continually cautious]!’”

14 IT WAS now two days before the Passover and [the festival of] Unleavened Bread, and the chief priests and the scribes were searching for a deceitful way to arrest Jesus and kill *Him*; [Matt 26:2–5; Luke 22:1, 2]

²but they were saying, “Not during the festival, for the people might riot.”

³While He was in Bethany [as a guest] at the home of Simon the leper, and reclining *at the table*, a woman came with an alabaster vial of very costly *and* precious perfume of pure nard; and she broke the vial and poured the perfume over His head.

⁴But there were some who were indignantly *remarking* to one another, “Why has this perfume been wasted?”

⁵“For this perfume might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii [a laborer’s wages for almost a year], and *the money* given to the poor.” And they scolded her.

⁶But Jesus said, “Let her alone; why are you bothering her *and* causing trouble? She has done a good *and* beautiful thing to Me.

⁷“For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you wish you can do something good to them; but you will not always have Me. [Deut 15:11]

⁸“She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial.

⁹“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, wherever the

good news [regarding salvation] is proclaimed throughout the world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.”

¹⁰Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve [disciples], went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. [Matt 26:14–16; Luke 22:3–6; John 6:71]

¹¹When they heard this they were delighted, and promised to give him money. And he *began* looking for an opportune time to betray Jesus.

¹²On the first day [of the festival] of Unleavened Bread, when [as was customary] they sacrificed the Passover lamb, His disciples asked Him, “Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?” [Matt 26:17–19; Luke 22:7–13]

¹³And He sent two of His disciples, saying to them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him;

¹⁴and say to the owner of the *house* he enters, ‘The Teacher asks, “Where is My guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?”’

¹⁵“He will show you a large upstairs room, furnished and ready [with carpets and dining couches]; prepare [the supper] for us there.”

¹⁶The disciples left and went to the city and found everything just as He had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

¹⁷When it was evening, He came with the twelve [disciples]. [Matt 26:20–25]

¹⁸While they were reclining *at the table*, Jesus said, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you that one of you will

betray Me—one who is eating with Me.” [Ps 41:9]

¹⁹They began to be grieved *and* deeply distressed and to say to Him one by one, “Surely not I?”

²⁰And He replied, “It is one of the twelve [disciples], one who is dipping *bread* in the bowl with Me.

²¹“For the Son of Man goes [to the cross] just as it is written [in Scripture] of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! *It would have been* good for that man if he had not been born.”

²²While they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it [giving thanks and praise], and He broke it, and gave it to them and said, “Take it. This is My body.” [Matt 26:26–29; Luke 22:17–20; 1 Cor 11:23–25]

²³And when He had taken a cup [of wine] and given thanks, He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. [Ex 24:8]

²⁴And He said to them, “This is My blood of the [new] covenant, [My blood] which is being poured out for many [for the forgiveness of sins].

²⁵“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

²⁶After they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

²⁷Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away [and be ashamed and be afraid to be associated with Me as disciples], because it is written, ‘I WILL STRIKE THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP WILL BE SCATTERED.’ [Zech 13:7]

²⁸“But after I have been raised [from the dead], I will go ahead of you to Galilee.”

²⁹But Peter said to Him, “Even if they all fall away [and desert You, ashamed and afraid of being associated with You], yet I will not [do so]!”

³⁰Jesus said to him, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you will deny [that you even know] Me three times.” [Matt 26:34; John 13:38]

³¹But Peter kept saying insistently, “If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” And they all were saying the same thing as well.

³²Then they went to a place called Gethsemane; and Jesus said to His disciples, “Sit down here until I have prayed.” [Matt 26:36–46; Luke 22:40–46]

³³He took Peter and James and John with Him, and He began to be deeply distressed and troubled [extremely anguished at the prospect of what was to come].

³⁴And He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved *and* overwhelmed with sorrow, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch.”

³⁵After going a little farther, He fell to the ground [distressed by the weight of His spiritual burden] and *began* to pray that if it were possible [in the Father’s will], the hour [of suffering and death for the sins of mankind] might pass from Him.

³⁶He was saying, “Abba, Father! All things are possible for You; take this cup [of judgment] away from Me; but not what I will, but what You will.”

³⁷And He came back and found them sleeping, and He said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Were you unable to keep

watch for one hour?

Speak God's Word

I keep actively watching and praying that I will not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the body is weak.

| adapted from MARK 14:38 |

³⁸“Keep [actively] watching and praying so that you do not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”

³⁹He went away again and prayed, saying the same words.

⁴⁰And again He came back and found them sleeping, because their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know how to answer Him.

⁴¹He came back a third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough [of that]! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.

⁴²“Get up, let us go. Look, my betrayer is near!”

⁴³And at once, while He was still speaking, Judas [Iscaiot], one of the twelve [disciples], came up, and with him a crowd of men with swords and clubs, *who came* from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders [of the Sanhedrin]. [Matt 26:47–56;

Luke 22:47–53; John 18:3–11]

⁴⁴Now the betrayer had given them a signal, saying, “Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him and lead Him away safely [under guard].”

⁴⁵When Judas came, immediately he went up to Jesus and said, “Rabbi (Master)!” and he kissed Him [forcefully].

⁴⁶They laid hands on Him and seized Him.

⁴⁷But one of the bystanders [Simon Peter] drew his sword and struck [Malchus] the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. [Matt 26:51; Luke 22:50; John 18:10]

⁴⁸Jesus said to them, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me, as *you would* against a robber?”

⁴⁹“Day after day I was with you, teaching in the [courts and porches of the] temple, and you did not seize Me; but *this has happened* so that the Scriptures would be fulfilled.”

⁵⁰Then all of His disciples abandoned Him and fled.

⁵¹A young man was following Him, wearing [only] a linen sheet over *his* naked *body*; and some men seized him.

⁵²But pulling free of the linen sheet, he escaped [from them] naked.

⁵³They led Jesus away to the high priest, and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court) gathered together. [Matt 26:57–68; Luke 22:66–71; John 18:12f, 19–24]

⁵⁴Peter had followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the officers [guards and servants] and warming himself at the fire.

⁵⁵Now the chief priests and the entire Council (Sanhedrin,

Jewish High Court) were trying to obtain testimony against Jesus [which they could use] to have Him [condemned and] executed, but they were not finding any.

⁵⁶For many [people] were giving false testimony against Him, but their testimonies were not consistent.

⁵⁷Some stood up and *began* to give false testimony against Him, saying,

⁵⁸“We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple (sanctuary) that was made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.’” [John 2:19–21]

⁵⁹Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent.

⁶⁰The high priest stood up and came forward and asked Jesus, “Have You no answer to give [in response] to what these men are testifying against You?”

⁶¹But Jesus kept silent and gave no answer at all. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, “Are You the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed), the Son of the Blessed One?”

⁶²Jesus said, “I am; and you will [all] see THE SON OF MAN SEATED [with authority] AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER (the Father), and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.” [Ps 110:1; Dan 7:13]

⁶³Then tearing his robe [to express his indignation], the high priest said, “What further need do we have of witnesses? [Num 14:6]

⁶⁴“You have heard the blasphemy [that is, His claim to be the Son of God]. What is your decision?” And they all condemned Him to be [guilty and] deserving of death. [Lev 24:16]

⁶⁵ And some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, “Prophecy [by telling us who hit you]!” Then the officers took custody of Him and struck him in the face.

⁶⁶ While Peter was down below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came, [Matt 26:69–75; Luke 22:55–62; John 18:16–18, 25–27]

⁶⁷ and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked intently at him and said, “You were with Jesus the Nazarene, too.”

⁶⁸ But he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you are talking about.” Then he went out [of the courtyard] to the porch, [and a rooster crowed.]

⁶⁹ The servant-girl saw him, and began once more to tell the bystanders, “This [man] is *one* of them.”

⁷⁰ But again he denied it. After a little while, the bystanders again said to Peter, “You are in fact *one* of them, for [it is clear from your accent, that] you are a Galilean, too.”

⁷¹ But he began to invoke a curse [on himself] and to swear [an oath], “I do not know this man you are talking about!”

⁷² Immediately a rooster crowed the second time. And Peter remembered what Jesus said to him: “Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.” And thinking of this, he began weeping [in anguish].

15 EARLY IN the morning the chief priests, with the elders and scribes and the whole Council (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court), immediately consulted together; and they bound Jesus,

they took Him away [violently] and handed Him over to Pilate.
[Is 53:8]

²Pilate questioned Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?”
And He replied to him, “It is as you say.” [Matt 27:11–14; Luke 23:2, 3; John 18:29–37]

³The chief priests *began* accusing Him of many things.

⁴Then Pilate again asked Him, “Have You no answer [to give]? See how many charges they are bringing against You!”

⁵But Jesus gave no further answer; so Pilate was perplexed.
[Is 53:7]

⁶Now at the [Passover] feast Pilate used to set free for them any one prisoner whom they requested. [Matt 27:15–26; Luke 23:18–25; John 18:39–19:16]

⁷The man called Barabbas was imprisoned with the insurrectionists (revolutionaries) who had committed murder in the civil rebellion.

⁸The crowd came up and began asking Pilate to do as he usually did for them.

⁹Pilate answered them, saying, “Do you want me to set free for you the King of the Jews?”

¹⁰For he was aware that the chief priests had turned Jesus over to him because of envy *and* resentment.

¹¹But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to get him to release Barabbas for them instead.

¹²Again Pilate answered, “Then what shall I do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?”

¹³They screamed back, “Crucify Him!”

¹⁴But Pilate asked them, “Why, what has He done that is

evil?” But they screamed all the more, “Crucify Him!”

¹⁵So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, set Barabbas free for them; and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over [to his soldiers] to be crucified. [Is 53:5]

¹⁶The soldiers led Him away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium), and they called together the entire [Roman] battalion [of 600 soldiers]. [Matt 27:27–31]

¹⁷They dressed Him up in [a ranking Roman officer’s robe of] purple, and after twisting [together] a crown of thorns, they placed it on Him; ¹⁸and they began saluting *and* mocking Him: “Hail, King of the Jews!”

¹⁹They kept beating Him on the head with a reed and spitting on Him, and kneeling and bowing in [mock] homage to Him. [Is 50:6]

²⁰After they had mocked Him, they took off the purple robe and put His own clothes on Him. And they led Him out [of the city] to crucify Him.

²¹They forced into service a passer-by coming in from the countryside, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to carry His cross. [Matt 27:32; Luke 23:26]

²²Then they brought Him to the place [called] Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. [Matt 27:33–44; Luke 23:33–43; John 19:17–24]

²³They tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh [to dull the pain], but He would not take it.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Don't Let Your Feelings Dictate Your Outcome

Jesus was frequently accused of being wicked and deceitful even though His entire goal was to help people (see Mark 15:3). He never tried to defend Himself because He knew He was acting in the will of God. Eventually Jesus was crucified, though He was totally innocent of the crimes alleged against Him. Toward the end of His suffering on the cross, although He had always trusted His heavenly Father and believed He was doing what God wanted Him to do, He cried, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?" (Mark 15:34). Jesus had a moment when life was so painful that He asked if He had been forsaken.

As the Son of God, Jesus knew that His Father would deliver Him, but in this instance He spoke as the Son of Man. Perhaps this statement is recorded for our benefit so we know that God understands us even when we feel He has forsaken us. We see that even Jesus felt abandoned in His pain and suffering, but we also see as we read the rest of the story in Mark that Jesus was resurrected and experienced complete victory over an intensely difficult time in His life. We can expect the same to happen to us when we are suffering.

You may be going through being falsely accused or suffering unjustly and you are wondering why God has forsaken you. In reality He is closer to you than you realize, and He is planning your resurrection also. He understands how you feel,

and I encourage you to keep believing and never let your feelings dictate your final outcome.

²⁴And they crucified Him, and divided up His clothes among themselves, casting lots for them to see who should take what. [Ps 22:18]

²⁵It was the third hour (9:00 a.m.) when they crucified Him. [Ps 22:14–16]

²⁶The inscription of the accusation against Him had been written [above Him]: “THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

²⁷They crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left.

²⁸[And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “He was counted with the transgressors.”] [Is 53:12]

²⁹Those who were passing by were insulting Him with abusive *and* insolent language, wagging their heads [as a sign of contempt], and saying, “Ha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in [only] three days, [John 2:19]

³⁰save Yourself by coming down from the cross!”

³¹In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were ridiculing *and* mocking Him among themselves and saying, “He saved others [from death]; He cannot save Himself! [Ps 22:7, 8]

³²“Let the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed), the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe *and* trust [in Him]!” Those who were crucified with Him were also insulting Him.

³³When the sixth hour (noon) came, darkness covered the

whole land until the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.). [Matt 27:45–56; Luke 23:44–49]

³⁴And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?”—which is translated, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?” [Ps 22:1]

³⁵Some of the bystanders heard Him and said, “Look! He is calling for Elijah!”

³⁶Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave Him a drink, saying, “Let us see whether Elijah is coming to take Him down.” [Ps 69:21; Matt 27:48, 50; Luke 23:36; John 19:29, 30]

³⁷But Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed out His last [voluntarily, sovereignly dismissing and releasing His spirit from His body in submission to His Father’s plan].

³⁸And the veil [of the Holy of Holies] of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

³⁹When the centurion, who was standing opposite Him, saw the way He breathed His last [being fully in control], he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

⁴⁰Now some women also were watching from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome. [John 19:25]

⁴¹When Jesus was in Galilee, they used to accompany him and minister to Him; and *there were* also many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.

⁴²When evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, [Deut 21:22, 23; Matt 27:57–61; Luke 23:50–56; John 19:38–42]

⁴³Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent *and* respected

member of the Council (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court), who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God—and he courageously dared to go in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus.

⁴⁴Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time [only six hours after being crucified], and he summoned the centurion and asked him whether He was already dead.

⁴⁵And when he learned from the centurion [that Jesus was in fact dead], he gave the body to Joseph [by granting him permission to remove it].

⁴⁶So Joseph purchased a [fine] linen cloth [for wrapping the body], and after taking Jesus down [from the cross], he wrapped Him in the linen cloth and placed Him in a tomb which had been cut out of rock. Then he rolled a [large, wheel-shaped] stone against the entrance of the tomb. [Is 53:9]

⁴⁷Mary Magdalene and Mary the *mother* of Josès were [carefully] watching to see where He was laid.

16 WHEN THE Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the *mother* of James, and Salome purchased [sweet-smelling] spices, so that they might go and anoint Him. [Matt 28:1–8; Luke 24:1–10; John 20:1–8]

²Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.

³And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll back the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?”

⁴Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, though it was extremely large.

⁵Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right, wearing a [long, stately] white robe; and they were amazed *and* bewildered.

⁶And he said to them, “Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen; He is not here. See, [here is] the place where they laid Him. [Ps 16:10]

⁷“But go, tell His disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see Him there, just as He told you.’”
[Mark 14:28]

⁸They went out and fled from the tomb, for they were seized with trembling and astonishment; and they said nothing [about it] to anyone, because they were afraid.

⁹[Now Jesus, having risen [from death] early on the first day of the week, appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons.

¹⁰She went and reported it to those who had been with Him, while they were mourning and weeping.

¹¹When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe it.

¹²After that, He appeared in a different form to two of them as they were walking along the way to the country. [Luke 24:13–35]

¹³They returned [to Jerusalem] and told the others, but they did not believe them either.

¹⁴Later, Jesus appeared to the eleven [disciples] themselves as they were reclining *at the table*; and He called them to account for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen [from death].

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Jesus, that though
You were crucified, You are
now risen!*

• adapted from Mark 16:6

¹⁵And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

¹⁶“He who has believed [in Me] and has been baptized will be saved [from the penalty of God’s wrath and judgment]; but he who has not believed will be condemned.

¹⁷“These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak in new tongues;

¹⁸they will pick up serpents, and if they drink anything deadly, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will get well.”

¹⁹So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of

God. [Ps 110:1]

²⁰And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord was working with them and confirming the word by the signs that followed.]

Luke

Author: | Luke
Date: | Around AD
60

Luke's Gospel is longer than any of the other three. It emphasizes Jesus as Savior, includes many stories of miracles, and recognizes the role of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' ministry. It also takes an inclusive approach to those whom Jesus touched, mentioning the poor and needy, the troubled and oppressed, women and children more than the other Gospels.

Luke 4 is an important chapter to remember as we contend for good thoughts. In it, Jesus faces intense temptation from the devil and gains victory over him. We learn from the way Jesus fought this battle that consistently speaking God's Word and worshipping the Lord is a powerful weapon against the enemy (see Luke 4:8). This story and others in Luke's Gospel remind us that God is always greater and more powerful than anything the enemy tries to do to us.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM LUKE:

You can always tell what is truly in your heart by what comes out of your mouth (see Luke 6:44–45).

Instead of focusing on what you don't have, focus on what you do have and watch God multiply what you give to Him (see Luke 9:12–17).

We have been given authority over the enemy, so keep your mind and words faith-filled and you will see the Lord put Satan under your feet (see Luke 10:19).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM LUKE:

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME (the Messiah), BECAUSE HE HAS ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO ANNOUNCE RELEASE (pardon, forgiveness) TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED (downtrodden, bruised, crushed by tragedy), TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD [the day when salvation and the favor of God abound greatly]. | Luke 4:18–19

But I say to you who hear [Me and pay attention to My words]: Love [that is, unselfishly seek the best or higher good for] your enemies, [make it a practice to] do good to those who hate you, bless and show kindness to those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. | Luke 6:27–28

For everyone who keeps on asking [persistently], receives; and he who keeps on seeking [persistently], finds; and to him who keeps on knocking [persistently], the door will be opened. | Luke 11:10

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

LUKE

1 SINCE [AS is well known] many have undertaken to compile an orderly account of the things which have been fulfilled among us [by God], ²exactly as they were handed down to us by those [with personal experience] who from the beginning [of Christ's ministry] were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word [that is, of the teaching concerning salvation through faith in Christ], ³it seemed fitting for me as well, [and so I have decided] after having carefully searched out *and* investigated all the events accurately, from the *very* beginning, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus; [Acts 1:1]

⁴so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught [that is, the history and doctrine of the faith].

⁵In the days of Herod [the Great], king of Judea, there was a certain priest whose name was Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was^{*} a descendant of Aaron [the first high priest of Israel], and her name was Elizabeth.

⁶They both were righteous (approved) in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.

⁷But they were childless, because Elizabeth was barren, and

they were both far advanced in years.

⁸Now it happened while Zacharias was serving as priest before God in the *appointed* order of his priestly division,

⁹as was the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter [the sanctuary of] the temple of the Lord and burn incense [on the altar of incense]. [Ex 30:7]

¹⁰And all the congregation was praying outside [in the court of the temple] at the hour of the incense offering.

¹¹And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense.

¹²When Zacharias saw *the angel*, he was troubled and overcome with fear.

¹³But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, because your petition [in prayer] was heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John.

¹⁴“You will have great joy and delight, and many will rejoice over his birth,

¹⁵for he will be great *and* distinguished in the sight of the Lord; and will never drink wine or liquor, and he will be filled with *and* empowered to act by the Holy Spirit while still in his mother’s womb. [Num 6:3]

¹⁶“He will turn many of the sons of Israel back [from sin] to [love and serve] the Lord their God.

¹⁷“It is he who will go as a *forerunner* before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous [which is to seek and submit to the will of God]—in order to make ready a people [perfectly] prepared [spiritually and morally] for the Lord.” [Is 40:3; Mal 4:5, 6]

¹⁸And Zacharias said to the angel, “How will I be certain of this? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in age.”

¹⁹The angel replied and said to him, “I am Gabriel; I stand *and* minister in the [very] presence of God, and I have been sent [by Him] to speak to you and to bring you this good news. [Dan 8:16; 9:21]

²⁰“Listen carefully, you will be *continually* silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe what I told you; but my words will be fulfilled at their proper time.”

²¹The people [outside in the court] were waiting for Zacharias, and were wondering about his *long* delay in the temple.

²²But when he did come out, he was unable to speak to them. They realized that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he kept making signs to them, and remained mute.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Words To Match Your Prayers

When Zacharias did not believe the angel's message that he and his wife would have a son in their old age, God closed his mouth. This kept him from speaking negatively about God's promise (see Luke 1:20).

If we want our prayers to be answered, we can choose to reinforce them with positive beliefs and the confession of God's Word instead of praying and then undermining our prayers with negative thoughts and words. Let's say that a mother is praying for a son who is addicted to drugs and asks God for a breakthrough for him. But then she goes to lunch with two neighbors and says several times, "I am so afraid that my son will never change."

This kind of negative confession weakens prayer because it is not based on faith that God will hear and answer. When the neighbors ask how her son is doing, she could say, "You know what? I can't see that things have changed much, but I'm praying for him, and I have assurance in my heart that God is doing a mighty work in his life. I believe things are going to turn out well" (see Ps. 138:8; Phil. 1:6; Jer. 29:11).

When you pray, once you have laid hold of the answer through faith, make sure your confession is in agreement with what you've asked God to do. When people ask you questions that you could answer in a negative way, answer them instead

with a positive confession of God's Word, one that agrees with the prayer you have prayed.

²³When his time of priestly service was finished, he returned to his home.

²⁴Now after this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant, and for five months she secluded herself completely, saying,

²⁵“This is how the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked with favor on *me*, to take away my disgrace among men.” [Gen 30:23; Is 4:1]

²⁶Now in the sixth month [of Elizabeth's pregnancy] the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth,

²⁷to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, a descendant of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

²⁸And coming to her, the angel said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.”

²⁹But she was greatly perplexed at what he said, and kept carefully considering what kind of greeting this was.

³⁰The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

³¹“Listen carefully: you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.

³²“He will be great *and* eminent and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; ³³and He will reign over the house of Jacob (Israel) forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end.” [Is

9:6, 7; Dan 2:44]

³⁴Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin *and* have no intimacy with any man?”

³⁵Then the angel replied to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you [like a cloud]; for that reason the holy (pure, sinless) Child shall be called the Son of God. [Ex 40:34; Is 7:14]

³⁶“And listen, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month.

³⁷“For with God nothing [is or ever] shall be impossible.”

³⁸Then Mary said, “Behold, *I am* the servant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.” And the angel left her.

³⁹Now at this time Mary arose and hurried to the hill country, to a city of Judah (Judea),

⁴⁰and she entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth.

⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, her baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit *and* empowered by Him.

⁴²And she exclaimed loudly, “Blessed [worthy to be praised] are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!

⁴³“And how has it *happened* to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me?

⁴⁴“For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.

45“And blessed [spiritually fortunate and favored by God] is she who believed *and* confidently trusted that there would be a fulfillment of the things that were spoken to her [by the angel sent] from the Lord.”

46And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies *and* exalts the Lord,

47And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

48“For He has looked [with loving care] on the humble state of
His maidservant;

For behold, from now on all generations will count me
blessed *and* happy *and* favored by God!

49“For He who is mighty has done great things for me;
And holy is His name [to be worshiped in His purity,
majesty, and glory].

50“AND HIS MERCY IS UPON GENERATION AFTER GENERATION
TOWARD THOSE WHO [stand in great awe of God and] FEAR
HIM.

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION. [Ps 103:17]

51“He has done mighty deeds with His [powerful] arm;
He has scattered *those who were* proud in the thoughts of
their heart.

52“He has brought down rulers from *their* thrones,
And exalted those who were humble.

53“HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS;
And sent the rich away empty-handed.

54“He has helped His servant Israel,
In remembrance of His mercy,

⁵⁵Just as He promised to our fathers,
To Abraham and to his descendants forever.” [Gen 17:7;
18:18; 22:17; 1 Sam 2:1–10; Mic 7:20]

⁵⁶And Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months,
and then returned to her home.

⁵⁷Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and
she gave birth to a son.

⁵⁸Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had
shown His great mercy toward her, and they were rejoicing with
her.

⁵⁹It happened that on the eighth day they came to
circumcise the child [as required by the Law], and they
intended to name him Zacharias, after his father; [Gen 17:12;
Lev 12:3]

⁶⁰but his mother answered, “No indeed; instead he will be
called John.”

⁶¹And they said to her, “None of your relatives is called by
that name.”

⁶²Then they made signs to his father, as to what he wanted
him called.

⁶³And he asked for a *writing* tablet and wrote as follows,
“His name is John.” And they were all astonished.

⁶⁴At once Zacharias’ mouth was opened and his tongue
freed, and he *began* speaking, praising *and* blessing *and*
thanking God.

⁶⁵Then fear came on all their neighbors; and all these
things were discussed throughout the hill country of Judea.

⁶⁶All who heard these things kept them in mind, saying,

“What then will this little boy *turn out to be*?” For the hand of the Lord was certainly with him[to bring about his birth].

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, for raising
up a horn of salvation, a
mighty and valiant Savior for
me.*

• *adapted from Luke 1:69*

⁶⁷Now Zacharias his father was filled with the Holy Spirit *and* empowered by Him, and he prophesied, saying,

⁶⁸“Blessed (praised, glorified) be the Lord, the God of Israel,
Because He has visited us and brought redemption to His
people,

⁶⁹And He has raised up a horn of salvation [a mighty and
valiant Savior] for us

In the house of David His servant—

⁷⁰Just as He promised by the mouth of His holy prophets from

the most ancient times—

⁷¹Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES,

And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US; [Ps 106:10]

⁷²To show mercy [as He promised] to our fathers,

And to remember His holy covenant [the promised blessing],

⁷³The oath which He swore to Abraham our father,

⁷⁴To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies,

Might serve Him without fear,

⁷⁵In holiness [being set apart] and righteousness [being upright] before Him all our days.

⁷⁶“And you, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;

For you will go on BEFORE THE LORD (the Messiah) TO PREPARE HIS WAYS; [Is 40:3; Mal 4:5]

⁷⁷To give His people the knowledge of salvation

By the forgiveness of their sins,

⁷⁸Because of the tender mercy of our God,

With which the Sunrise (the Messiah) from on high will dawn *and* visit us, [Mal 4:2]

⁷⁹TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND IN THE SHADOW OF DEATH,

To guide our feet [in a straight line] into the way of peace *and* serenity.” [Is 9:2]

⁸⁰The child continued to grow and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel [as John the Baptist, the forerunner of the

Messiah].

2 NOW IN those days a decree went out from [the emperor] Caesar Augustus, that all the inhabited world (the Roman Empire) should be registered [in a census].

²This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.

³And everyone went to register for the census, each to his own city.

⁴So Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David,
⁵in order to register with Mary, who was betrothed to him, and was with child. [Matt 1:18–25]

⁶While they were there [in Bethlehem], the time came for her to give birth,

⁷and she gave birth to her Son, her firstborn; and she wrapped Him in [swaddling] cloths and laid Him in a manger, because there was no [private] room for them in the inn.

⁸In the same region there were shepherds staying out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.

⁹And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord flashed *and* shone around them, and they were terribly frightened.

¹⁰But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people.

¹¹“For this day in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord (the Messiah). [Mic 5:2]

¹²“And this will be a sign for you [by which you will recognize Him]: you will find a Baby wrapped in [swaddling] cloths and lying in a manger.” [1 Sam 2:34; 2 Kin 19:29; Is 7:14]

¹³Then suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host (angelic army) praising God and saying,

¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest [heaven],
And on earth peace among men with whom He is well-pleased.”

¹⁵When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds *began* saying one to another, “Let us go straight to Bethlehem, and see this [wonderful] thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.”

¹⁶So they went in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the Baby as He lay in the manger.

¹⁷And when they had seen this, they made known what had been told them about this Child,

¹⁸and all who heard it were astounded *and* wondered at what the shepherds told them.

¹⁹But Mary treasured all these things, giving careful thought to them *and* pondering them in her heart.

²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

²¹At the end of eight days, when He was to be circumcised, He was named Jesus, the name given [to Him] by the angel [Gabriel] before He was conceived in the womb.

²²And when the time for their purification came [that is, the mother's purification and the baby's dedication] according to the Law of Moses, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord [set apart as the Firstborn] [Lev 12:1–4]

²³(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “EVERY *firstborn* MALE THAT OPENS THE WOMB SHALL BE CALLED HOLY [set apart and dedicated] TO THE LORD)” [Ex 13:1, 2, 12; Num 8:17]

POWERPOINT

God does not want us to reason and try to figure out everything in life. But He does want us to ponder the things He does in our lives, as Mary did (see Luke 2:19). We can tell when we have moved from pondering to reasoning by the confusion we experience. If we are confused, we are not pondering in our heart; we are reasoning in our mind.



²⁴and [they came also] to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord [to be appropriate for a family of modest means], “A PAIR OF TURTLEDOVES OR TWO YOUNG PIGEONS.” [Lev 12:6–8]

²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout [carefully observing the divine Law], and looking for the Consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed).

²⁷Prompted by the Spirit, he came into the temple [enclosure]; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for Him the custom required by the Law, ²⁸Simeon took Him into his arms, and blessed *and* praised *and* thanked God, and said,

²⁹"Now, Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to leave
[this world] in peace,
According to Your word;

³⁰For my eyes have seen Your Salvation, [Is 52:10]

³¹Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³²A LIGHT FOR REVELATION TO THE GENTILES [to disclose what was previously unknown], And [to bring] the praise *and* honor *and* glory of Your people Israel." [Is 42:6; 49:6]

³³And His [legal] father and His mother were amazed at what was said about Him.

³⁴Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, "Listen carefully: this *Child* is appointed *and* destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign that is to be opposed—[Is 8:14, 15]

³⁵and a sword [of deep sorrow] will pierce through your own soul—so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

³⁶There was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old, and had lived with her

husband for seven years after her marriage, [Josh 19:24]

³⁷and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She did not leave the [area of the] temple, but was serving *and* worshiping night and day with fastings and prayers.

³⁸She, too, came up at that very moment and *began* praising *and* giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all who were looking for the redemption *and* deliverance of Jerusalem.

³⁹And when they had done everything [in connection with Jesus' birth] according to the Law of the Lord, they went back to Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth.

⁴⁰And the Child continued to grow and become strong [in spirit], filled with wisdom; and the grace (favor, spiritual blessing) of God was upon Him. [Judg 13:24]

⁴¹Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year for the Passover Feast. [Deut 16:1-8; Ex 23:15]

⁴²And when He was twelve years old, they went up *to Jerusalem*, according to the custom of the Feast;

⁴³and as they were returning [to Nazareth], after spending the required number of days [at the Feast], the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem. Now His parents did not know this, ⁴⁴but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and traveled a day's journey; and [then] they *began* searching [anxiously] for Him among their relatives and acquaintances.

⁴⁵When they did not find Him, they went back to Jerusalem looking for Him [everywhere].

⁴⁶Three days later they found Him in the [court of the] temple, sitting among the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.

⁴⁷All who heard Him were amazed by His intelligence *and* His understanding and His answers.

⁴⁸When they saw Him, they were overwhelmed; and His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You treated us like this? Listen, Your father and I have been [greatly distressed and] anxiously looking for You.”

⁴⁹And He answered, “Why did you have to look for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s *house*?”

⁵⁰But they did not understand what He had said to them.

⁵¹He went down to Nazareth with them, and was continually submissive *and* obedient to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

⁵²And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and men. [1 Sam 2:26]

3 NOW IN the fifteenth year of [Emperor] Tiberius Caesar’s reign—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod [Antipas] was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene—²in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas [his son-in-law], the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.

³And he went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin;

⁴as it is written *and* forever remains written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

“THE VOICE OF ONE SHOUTING IN THE WILDERNESS,

‘PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD,
MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.

⁵‘EVERY RAVINE SHALL BE FILLED UP,
AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL SHALL BE LEVELED;
AND THE CROOKED [places] SHALL BE MADE STRAIGHT,
AND THE ROUGH ROADS SMOOTH;

⁶AND ALL MANKIND SHALL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD.’” [Is
40:3–5]

⁷So he *began* saying to the crowds who were coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath [of God that is] to come?

⁸“Therefore produce fruit that is worthy of [and consistent with your] repentance [that is, live changed lives, turn from sin and seek God and His righteousness]. And do not *even* begin to say to yourselves [as a defense], ‘We have Abraham for our father [and so our heritage assures us of salvation]’; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children (descendants) for Abraham [for God can replace the unrepentant, regardless of their heritage, with those who are obedient]. [Matt 3:9]

**A Prayer To
Renew Your
Mind**



Lord, I pray that You will help me to produce fruit that is worthy of and consistent with my repentance. And I pray that because of You, I will live a changed life, turning from sin and seeking You and Your righteousness.

• *adapted from Luke 3:8*

⁹“Even now the axe [of God’s judgment] is swinging toward the root of the trees; so every tree that does not produce good fruit is being cut down and thrown into the fire.”

¹⁰The crowds asked him, “Then what are we to do?”

¹¹And John replied, “The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do the same.”

¹²Even *some* tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked, “Teacher, what are we to do?”

¹³And he told them, “Collect no more than the *fixed amount* you have been ordered to [collect].”

¹⁴*Some* soldiers asked him, “And *what about* us, what are we to do?” And he replied to them, “Do not extort money from anyone or harass *or* blackmail *anyone*, and be satisfied with your wages.”

¹⁵Now the people were in a state of expectation, and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed).

¹⁶John answered them all by saying, “As for me, I baptize you [only] with water; but One who is mightier [more powerful, more noble] than I is coming, and I am not fit to untie the strap of His sandals [even as His slave]. He will baptize you [who truly repent] with the Holy Spirit and [you who remain unrepentant] with fire. [Matt 3:11]

¹⁷“His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat (believers) into His barn (kingdom); but He will burn up the chaff (the unrepentant) with unquenchable fire.”

¹⁸So with many other appeals *and* various admonitions John preached the good news (gospel) to the people.

¹⁹But when Herod [Antipas] the tetrarch was *repeatedly* reprimanded [and convicted by John’s disapproval] for having Herodias, his brother’s wife [as his own], and for all the wicked things that Herod had done, [Matt 14:3; Mark 6:17]

²⁰he also added this to them all: he locked up John in prison.

²¹Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, the [visible] heaven was opened, [Matt 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–11; John 1:32]

²²and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came from heaven, “You are My Son, My Beloved, in You I am well-pleased *and* delighted!” [Ps 2:7; Is 42:1]

²³When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about

thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, the son [by marriage] of Eli, ²⁴the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph,

²⁵the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Hesli, the son of Naggai,

²⁶the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda,

²⁷the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri,

²⁸the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er,

²⁹the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi,

³⁰the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim,

³¹the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David,

³²the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon,

³³the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah,

³⁴the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor,

³⁵the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Heber, the son of Shelah,

³⁶the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech,

³⁷the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of

Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan,

³⁸the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God. [Gen 5:3–32; 11:10–26; Ruth 4:18–22; 1 Chr 1:1–4, 24–28; 2:1–15]

4 NOW JESUS, full of [and in perfect communication with] the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness [Matt 4:1–11]

²for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they ended, He was hungry. [Deut 9:9; 1 Kin 19:8]

³Then the devil said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command this stone to turn into bread.”

⁴Jesus replied to him, “It is written *and* forever remains written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE.’” [Deut 8:3]

⁵Then he led Jesus up [to a high mountain] and displayed before Him all the kingdoms of the inhabited earth [and their magnificence] in the twinkling of an eye.

⁶And the devil said to Him, “I will give You all this realm and its glory [its power, its renown]; because it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.

⁷“Therefore if You worship before me, it will all be Yours.”

⁸Jesus replied to him, “It is written *and* forever remains written, ‘YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE ONLY HIM.’” [Deut 6:13; 10:20]

⁹Then he led Jesus to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle (highest point) of the temple, and said [mockingly] to

Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here; ¹⁰for it is written *and* forever remains written,

‘HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU TO GUARD *and* PROTECT YOU,’

¹¹and,

‘THEY WILL LIFT YOU UP ON *their* HANDS,

SO THAT YOU DO NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.’”

[Ps 91:11, 12]

¹²Jesus replied to him, “It is said [in Scripture], ‘YOU SHALL NOT TEMPT THE LORD YOUR GOD [to prove Himself to you].’” [Deut 6:16; Matt 4:7]

¹³When the devil had finished every temptation, he [temporarily] left Him until a more opportune time.

¹⁴Then Jesus went back to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and the news about Him spread through the entire region.

¹⁵And He *began* teaching in their synagogues and was praised *and* glorified *and* honored by all.

¹⁶So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.

¹⁷The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, [Is 61:1, 2]

¹⁸“THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME (the Messiah),
BECAUSE HE HAS ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOOD NEWS
TO THE POOR.

HE HAS SENT ME TO ANNOUNCE RELEASE (pardon,
forgiveness) TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT
TO THE BLIND,

TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED (downtrodden,
bruised, crushed by tragedy),

¹⁹TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD [the day
when salvation and the favor of God abound greatly].” [Is
61:1, 2]

²⁰Then He rolled up the scroll [having stopped in the middle of
the verse], gave it back to the attendant and sat down [to
teach]; and the eyes of all those in the synagogue were
[attentively] fixed on Him.

²¹He began speaking to them: “Today this Scripture has
been fulfilled in your hearing *and* in your presence.”

²²And [as He continued on] they all were speaking well of
Him, and were in awe *and* were wondering about the words of
grace which were coming from His lips; and they were saying,
“Is this not Joseph’s son?”

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Jesus Sets People Free

I have heard many sad stories of abuse and pain. I understand because I've been there. Some people who tell me their stories also think negatively as I did at one time and use their background as an excuse for not growing spiritually, for living in defeat, and for allowing the enemy to influence their thoughts.

No matter what has happened in a person's past, God can bring anyone into a great future if he or she will learn His Word and live according to it. I know this is true because I have experienced His healing and blessing in my own life. God's promises of healing and blessing are for anyone who will believe them and live by them.

In Jesus' first public appearance recorded in Luke 4, after His temptation in the wilderness (see vv. 1-13), He went to the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth and read from the scroll of Isaiah. "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME (THE MESSIAH), BECAUSE HE HAS ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO ANNOUNCE RELEASE

(PARDON, FORGIVENESS) TO THE CAPTIVES” (v. 18).

God anointed Jesus to bring the good news and to set the captives free, and it's important to receive the freedom He has provided for us. A battle takes place in our mind when we choose freedom instead of remaining in bondage. The devil puts thoughts in our mind, thoughts that disagree with God's promises of healing, but we can choose to cast down those thoughts and imaginations and believe God's Word.

We will choose to listen to one voice or another, and our deliverance depends on that choice. If we listen to Jesus and believe Him, deliverance is not only possible, but it will become a reality in our life. Jesus came to open prison doors and set the captives free. You and I can be set completely free as we choose to trust God and obey Him.

Though you may have had a terrible, sad, and abusive past, as I did, you can choose today to rejoice because you have a wonderful future ahead of you.

APRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord Jesus, You have been anointed to set me free. Forgive me for listening to Satan's voice, which makes me feel I'm beyond help. I ask You to set me free from everything that holds me back from fully and totally serving You. Amen.

²³So He said to them, “You will no doubt quote this proverb to Me, ‘Physician, heal Yourself! Whatever [miracles] that we heard were done [by You] in Capernaum, do here in Your hometown as well.’”

²⁴Then He said, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown.

²⁵“But in truth I say to you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was closed up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; ²⁶and yet Elijah was not sent [by the Lord] to a single one of them, but only to Zarephath *in the land* of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. [1 Kin 17:1, 8–16; 18:1]

²⁷“And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and not one of them was cleansed [by being healed] except Naaman the Syrian.” [2 Kin 5:1–14]

²⁸As they heard these things [about God’s grace to these two Gentiles], *the people* in the synagogue were filled with a great rage;

²⁹and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the crest of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to hurl Him down the cliff.

³⁰But passing [miraculously] through the crowd, He went on His way.

³¹Then He came down [from the hills of Nazareth] to Capernaum, a city of Galilee [on the shore of the sea], and He was teaching them on the Sabbath; [Mark 1:21–28]

³²and they were surprised [almost overwhelmed] at His

teaching, because His message was [given] with authority *and* power *and* great ability.

³³There was a man in the synagogue who was possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon; and he cried out with a loud *and* terrible voice,

³⁴“Let us alone! What business do we have [in common] with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!”

³⁵But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent (muzzled, gagged) and come out of him!” And when the demon had thrown the man down among them, he came out of him without injuring him in any way.

³⁶They were all astonished *and* in awe, and *began* saying to one another, “What is this message? For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits and they come out!”

³⁷And the news about Him spread into every place in the surrounding district (Galilee).

³⁸Then Jesus got up and left the synagogue and went to Simon’s (Peter’s) house. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Him to help her. [Matt 8:14–17; Mark 1:29–34]

³⁹Standing over her, He rebuked the fever, and it left her; and immediately she got up and *began* serving them [as her guests].

⁴⁰While the sun was setting [marking the end of the Sabbath day], all those who had any *who were* sick with various diseases brought them to Jesus; and laying His hands on each one of them, He was healing them [exhibiting His authority as Messiah]. [Matt 8:16, 17; Mark 1:32–34]

⁴¹Demons also were coming out of many people, shouting, “You are the Son of God!” But He rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that He was the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed).

⁴²When daybreak came, Jesus left [Simon Peter’s house] and went to a secluded place; and the crowds were searching for Him, and [they] came to Him and tried to keep Him from leaving them.

⁴³But He said, “I must preach [the good news of] the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because I was sent for this purpose.”

⁴⁴So He continued preaching in the synagogues of Judea [the country of the Jews, including Galilee].

5 NOW IT happened that while Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret (Sea of Galilee), with the people crowding all around Him and listening to the word of God; ²that He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake, but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets.

³He got into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, and asked him to put out a little distance from the shore. And He sat down and *began* teaching the crowds from the boat.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

“Nevertheless”

In Luke 5:4, after a long night of not catching any fish, Jesus tells Peter to launch out into the deep water and lower the nets one more time. Based upon Peter's experience as a professional fisherman, what Jesus told him to do probably didn't make any sense, and I doubt that he felt like doing it. However, Peter did what the Lord said and received what was probably the biggest catch of his fishing career.

Peter reasoned with Jesus, reminding Him that they had worked all night and caught nothing. But to his credit, although he was exhausted, Peter chose to obey Jesus and said, “But at Your word I will [do as you say and] lower the nets [again]” (v. 5). And they caught so many fish that the nets almost broke.

An important principle of obedience that we need to grasp is to obey instead of reasoning. One of my friends calls it, “The Nevertheless Principle.” When she feels God leading her to do things that don't always make a lot of sense, she quickly interjects, “Nevertheless.” Then she obeys.

Being led by your thoughts, feelings, and emotions won't bring in a big catch or lead to success. But you can do what God says, when He says it, whether or not it makes any sense to you—and the blessings of obedience will amaze you. All that God really asks is that we obey instead of reasoning.

⁴When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon [Peter], “Put out into the deep water and lower your nets for a catch [of fish].”

⁵Simon replied, “Master, we worked hard all night [to the point of exhaustion] and caught nothing [in our nets], but at Your word I will [do as you say and] lower the nets [again].”

⁶When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their nets were [at the point of] breaking;

⁷so they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats [with fish], so that they began to sink.

⁸But when Simon Peter saw this, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Go away from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!”

⁹For he and all his companions were completely astounded at the catch of fish which they had taken;

¹⁰and so were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon [Peter]. Jesus said to Simon, “Have no fear; from now on you will be catching men!”

¹¹After they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him [becoming His disciples, believing and trusting in Him and following His example].

¹²While Jesus was in one of the cities, there came a man covered with [an advanced case of] leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged Him, saying, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean *and* well.” [Matt 8:2–4; Mark 1:40–44]

¹³And Jesus reached out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” And immediately the

leprosy left him.

¹⁴Jesus ordered him to tell no one [that he might happen to meet], “But go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your purification, just as Moses commanded, as a testimony (witness) to them [that this is a work of Messiah].” [Lev 13:49; 14:2–32]

¹⁵But the news about Him was spreading farther, and large crowds kept gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their illnesses.

¹⁶But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray [in seclusion].

¹⁷One day as He was teaching, there were Pharisees and teachers of the Law sitting there who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was *present* with Him to heal.

¹⁸*Some* men came carrying on a stretcher a man who was paralyzed, and they tried to bring him in and lay him down in front of Jesus. [Matt 9:2–8; Mark 2:3–12]

¹⁹But finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof [and removed some tiles to make an opening] and lowered him through the tiles with his stretcher, into the middle *of the crowd*, in front of Jesus.

²⁰When Jesus saw their [active] faith [springing from confidence in Him], He said, “Man, your sins are forgiven.”

²¹The scribes and the Pharisees began to consider *and* question [the implications of what He had said], saying, “Who is this man who speaks blasphemies [by claiming the rights and prerogatives of God]? Who can forgive sins [that is, remove guilt, nullify sin’s penalty, and assign righteousness] except

God alone?”

²²But Jesus, knowing their [hostile] thoughts, answered them, “Why are you questioning [these things] in your hearts?

²³“Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’?

²⁴“But, in order that you may know that the Son of Man (the Messiah) has authority *and* power on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the paralyzed man, “I say to you, get up, pick up your stretcher and go home.”

²⁵He immediately stood up before them, picked up his stretcher, and went home glorifying *and* praising God.

²⁶They were all astonished, and they *began* glorifying God; and they were filled with [reverential] fear and kept saying, “We have seen wonderful *and* incredible things today!”

²⁷After this Jesus went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi (Matthew) sitting at the tax booth; and He said to him, “Follow Me [as My disciple, accepting Me as your Master and Teacher and walking the same path of life that I walk].” [Matt 9:9–17; Mark 2:14–22]

²⁸And he left everything behind and got up and *began* to follow Jesus [as His disciple].

²⁹Levi (Matthew) gave a great banquet for Him at his house; and there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others who were reclining *at the table* with them.

³⁰The Pharisees and their scribes [seeing those with whom He was associating] *began* murmuring in discontent to His disciples, asking, “Why are you eating and drinking with the tax collectors and sinners [including non-observant Jews]?”

³¹And Jesus replied to them, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but [only] those who are sick.

³²“I did not come to call the [self-proclaimed] righteous [who see no need to repent], but sinners to repentance [to change their old way of thinking, to turn from sin and to seek God and His righteousness].”

³³Then they said to Him, “The disciples of John [the Baptist] often practice fasting and offer prayers [of special petition], and so do the *disciples* of the Pharisees; but Yours eat and drink.”

³⁴Jesus said to them, “Can you make the wedding guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them?

³⁵“But days [for mourning] will come when the bridegroom is [forcefully] taken away from them. They will fast in those days.”

³⁶He also told them a parable: “No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and puts it on an old one; otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old.

³⁷“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new [fermenting] wine will [expand and] burst the skins and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined.

³⁸“But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins.

³⁹“And no one, after drinking old *wine*, wishes for new; for he says, ‘The old is fine.’”

6 ONE SABBATH while Jesus was passing through fields of standing grain, it happened that His disciples were picking the

heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands, and eating them. [Deut 23:25; Matt 12:1–8; Mark 2:23–28]

²But some of the Pharisees said, “Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?” [Ex 20:10; 23:12; Deut 5:14]

³Jesus replied to them, “Have you not even read [in the Scriptures] what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him—[1 Sam 21:1–6]

⁴how he went into the house of God, and took and ate the ~~—~~consecrated bread, which is not lawful [for anyone] to eat except the priests alone, and [how he also] gave it to the men who were with him?” [Lev 24:9]

⁵Jesus was saying to them, “The Son of Man (the Messiah) is Lord [even] of the Sabbath.”

⁶On another Sabbath He went into the synagogue and taught, and a man was present whose right hand was withered. [Matt 12:9–14; Mark 3:1–6]

⁷The scribes and the Pharisees were watching Him closely [with malicious intent], to see if He would [actually] heal [someone] on the Sabbath, so that they might find *a reason* to accuse Him.

⁸But He was aware of their thoughts, and He said to the man with the withered hand, “Get up and come forward.” So he got up and stood *there*.

⁹Then Jesus said to them, “I ask you directly: Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath or to do evil, to save a life or to destroy it?”

¹⁰After looking around at them all, He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand!” And he did, and his hand was [fully] restored.

¹¹But the scribes and Pharisees were filled with senseless rage [and lacked spiritual insight], and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

¹²Now at this time Jesus went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.

¹³When day came, He called His disciples and selected twelve of them, whom He also named apostles (special messengers, personally chosen representatives): [Matt 10:2–4; Mark 3:16–19]

¹⁴Simon, whom He also named Peter, and his brother Andrew; and [the brothers] James and John; and Philip, and Bartholomew [also called Nathanael];

¹⁵and Matthew (Levi, the tax collector) and Thomas; and James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot;

¹⁶Judas [also called Thaddaeus] *the son* of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor [to the Lord].

¹⁷Then Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place; and *there was* a large crowd of His disciples, and a vast multitude of people from all over Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon, ¹⁸who had come to listen to Him and to be healed of their diseases. Even those who were troubled by unclean spirits (demons) were being healed.

¹⁹All the people were trying to touch Him, because [healing] power was coming from Him and healing them all.

²⁰And looking toward His disciples, He began speaking: “Blessed [spiritually prosperous, happy, to be admired] are you *who are* poor [in spirit, those devoid of spiritual arrogance, those who regard themselves as insignificant], for the kingdom

of God is yours [both now and forever]. [Matt 5:3–12]

²¹“Blessed [joyful, nourished by God’s goodness] are you who hunger now [for righteousness, actively seeking right standing with God], for you will be [completely] satisfied. Blessed [forgiven, refreshed by God’s grace] are you who weep now [over your sins and repent], for you will laugh [when the burden of sin is lifted].

²²“Blessed [morally courageous and spiritually alive with life-joy in God’s goodness] are you when people hate you, and exclude you [from their fellowship], and insult you, and scorn your name as evil because of [your association with] the Son of Man.

²³“Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for your reward in heaven is great [absolutely inexhaustible]; for their fathers used to treat the prophets in the same way.

²⁴“But woe (judgment is coming) to you who are rich [and place your faith in possessions while remaining spiritually impoverished], for you are [already] receiving your comfort in full [and there is nothing left to be awarded to you].

²⁵“Woe to you who are well-fed (gorged, satiated) now, for you will be hungry. Woe *to you* who laugh now [enjoying a life of self-indulgence], for you will mourn and weep [and deeply long for God].

²⁶“Woe *to you* when all the people speak well of you *and* praise you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.

²⁷“But I say to you who hear [Me and pay attention to My words]: Love [that is, unselfishly seek the best or higher good for] your enemies, [make it a practice to] do good to those who

hate you, ²⁸ *ble*ss *and* show kindness to those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

²⁹“Whoever strikes you on the cheek, offer him the other one also [simply ignore insignificant insults or losses and do not bother to retaliate—maintain your dignity]. Whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. [Matt 5:39–42]

³⁰“Give to everyone who asks of you. Whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back.

³¹“Treat others the same way you want them to treat you.

³²“If you [only] love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.

³³“If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.

³⁴“If you lend [money] to those from whom you expect to receive [it back], what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners expecting to receive back the same *amount*.

³⁵“But love [that is, unselfishly seek the best or higher good for] your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; for your reward will be great (rich, abundant), and you will be sons of the Most High; because He Himself is kind *and* gracious *and* good to the ungrateful and the wicked.

³⁶“Be merciful (responsive, compassionate, tender) just as your [heavenly] Father is merciful.

³⁷“Do not judge [others self-righteously], and you will not be judged; do not condemn [others when you are guilty and unrepentant], and you will not be condemned [for your hypocrisy]; pardon [others when they truly repent and change], and you will be pardoned [when you truly repent and

change]. [Matt 7:1–5]

³⁸“Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over [with no space left for more]. For with the standard of measurement you use [when you do good to others], it will be measured to you in return.”

POWERPOINT

Loving people unconditionally is the greatest gift we can give to them (and ourselves). I have learned that one of the secrets to my own personal peace is to let people be who God made them to be rather than try to make people be who I would like them to be. I do my best to enjoy their strengths and to be merciful toward their weaknesses because I have plenty of my own. Jesus said, “Be merciful (responsive, compassionate, tender) just as your [heavenly] Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36). Make a decision not to look at—or for—flaws in others. We all have them, but we don’t have to focus on them.



³⁹He also told them a parable: “Can a blind man guide [another] blind man? Will they not both fall into a hole in the ground?

⁴⁰“A student is not superior to his teacher; but everyone, after he has been completely trained, will be like his teacher.

⁴¹“Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice *or* consider the log that is in your own eye?

⁴²“How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, allow me to take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite (play actor, pretender), first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye.

⁴³“For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. [Matt 7:16, 18]

⁴⁴“For each tree is known *and* identified by its own fruit. For figs are not picked from thorn bushes, nor is a cluster of grapes picked from a briar bush.

⁴⁵“The [intrinsically] good man produces what is good *and* honorable *and* moral out of the good treasure [stored] in his heart; and the [intrinsically] evil *man* produces what is wicked *and* depraved out of the evil [in his heart]; for his mouth speaks from the overflow of his heart.

⁴⁶“Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not practice what I tell you?

⁴⁷“Everyone who comes to Me and listens to My words and obeys them, I will show you whom he is like: [Matt 7:24–

27]

⁴⁸he is like a [far-sighted, practical, and sensible] man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and yet could not shake it, because it had been securely built *and* founded on the rock.

⁴⁹“But the one who has [merely] heard and has not practiced [what I say], is like a [foolish] man who built a house on the ground without *any* foundation, and the torrent burst against it; and it immediately collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great.”

7 AFTER HE had finished all that He had to say in the hearing of the people, He went to Capernaum. [Matt 8:5–13]

²Now a [Roman] centurion’s slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and on the verge of death.

³When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to Him, asking Him to come and save the life of his slave.

⁴When they reached Jesus, they pleaded with Him earnestly [to come], saying, “He is worthy for You to do this for him,

⁵because he loves our nation and he built us our synagogue [at his own expense].”

⁶And Jesus went with them. But when He was near the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying, “Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Generosity Leads to Blessings

While we can never out-give God, one key to living a victorious life is to learn to be generous. The more generous you become as God leads you to give and share with others, the more you will be blessed. If you are a generous person, you will not end up with less; you will actually prosper in all you do.

Generosity is not only giving of ourselves and our resources. It also involves our attitude toward others. Generous-spirited people will be patient with the weaknesses of others, quick to forgive, and slow to become angry. They always believe the best about others. They listen when others are hurting and attempt to provide comfort—or just show concern. They are also encouragers of others, building up and edifying people. They celebrate what others do well and often don't even mention what they do wrong.

God expects us to give away what He gives us. This is a spiritual law and is the way to keep a steady flow of whatever we need coming into our lives. God first gives to us, and Jesus says we are to give and it will be given to us in overflowing abundance (see Luke 6:38).

In whatever ways you express generosity, I encourage you to do so every time you have a chance.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Receive God's Love, Produce Good Fruit

When you become a student of God's Word, you begin to desire a change in your behavior. But so often, as soon as you deal with one bad behavior, another immediately pops up to replace it. Why? Because bad fruit comes from a bad root (see Luke 6:45). For example, as long as we feel bad about ourselves, we will produce bad fruit of some kind. It might be anger, insecurity, fear, or indecision, and it will show up in our behavior if we do not deal with the root of the problem. No matter how good things look outwardly, if our heart is not right, sooner or later what is not right on the inside will reveal itself on the outside.

Receive God's unconditional love, learn to love and value yourself, live by God's Word, and you will begin to produce better fruit in your life.

⁷“Therefore I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You. But just speak a word, and my slave will be healed.

⁸“For I also am a man subject to authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

⁹Now when Jesus heard this, He was amazed at him, and turned and said to the crowd that was following Him, “I say to

you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith [as this man's].”

¹⁰When the messengers who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

¹¹Soon afterward Jesus went to a city called Nain [near Nazareth], and His disciples and a large crowd accompanied Him.

¹²Now as He approached the city gate, a dead man was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her [in the funeral procession].

¹³When the Lord saw her, He felt [great] compassion for her, and said to her, “Do not weep.”

¹⁴And He came up and touched the bier [on which the body rested], and the pallbearers stood still. And He said, “Young man, I say to you, arise [from death]!”

¹⁵The man who was dead sat up and began to speak. And *Jesus* gave him back to his mother.

¹⁶Fear *and* profound awe gripped them all, and they *began* glorifying *and* honoring *and* praising God, saying, “A great prophet has arisen among us!” and, “God has visited His people [to help and care for and provide for them]!”

¹⁷This news about Him spread through all of Judea and in all the surrounding countryside. [1 Kin 17:17–24; 2 Kin 4:32–37]

¹⁸John’s disciples brought word to him [in prison] of all these things. [Matt 11:2–19]

¹⁹John called two of his disciples and sent them to the Lord, saying, “Are You the Expected One (the Messiah), or should we look for someone else?”

²⁰So the men came to Jesus and said, “John the Baptist sent us to You to ask, ‘Are You the Expected One (the Messiah), or should we look for someone else?’”

²¹At that very hour Jesus healed many *people* of sicknesses and infirmities and evil spirits; and He gave [the gracious gift of] sight to many *who were* blind.

²²So He replied to them, “Go and tell John about everything you have seen and heard: the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the POOR HAVE THE GOOD NEWS (gospel) PREACHED TO THEM. [Is 29:18, 19; 35:5, 6; 61:1]

²³“Blessed [joyful, spiritually favored] is he who does not take offense at Me.”

²⁴When John’s messengers left, Jesus began speaking to the crowds about John: “What did you go out to the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?

²⁵“But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing [entirely unsuited for the harsh wilderness]? Those who wear splendid clothing and live in luxury are in royal palaces!

²⁶“But what did you [really] go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and one far more [eminent and remarkable] than a prophet [who foretells the future].

²⁷“This is the one of whom it is written [by the prophet Malachi],

‘BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.’ [Mal 3:1]

²⁸“I tell you, among those born of women there is no one

greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater [in privilege] than he.”

²⁹All the people and the tax collectors who heard Jesus, acknowledged [the validity of] God’s justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John.

³⁰But the Pharisees and the lawyers [who were experts in the Mosaic Law] annulled *and* set aside God’s purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John.

³¹“To what then shall I compare the people of this generation [who set aside God’s plan], and what are they like?

³²“They are like children sitting in the market place and calling to one another, and saying, ‘We played the flute for you [pretending to be at a wedding], and you did not dance; we sang a dirge [pretending to be at a funeral], and you did not weep [so nothing we did appealed to you].’

³³“For John the Baptist has come neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon!’

Speak God's Word

*I will always seek to be wise.
Wisdom is shown to be right
by her children—by the
lifestyle, moral character, and
good deeds of her followers.*

| adapted from LUKE 7:35 |

³⁴“The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look, a man who is a glutton and a [heavy] wine-drinker, a friend of tax collectors and sinners [including non-observant Jews].’

³⁵“Yet wisdom is vindicated *and* shown to be right by all her children [by the lifestyle, moral character, and good deeds of her followers].”

³⁶One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and He went into the Pharisee’s house [in the region of Galilee] and reclined *at the table*.

³⁷Now there was a woman in the city who was [known as] a sinner; and when she found out that He was reclining *at the table* in the Pharisee’s house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume; ³⁸and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began wetting His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and [respectfully] kissed His feet [as an act

signifying both affection and submission] and anointed them with the perfume.

³⁹Now when [Simon] the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, “If this Man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of woman this is who is touching Him, that she is a [notorious] sinner [an outcast, devoted to sin].”

⁴⁰Jesus, answering, said to the Pharisee, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he replied, “Teacher, say it.”

⁴¹“A certain moneylender had two debtors: one owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.

⁴²“When they had no means of repaying [the debts], he freely forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?”

⁴³Simon answered, “The one, I take it, for whom he forgave more.” Jesus said to him, “You have decided correctly.”

⁴⁴Then turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house [but you failed to extend to Me the usual courtesies shown to a guest]; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair [demonstrating her love].

⁴⁵“You gave Me no [welcoming] kiss, but from the moment I came in, she has not ceased to kiss My feet.

⁴⁶“You did not [even] anoint My head with [ordinary] oil, but she has anointed My feet with [costly and rare] perfume.

⁴⁷“Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.”

⁴⁸Then He said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

⁴⁹Those who were reclining *at the table* with Him began

saying among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”

⁵⁰Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith [in Me] has saved you; go in peace [free from the distress experienced because of sin].”

8 SOON AFTERWARD, Jesus *began* going around from one city and village to another, preaching and proclaiming *the good news* of the kingdom of God. The twelve [disciples] were with Him, ²and *also* some women who had been healed of evil spirits and diseases: Mary, called Magdalene [from the city of Magdala in Galilee], from whom seven demons had come out, ³and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod’s household steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means [as was the custom for a rabbi’s disciples].

⁴When a large crowd was gathering together, and people from city after city were coming to Him, He spoke [to them] using a parable: [Matt 13:2–9; Mark 4:1–9]

⁵“The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road and it was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the sky ate it up.

⁶“And some *seed* fell on [shallow soil covering] the rocks, and as soon as it sprouted, it withered away, because it had no moisture.

⁷“Other *seed* fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out.

⁸“And some fell into good soil, and grew up and produced

a crop a hundred times as great.” As He said these things, He called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear *and* heed My words.”

⁹Now His disciples *began* asking Him what this parable meant.

¹⁰And He said, “To you [who have been chosen] it has been granted to know *and* recognize the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, so that *though* SEEING THEY MAY NOT SEE, AND HEARING THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND. [Is 6:9, 10; Jer 5:21; Ezek 12:2]

¹¹“Now [the meaning of] the parable is this: The seed is the word of God [concerning eternal salvation].

¹²“Those beside the road are the people who have heard; then the devil comes and takes the message [of God] away from their hearts, so that they will not believe [in Me as the Messiah] and be saved.

¹³“Those on the rocky *soil are* the people who, when they hear, receive *and* welcome the word with joy; but these have no *firmly grounded* root. They believe for a while, and in time of trial *and* temptation they fall away [from Me and abandon their faith].

¹⁴“The *seed* which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, but as they go on their way they are suffocated with the anxieties and riches and pleasures of this life, and they bring no fruit to maturity.

¹⁵“But as for that *seed* in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word with a good and noble heart, and hold on to it tightly, and bear fruit with patience.

¹⁶“Now no one lights a lamp and then covers it with a

container [to hide it], or puts it under a bed; instead, he puts it on a lampstand, so that those who come in may see the light. [Matt 5:15; Mark 4:21; Luke 11:33]

¹⁷“For there is nothing hidden that will not become evident, nor *anything* secret that will not be known and come out into the open.

¹⁸“So be careful how you listen; for whoever has [a teachable heart], to him *more* [understanding] will be given; and whoever does not have [a longing for truth], even what he thinks he has will be taken away from him.” [Matt 13:12; 25:29; Mark 4:25]

¹⁹Then Jesus’ mother and His brothers came up toward Him, but they could not reach Him because of the crowd. [Matt 12:46–50; Mark 3:31–35]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Prayer and Faith

If you or I drank some kind of poison, we would also have to swallow an antidote or the poison would cause serious damage or even death. The same is true of the deadly toxin of fear. There must be an antidote for it, and the antidote for fear is faith.

When fear comes knocking at our door, as it did for the disciples when it appeared their boat was about to be swamped by raging, violent waves, we can answer that fear with faith, as Jesus did, because nothing else is effective against it (see Luke 8:22–25). And prayer is the major vehicle that carries and releases faith.

As believers, we can always choose faith and release it in some way. It is possible to pray without faith (we do it all the time), but it is impossible to have real faith and not pray.

James tells us that when we find ourselves in need of something, we should pray and ask God for it, and resist the temptation to doubt (see James 1:5–7).

Fear comes to us all; we can answer with faith and be victorious every time.

²⁰And He was told, “Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, asking to see You.”

²¹But He answered, “My mother and My brothers are these who listen to the word of God and do it!”

²²Now on one of *those* days Jesus and His disciples got into a boat, and He said to them, “Let us cross over to the other side of the lake (Sea of Galilee).” So they set out. [Matt 8:23–27; Mark 4:36–41]

²³But as they were sailing, He fell asleep. And a fierce gale of wind swept down [as if through a wind tunnel] on the lake, and they *began* to be swamped, and were in great danger.

²⁴They came to Jesus and woke Him, saying, “Master, Master, we are about to die!” He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging, violent waves, and they ceased, and it became calm [a perfect peacefulness].

²⁵And He said to them, “Where is your faith [your confidence in Me]?” They were afraid and astonished, saying to one another, “Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the sea, and they obey Him?”

²⁶Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is east of Galilee. [Matt 8:28–34; Mark 5:1–17]

²⁷Now when Jesus stepped out on land, He was met by a man from the city [of Gerasa] who was possessed with demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and was not living in a house, but among the tombs.

²⁸Seeing Jesus, he cried out [with a terrible voice from the depths of his throat] and fell down before Him [in dread and terror], and shouted loudly, “What business do we have [in common] with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me [before the appointed time of judgment]!”

²⁹Now He was [already] commanding the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had seized him [violently] many times; and he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.

³⁰Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” And he answered, “Legion”; because many demons had entered him.

³¹They *continually* begged Him not to command them to go into the abyss. [Rev 9:1]

³²Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the mountain. *The demons* begged Jesus to allow them to enter the pigs, and He gave them permission.

³³Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

³⁴When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they ran away and told it in the city and out in the country.

³⁵*And people* came out to see what had happened. They came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus’ feet, clothed and in his right mind (mentally healthy); and they were frightened.

³⁶Those who had seen it told them how the man who had been demon-possessed had been healed.

³⁷Then all the people of the country of the Gerasenes and the surrounding district asked Him to leave them, because they were overwhelmed with fear. So Jesus got into the boat and returned [to the west side of the Sea of Galilee].

³⁸But the man from whom the demons had gone out kept begging Him, pleading to go with Him; but Jesus sent him

away, saying,

³⁹“Return home and tell [about] all the great things God has done for you.” So the man went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

⁴⁰Now as Jesus was returning [to Galilee], the people welcomed Him, for they had all been expecting Him.

⁴¹Now a man named Jairus, a synagogue official, came [to Him]; and he fell at Jesus’ feet and *began* begging Him to come to his house; [Matt 9:18–26; Mark 5:22–43]

⁴²for he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, and she was dying. But as Jesus went, the people were crowding against Him [almost crushing Him].

⁴³And a woman who had [suffered from] a hemorrhage for twelve years [and had spent all her money on physicians], and could not be healed by anyone, ⁴⁴came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His outer robe, and immediately her bleeding stopped.

⁴⁵Jesus said, “Who touched Me?” While they all were denying it, Peter [and those who were with him] said, “Master, the people are crowding and pushing against You!”

⁴⁶But Jesus said, “Someone did touch Me, because I was aware that power [to heal] had gone out of Me.”

⁴⁷When the woman saw that she had not escaped notice, she came up trembling and fell down before Him. She declared in the presence of all the people the reason why she had touched Him, and how she had been immediately healed.

⁴⁸He said to her, “Daughter, your faith [your personal trust and confidence in Me] has made you well. Go in peace

(untroubled, undisturbed well-being).”

⁴⁹While He was still speaking, someone from the synagogue official’s house came and said [to Jairus], “Your daughter is dead; do not inconvenience the Teacher any further.”

⁵⁰But Jesus, hearing this, answered him, “Do not be afraid *any longer*; only believe *and* trust [in Me and have faith in My ability to do this], and she will be made well.”

⁵¹When He came to the house, He allowed no one to enter with Him, except Peter and John and James, and the girl’s father and mother.

⁵²Now they were all weeping loudly and mourning for her; but He said, “Do not weep, for she is not dead, but is sleeping.”

⁵³Then they *began* laughing scornfully at Him *and* ridiculing Him, knowing [without any doubt] that she was dead.

⁵⁴But Jesus took hold of her hand and spoke, saying, “Child, arise!”

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Lord, thank You that I do not have to be afraid any longer; that I only have to believe and trust in You and have faith in Your ability to do everything that needs to be done in my life.

• adapted from Luke 8:50

⁵⁵ And her spirit returned, and she got up immediately; and He ordered that she be given *something* to eat.

⁵⁶ Her parents were greatly astonished [by the miracle]; but He instructed them to tell no one what had happened.

9 NOW JESUS called together the twelve [disciples] and gave them [the right to exercise] power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases.

² Then He sent them out [on a brief journey] to preach the kingdom of God and to perform healing. [Matt 10:5]

³ And He said to them, “Take nothing for *your* journey [that might encumber you]—neither a walking stick, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not *even* have two tunics apiece.

⁴ “Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city [to go to another].

⁵ “And as for all those who do not welcome you, when you leave that city, shake the dust off your feet [breaking all ties with them] as a testimony against them [that they rejected My

message].”

⁶So they *began* going from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing *the sick* everywhere.

⁷Now Herod [Antipas] the tetrarch [who governed a portion of Palestine including Galilee and Perea] heard about all that was being done [by Jesus], and he was thoroughly perplexed, because it was said by some that John [the Baptist whom he had ordered beheaded] had been raised from the dead, [Matt 14:1, 2]

⁸and by others that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the [other] prophets of old had been resurrected.

⁹Herod said, “I personally had John beheaded. Who is this man about whom I hear such things?” And he kept trying to see Jesus.

¹⁰When the apostles returned, they told Him all that they had done. He took them with Him and He privately withdrew [across the Jordan] to a city called Bethsaida. [Matt 14:13–21; Mark 6:32–44; John 6:5–13]

¹¹But when the crowds learned of it, they followed Him; and He welcomed them and He *began* talking to them about the kingdom of God, and healing those who needed to be healed.

¹²Now the day was ending, and the twelve [disciples] came and said to Him, “Send the crowd away, so that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside and find lodging, and get provisions; because here we are in an isolated place.”

¹³But He said to them, “You give them *something* to eat.” They said, “We have no more than five loaves and two fish—unless perhaps we go and buy food for all these people.” [2

Kin 4:42–44]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Focus on What You Do Have

In Luke 9, when the disciples tell Jesus that it is getting late and He should send the people away to get themselves something to eat, Jesus instructs His disciples to feed the people (see vv. 12–13). The disciples respond by saying they have no more than five loaves and two fish and cannot feed five thousand men. Because they felt they couldn't meet the entire need, they were choosing to do nothing. But Jesus takes what they do have and multiplies it to satisfy the entire crowd with plenty of leftovers (see vv. 16–17).

Instead of focusing on what you can't do, or what you don't have, or what you've lost, take an inventory of what you do have. When you give God the little bit you have, He will do the multiplying and you will end up with more left over than what you started with. Needs will be met, and you will be blessed!

¹⁴(For there were about 5,000 men.) And He said to His disciples, "Have them sit down *to eat* in groups of about fifty each."

¹⁵They did so, and had them all sit down.

¹⁶Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and He looked up to heaven [and gave thanks] and blessed them, and broke *them* and kept giving *them* to the disciples to set before

the crowd.

¹⁷They all ate and were [completely] satisfied; and the broken pieces which they had left over were [abundant and were] picked up—twelve baskets full.

¹⁸Now it happened that as Jesus was praying privately, the disciples were with Him, and He asked them, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” [Matt 16:13–16; Mark 8:27–29]

¹⁹They answered, “John the Baptist, and some say, Elijah; but others, that one of the ancient prophets has come back to life.”

²⁰And He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter replied, “The Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed) of God!”

²¹But He strictly warned and admonished them not to tell this to anyone,

²²saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected [as the Messiah] by the elders and chief priests and scribes (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court), and be put to death, and on the third day be raised up [from death to life].” [Matt 16:21–28; Mark 8:31–9:1]

²³And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to follow Me [as My disciple], he must deny himself [set aside selfish interests], and take up his cross daily [expressing a willingness to endure whatever may come] and follow Me [believing in Me, conforming to My example in living and, if need be, suffering or perhaps dying because of faith in Me].

²⁴“For whoever wishes to save his life [in this world] will [eventually] lose it [through death], but whoever loses his life [in this world] for My sake, he is the one who will save it [from the consequences of sin and separation from God].

²⁵“For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world [wealth, fame, success], and loses or forfeits himself?

²⁶“For whoever is ashamed [here and now] of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory and *the glory* of the [heavenly] Father and of the holy angels.

²⁷“But I tell you truthfully, there are some among those standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.”

²⁸Now about eight days after these teachings, He took along Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. [Matt 17:1–8; Mark 9:2–8]

²⁹As He was praying, the appearance of His face became different [actually transformed], and His clothing *became* white and flashing with the brilliance of lightning.

³⁰And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah,

³¹who appeared in glory, and were speaking of His departure [from earthly life], which He was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.

³²Now Peter and those who were with him had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory *and* splendor *and* majesty, and the two men who were standing with Him.

³³And as these [men, Moses and Elijah] were leaving Him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is delightful *and* good for us to be here; we should make three [sacred] tents; one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—not realizing what he was saying.

³⁴But even as he was saying this, a cloud formed and *began* to overshadow them; and they were [greatly] afraid as they entered the cloud.

³⁵Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, My Chosen One; listen *and* obey *and* yield to Him!”

³⁶When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found *there* alone. And they kept silent, and told no one at that time any of the things which they had seen [concerning the divine manifestation]. [2 Pet 1:16–19]

³⁷On the next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met Him. [Matt 17:14–18; Mark 9:14–27]

³⁸And a man from the crowd shouted for help, “Teacher, I beg You to look at my son, because he is my only child;

³⁹and a spirit seizes him, and suddenly he cries out, and it throws him into a convulsion so that he foams *at the mouth*; and only with [great] difficulty does it leave him, mauling *and* bruising him *as it leaves*.

⁴⁰“I begged Your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.”

⁴¹Jesus answered, “You unbelieving and perverted generation! How long shall I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here [to Me].”

⁴²Even while the boy was coming, the demon slammed him down and threw him into a [violent] convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy and gave him back to his father.

⁴³They were all amazed [practically overwhelmed] at the

[evidence of the] greatness of God *and* His majesty *and* His wondrous work. [Mark 9:30–32]

But while they were still awed by everything Jesus was doing, He said to His disciples,

⁴⁴“Let these words sink into your ears: the Son of Man is going to be betrayed *and* handed over to men [who are His enemies].”

⁴⁵However, they did not understand this statement. Its meaning was kept hidden from them so that they would not grasp it; and they were afraid to ask Him about it.

⁴⁶An argument started among them as to which of them might be the greatest [surpassing the others in esteem and authority]. [Matt 18:1–5; Mark 9:33–37]

⁴⁷But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and had him stand beside Him,

⁴⁸and He told them, “Whoever welcomes this child in My name welcomes Me; and whoever welcomes Me [also] welcomes Him who sent Me; for the one who is least among all of you [that is, the one who is genuinely humble—the one with a realistic self-view]—he is the one who is [truly] great.”

⁴⁹John replied, “Master, we saw someone driving out demons in Your name; and we tried to stop him because he does not follow along with us.” [Mark 9:38–40]

⁵⁰But Jesus told him, “Do not stop *him*; for he who is not against you is for you.” [Matt 12:30]

⁵¹Now when the time was approaching for Him to be taken up [to heaven], He was determined to go to Jerusalem [to fulfill His purpose].

⁵²He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went into

a Samaritan village to make arrangements for Him;

⁵³but the people would not welcome Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem.

⁵⁴When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and destroy them?” [2 Kin 1:9–16]

⁵⁵But He turned and rebuked them [and He said, “You do not know what kind of spirit you are;

⁵⁶for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.”] And they journeyed on to another village.

⁵⁷As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, “I will follow You wherever You go.” [Matt 8:19–22]

⁵⁸And Jesus told him, “Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head.”

⁵⁹He said to another, “Follow Me [accepting Me as Master and Teacher].” But he said, “Lord, allow me first to go and bury my father.” [Matt 8:21, 22]

⁶⁰But He said to him, “Allow the [spiritually] dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and spread the news about the kingdom of God.”

⁶¹Another also said, “I will follow You, Lord [as Your disciple]; but first let me say goodbye to those at my home.”

⁶²But Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back [to the things left behind] is fit for the kingdom of God.”

10 NOW AFTER this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them out ahead of Him, two by two, into every city and place where He was about to go.

²He was saying to them, “The harvest is abundant [for there are many who need to hear the good news about salvation], but the workers [those available to proclaim the message of salvation] are few. Therefore, [prayerfully] ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.

³“Go your way; listen carefully: I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.

⁴“Do not carry a money belt, a provision bag, or [extra] sandals; and do not greet anyone along the way [who would delay you].

Speak God's Word

When I go someplace and the people do not welcome me, I don't let it get me down. I just shake it off and go on about my business.

| adapted from LUKE 10:10–11 |

⁵“Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace [that is, a blessing of well-being and prosperity, the favor of God] to this house.’

⁶“And if anyone of peace is there [someone who is sweet-spirited and hospitable], your [blessing of] peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you.

⁷“Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not move from house to house. [Deut 24:15]

⁸“Whenever you go into a city and they welcome you, eat what is set before you;

⁹and heal those in it who are sick [authenticating your message], and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’

¹⁰“But whatever city you enter and they do not welcome

you, go out into its streets and say,

¹¹“Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet we wipe off *in protest* against you [breaking all ties]; yet understand this, that the kingdom of God has come near [and you rejected it].”

¹²“I tell you, it will be more bearable in that day [of judgment] for Sodom than for that city. [Gen 19:24–28]

¹³“Woe (judgment is coming) to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented *and* changed their minds long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes [to show deep regret for sin].

¹⁴“However, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you.

¹⁵“And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades (the realm of the dead).

¹⁶“The one who listens to you listens to Me; and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and the one who rejects Me rejects Him [My heavenly Father] who sent Me.”

¹⁷The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.”

¹⁸He said to them, “I watched Satan fall from heaven like [a flash of] lightning.

¹⁹“Listen carefully: I have given you authority [that you now possess] to tread on serpents and scorpions, and [the ability to exercise authority] over all the power of the enemy (Satan); and nothing will [in any way] harm you.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Power over Negative Thinking

This is typically how your mind, mouth, moods, and attitudes are connected: When you have a negative circumstance, you create a negative thought about it. Then you speak negative words about the circumstance, and your mood begins to sink, which leads to a bad attitude; and you end up with more negative circumstances than you started with.

You can break this cycle in your life. Luke 10:19 says we have been given authority to “tread on serpents and scorpions, and [the ability to exercise authority] over all the power of the enemy (Satan).” To tread means “to walk all over, to take steps, to take action, to resist.” You have the power to do these things. When you have a problem, nothing negative will fix it. Keep your mind, mouth, moods, and attitudes positive, and watch God work miracles on your behalf.

²⁰“Nevertheless do not rejoice at this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.” [Ex 32:32; Ps 69:28; Dan 12:1; Rev 3:5]

²¹In that very hour He was overjoyed *and* rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and He said, “I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things [relating to salvation] from the wise and intelligent, and have revealed them to infants [the childlike and untaught]. Yes, Father, for

this way was [Your gracious will and choice, and was] well-pleasing in Your sight.

²²“All things have been transferred *and* turned over to Me by My Father and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal Him.”

²³Then turning to His disciples, Jesus said privately, “Blessed [joyful, spiritually enlightened, and favored by God] are the eyes which see what you see, [Matt 13:16, 17]

²⁴for I say to you that many prophets and kings longed to see what you see, and they did not see it; and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”

²⁵And a certain lawyer [an expert in Mosaic Law] stood up to test Him, saying, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” [Matt 22:34–40; Mark 12:28–31]

²⁶Jesus said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?”

²⁷And he replied, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.” [Lev 19:18; Deut 6:5]

²⁸Jesus said to him, “You have answered correctly; DO THIS *habitually* AND YOU WILL LIVE.” [Lev 18:5; Ezek 20:11; Matt 19:17]

²⁹But he, wishing to justify *and* vindicate himself, asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

³⁰Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he encountered robbers, who stripped him of his clothes [and belongings], beat him, and went their way

[unconcerned], leaving him half dead.

³¹“Now by coincidence a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Give Yourself to the One Thing

When the term multitasking first became popular, everyone seemed to want to do it; and soon thereafter, many job descriptions began including such phrases as “must be able to multitask.” While there are certainly times a person needs to be able to handle more than one thing at a time, I’m not sure multitasking serves us well in everyday life, and I don’t think it should become the normal way to live. I think trying to do too many things at once creates stress and prevents us from enjoying life.

When Martha got “very busy and distracted with all her serving responsibilities,” our Lord reminded her that “only one thing” was necessary at that moment (Luke 10:40–42). I challenge you to stop trying to multitask excessively and learn to give yourself to the one thing you are doing at that moment. This kind of concentration requires discipline, but it’s worth it because being able to focus helps you enjoy the present moment (see Eccl. 5:1).

³²“Likewise a Levite also came down to the place and saw him, and passed by on the other side [of the road].

³³“But a Samaritan (foreigner), who was traveling, came upon him; and when he saw him, he was deeply moved with compassion [for him],

³⁴and went to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on *them* [to sooth and disinfect the injuries]; and he put him on his own pack-animal, and brought him to an inn and took care of him.

³⁵“On the next day he took out two denarii (two days’ wages) and gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I return.’”

³⁶“Which of these three do you think proved himself a neighbor to the man who encountered the robbers?”

³⁷He answered, “The one who showed compassion *and* mercy to him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and *constantly* do the same.”

³⁸Now while they were on their way, Jesus entered a village [called Bethany], and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. [John 11:1]

³⁹She had a sister named Mary, who seated herself at the Lord’s feet and was *continually* listening to His teaching.

⁴⁰But Martha was very busy *and* distracted with all of her serving responsibilities; and she approached Him and said, “Lord, is it of no concern to You that my sister has left me to do the serving alone? Tell her to help me *and* do her part.”

⁴¹But the Lord replied to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered *and* anxious about so many things;

POWERPOINT

We can learn to be like Mary who, in the midst of the many things that were taking place, was able to focus on what was important at the moment and listen to the voice of the Master.



⁴²but *only* one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part [that which is to her advantage], which will not be taken away from her.”

11 IT HAPPENED that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples.”

²He said to them,

“When you pray, say:

‘Father, hallowed be Your name.

Your kingdom come.

³‘Give us each day our daily bread.

⁴‘And forgive us our sins,

For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us [who has offended or wronged us].

And lead us not into temptation [but rescue us from evil].”

⁵Then He said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves [of bread]; ⁶for a friend of mine who is on a journey has just come to *visit* me, and I have nothing to serve him’;

⁷and from inside he answers, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you *anything*.’

⁸“I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him *anything just* because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence *and* boldness he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

⁹“So I say to you, ask *and* keep on asking, and it will be given to you; seek *and* keep on seeking, and you will find; knock *and* keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. [Matt 7:7–11]

¹⁰“For everyone who keeps on asking [persistently], receives; and he who keeps on seeking [persistently], finds; and to him who keeps on knocking [persistently], the door will be opened.

¹¹“What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead of a fish?

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Knowing God as Father

For many years I prayed the “Lord’s Prayer,” but I did not know God as my Father. I did not have a close personal relationship with Him. When I referred to Him as “Father,” I was simply repeating a word I had learned to use when praying.

If you want to be effective in your prayer life, it’s important to know God as your Father. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, He taught them what we refer to as the “Lord’s Prayer,” which is a spiritual treasure house of principles for prayer. Foremost, Jesus started out by instructing them to say, “Father; hallowed be Your name” (Luke 11:2).

Jesus was teaching them the importance of seeing the precious and privileged relationship He came to bring to every believer. He told them that having a relationship with God as their Father was important in order to pray properly. He is teaching us to develop a trusting, loving, Father-child relationship with Him and to not go to God as if we are afraid of Him or as though He might be angry with us for some reason. This intimate relationship will give you the liberty to ask Him for things you would not have asked for otherwise.

Our heavenly Father longs to give good gifts to His children. When you pray, remember you have a loving Father Who is

¹²“Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?

¹³“If you, then, being evil [that is, sinful by nature], know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask *and* continue to ask Him!”

¹⁴And [at another time] Jesus was casting out a demon, and it was [controlling a man so as to make him] mute; when the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke. And the crowds were awed. [Matt 12:22–24]

¹⁵But some of them said, “He drives out demons by [the power of] Beelzebul (Satan), the ruler of the demons.”

¹⁶Others, trying to test Him, were demanding of Him a sign from heaven.

¹⁷But He, *well* aware of their thoughts *and* purpose, said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is doomed to destruction; and a house *divided* against itself falls.

¹⁸“If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand *and* continue to survive? For you are saying that I drive out demons by [the power of] Beelzebul.

¹⁹“Now if I drive out the demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons [the Jewish exorcists] drive them out? For this reason they will be your judges.

²⁰“But if I drive out the demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has already come upon you.

²¹“When the strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his belongings are undisturbed *and* secure.

22“But when someone stronger than he attacks and overpowers him, he robs him of all his armor on which he had relied and divides his [goods as] spoil.

23“He who is not with Me [believing in Me as Lord and Savior] is against Me [there is no impartial position]; and he who does not gather with Me [assisting in My ministry], scatters.

24“When the unclean spirit comes out of a person, it roams through waterless places in search [of a place] of rest; and not finding any, it says, ‘I will go back to my house (person) from which I came.’

25“And when it comes, it finds the place swept and put in order.

26“Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in [the person] and live there; and the last state of that person becomes worse than the first.”

27Now while Jesus was saying these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, “Blessed (happy, favored by God) is the womb that gave birth to You and the breasts at which You nursed!”

28But He said, “On the contrary, blessed (happy, favored by God) are those who hear the word of God and continually observe it.”

29Now as the crowds were increasing [in number], He began to say, “This [present] generation is a wicked generation; it seeks a sign (attesting miracle), but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah [the prophet]. [Matt 12:39–42]

30“For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of

Nineveh, so will the Son of Man also be [a sign] to this generation. [Jon 3:4–10]

³¹“The Queen of the South (the kingdom of Sheba) will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and look, something greater than Solomon is here. [1 Kin 10:1–13; 2 Chr 9:1–12]

³²“The men of Nineveh will stand up [as witnesses] at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and look, something greater than Jonah is here. [Jon 3:5]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Focusing on Good Brings Victory

Jesus once explained that after an unclean spirit has been cast out of a person, it will eventually return and, if it finds its old home empty, will bring other spirits with it. When that happens, the person's condition becomes worse than it was originally (see Luke 11:24–26). Jesus' purpose in sharing this insight is not to frighten us, but to warn us that getting rid of evil alone is not enough to maintain freedom. We also need to fill our mind and lives with good so that the enemy has no room to get back into our life.

One way to keep the enemy from coming back and planting wrong thoughts in your mind is to keep your mind active and alert and full of right thoughts. After casting out wrong thoughts, you then need to replace them with good ones because empty space is a place the enemy can occupy.

There are aggressive sins (sins of commission) and there are passive sins (sins of omission). That is, there are things we do that are sinful, and we may also sin by not doing right things. James said that if we know to do right and don't do it, it is sin (see James 4:17).

You can enjoy a great life by trusting God and pushing away the thoughts and desires that don't come from Him and replacing them with ones that do.

One of the most effective ways to resist the devil is to fill your

mind and your heart with thanksgiving to God. When you worship and praise God, you slam the door in the enemy's face and post a "No Trespassing" sign.

³³“No one lights a lamp and then puts it in a cellar nor under a basket [hiding the light], but [instead it is put] on the lampstand, so that those who come in may see the light. [Matt 5:15; Mark 4:21; Luke 8:16]

³⁴“The eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is clear [spiritually perceptive, focused on God], your whole body also is full of light [benefiting from God's precepts]. But when it is bad [spiritually blind], your body also is full of darkness [devoid of God's word].

³⁵“Be careful, therefore, that the light that is in you is not darkness.

³⁶“So if your whole body is illuminated, with no dark part, it will be entirely bright [with light], as when the lamp gives you light with its bright rays.”

³⁷Now after Jesus had spoken, a Pharisee asked Him to have lunch with him. He went in [the Pharisee's home] and reclined *at the table* [without ceremonially washing His hands].

³⁸The Pharisee noticed this and was surprised that Jesus did not first ceremonially wash before the meal.

³⁹But the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and plate [as required by tradition]; but inside you are full of greed and wickedness.

⁴⁰“You foolish ones [acting without reflection or intelligence]! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also?

⁴¹“But give that which is within as charity [that is, acts of mercy and compassion, not as a public display, but as an expression of your faithfulness to God], and then indeed all things are clean for you.

⁴²“But woe (judgment is coming) to you Pharisees, because you [self-righteously] tithe mint and rue and every [little] garden herb [tending to all the minutiae], and yet disregard *and* neglect justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done, without neglecting the others. [Lev 27:30; Mic 6:8]

⁴³“Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the best seats in the synagogues and to be respectfully greeted in the market places.

⁴⁴“Woe to you! For you are like graves which are unmarked, and people walk over them without being aware of it [and are ceremonially unclean].”

⁴⁵One of the lawyers [an expert in the Mosaic Law] answered Him, “Teacher, by saying this, You insult us too!”

⁴⁶But He said, “Woe to you lawyers as well, because you weigh men down with burdens [man-made rules, unreasonable requirements] which are hard to bear, and you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers [to lighten the load].

⁴⁷“Woe to you! For you repair *or* build tombs for the prophets, and it was your fathers who killed them.

⁴⁸“So you are witnesses and approve the deeds of your fathers, because they [actually] killed them, and you repair *or* build their tombs.

⁴⁹“For this reason also the wisdom of God said [in the

Scriptures], ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will put to death and some they will persecute,’⁵⁰ so that charges may be brought against this generation [holding them responsible] for the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world,⁵¹ from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah [the priest], who was murdered between the altar and the house *of God*. Yes, I tell you, charges will be brought against this generation.’ [Gen 4:8; 2 Chr 24:20, 21; Zech 1:1; Matt 23:35]

⁵²“Woe to you lawyers, because you have taken away the key to knowledge (scriptural truth). You yourselves did not enter, and you held back those who were entering [by your flawed interpretation of God’s word and your man-made tradition].” [Matt 23:13]

⁵³When He left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile [toward Him] and to interrogate Him on many subjects,⁵⁴ plotting against Him to catch *Him* in something He might say.

12 IN THE meantime, after so many thousands of the people had gathered that they were stepping on one another, Jesus began speaking first *of all* to His disciples, “Be *continually* on your guard against the leaven of the Pharisees [that is, their pervasive, corrupting influence and teaching], which is hypocrisy [producing self-righteousness].

POWERPOINT

What if your mind were a movie screen on which everyone could see what you are thinking? Most of us have thoughts we wouldn't want anyone else to see, and we may find it unsettling to think that Jesus said that everything we've concealed will be revealed (see Luke 12:2). But we can grow to the point where we wouldn't be ashamed for anybody to see what we are thinking. Our thought lives can change little by little as God changes us from one degree of glory to another (see 2 Cor. 3:18). Work with Him to cultivate a thought life you wouldn't be ashamed for anyone to see!



²“But there is nothing [so carefully] concealed that it will not be revealed, nor so hidden that it will not be made known. [Matt 10:26–33; Mark 4:22]

³“For that reason, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be proclaimed on the housetops.

⁴“I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have nothing more that they can do.

⁵“But I will point out to you whom you should fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority *and* power to hurl [you] into hell; yes, I say to you, [stand in great awe of God and] fear Him!

⁶“Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? Yet not one of them has [ever] been forgotten in the presence of God.

⁷“Indeed the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not be afraid; you are far more valuable than many sparrows.

⁸“I say to you, whoever declares openly *and* confesses Me before men [speaking freely of Me as his Lord], the Son of Man also will declare openly *and* confess him [as one of His own] before the angels of God.

⁹“But he who denies Me before men will be denied in the presence of the angels of God.

¹⁰“And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit [that is, whoever intentionally discredits the Holy Spirit by attributing the authenticating miracles done by Me to Satan], it will not be forgiven him [for him there is no forgiveness]. [Matt 12:31; Mark 3:28–30]

¹¹“When they bring you before the synagogues and the

magistrates and the authorities, do not be worried about how you are to defend yourselves or what you are to say; ¹²for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

¹³Someone from the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the *family* inheritance with me.”

¹⁴But He said to him, “Man, who appointed Me a judge or an arbitrator over [the two of] you?”

¹⁵Then He said to them, “Watch out and guard yourselves against every form of greed; for not even when one has an overflowing abundance does his life consist of *nor* is it derived from his possessions.”

¹⁶Then He told them a parable, saying, “There was a rich man whose land was very fertile *and* productive.

¹⁷“And he began thinking to himself, ‘What shall I do, since I have no place [large enough in which] to store my crops?’

¹⁸Then he said, ‘This is what I will do: I will tear down my storehouses and build larger ones, and I will store all my grain and my goods there.

¹⁹‘And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many good things stored up, [enough] for many years; rest *and* relax, eat, drink and be merry (celebrate continually).” ’

²⁰“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This *very* night your soul is required of you; and *now* who will own all the things you have prepared?’ [Job 27:8; Jer 17:11]

²¹“So it is for the one who continues to store up *and* hoard possessions for himself, and is not rich [in his relationship] toward God.”

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Stop Worrying, Start Trusting

Jesus said, “Do not worry about your life” (Luke 12:22), yet still, many Christians worry. You can choose to worry, or you can reject worry and choose to live with joy and peace. Most people think that worrying is beyond their control. It is not. *Worry is a sin against God.* I don’t think anyone ever worries by faith! When we worry, we are indicating that we doubt that God will take care of us or meet our needs, and that if we think about it long enough, perhaps we will find a way to take care of ourselves.

Faith says, “God can do it.” Worry says, “I doubt God will help me, so I better come up with my own answer.”

Jesus did more than teach His disciples not to worry about tomorrow; He lived it out. He said, “Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” (Matt. 8:20). Jesus trusted His Father’s provision for Him even when He didn’t know where He would sleep or what He would eat next.

Jesus taught that we are not to worry about anything in life.

He wasn't indicating that we should never think and plan ahead, but He was clear that we should not be fearful and filled with worry. When we worry and are fearful, we forfeit our peace. Let's not allow fear and worry to hinder God from doing great things in our lives.

I heard about a couple who could not pay their daughter's medical bills. After a lengthy time in prayer, the husband realized the truth and said, "It is really quite simple. I am God's servant. My responsibility is to serve my Master. His responsibility is to take care of me."

The next day, the doctors told them that their daughter was eligible to be part of an experimental surgery and all expenses would be paid. The wife smiled and said, "God is responsible, isn't He?" God does not show partiality. What He does for one, He will do for another (see Rom. 2:11). I encourage you to stop worrying and start trusting in Him.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord God, I know that worry is a sin against You. In the name of Jesus, help me to overcome all anxieties and worry and enable me to trust You to provide for every need I have. Amen.

²²Jesus said to His disciples, “For this reason I tell you, do not worry about your life, as to what you will eat; or about your body, as to what you will wear. [Matt 6:25–33]

²³“For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes.

²⁴“Consider the ravens, for they neither sow [seed] nor reap [the crop]; they have no storehouse or barn, and yet God feeds them. How much more valuable are you than the birds!

²⁵“And which of you by worrying can add one hour to his life’s span?

²⁶“So if you are not even able to do a very little thing [such as that], why are you worried about the rest?

²⁷“Consider the lilies *and* wildflowers, how they grow [in the open field]. They neither labor nor spin [wool to make clothing]; yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory *and* splendor dressed himself like one of these. [1 Kin 10:4–7]

²⁸“But if this is how God clothes the grass which is in the field today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more *will He clothe* you? You of little faith!

²⁹“So as for you, do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink; nor have an anxious *and* unsettled mind.

³⁰For all the [pagan] nations of the world greedily seek these things; and your [heavenly] Father [already] knows that you need them.

POWERPOINT

Someone has defined *worry* as “to torment oneself with disturbing thoughts.” When we have had a bout with worry and an unsettled mind for even a few hours, we can feel exhausted. We need to be wise enough to refuse to torment ourselves with worry, choosing instead to obey Jesus, Who said we are not to have “an anxious *and* unsettled mind” (Luke 12:29). I recently read this statement: “One day of worry is equivalent to one week of work.”



Speak God's Word

I will not be afraid and anxious, for it is the Father's good pleasure to give me the kingdom.

| adapted from LUKE 12:32 |

³¹“But [strive for and actively] seek His kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

³²“Do not be afraid *and* anxious, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

³³“Sell your possessions (show compassion) and give [donations] to the poor. Provide money belts for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing *and* inexhaustible treasure in the heavens, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.

³⁴“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

³⁵“Be dressed and ready for active service, and keep your lamps continuously burning.

³⁶“Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that when he comes and knocks they may immediately open *the door* for him.

³⁷“Blessed (happy, prosperous, to be admired) are those servants whom the master finds awake *and* watching when he

arrives. I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, he will prepare himself *to serve*, and will have them recline *at the table*, and will come and wait on them.

³⁸“Whether he comes in the second watch (before midnight), or even in the third (after midnight), and finds them so [prepared and ready], blessed are those *servants*.”

³⁹“But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time the thief was coming, he [would have been awake and alert, and] would not have allowed his house to be broken into. [Matt 24:43, 44]

⁴⁰“You too, be *continually* ready; because the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.”

⁴¹Peter said, “Lord, are You addressing this parable to us [disciples], or to everyone else as well?”

⁴²The Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and wise steward [of the estate], whom his master will put in charge over his household, to give *his servants* their portion of food at the proper time? [Matt 24:45–51]

⁴³“Blessed (happy, prosperous, to be admired) is that servant whom his master finds so doing when he arrives.

⁴⁴“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

⁴⁵“But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master is taking his time in coming,’ and begins to beat the servants, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk,
⁴⁶the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

⁴⁷“And that servant who knew his master’s will, and yet

did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will be beaten with many lashes [of the whip], ⁴⁸but the one who did not know it and did things worthy of a beating, will receive only a few [lashes]. From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more. [Num 15:29, 30; Deut 25:2, 3]

⁴⁹“I have come to cast fire (judgment) on the earth; and how I wish that it were already kindled!

⁵⁰“I have a baptism [of great suffering] with which to be baptized, and how [greatly] I am distressed until it is accomplished!

⁵¹“Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division [between believers and unbelievers]; [Matt 10:34–36]

⁵²for from now on five in one household will be divided [over Me], three against two and two against three.

⁵³“They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.” [Mic 7:6]

⁵⁴He also said to the crowds, “When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, ‘It is going to rain,’ and that is how it turns out.

⁵⁵“And when [you see that] a south wind is blowing, you say, ‘It will be a hot day,’ and it happens.

⁵⁶“You hypocrites (play-actors, pretenders)! You know how to analyze *and* intelligently interpret the appearance of the earth and sky [to forecast the weather], but why do you not intelligently interpret this present time?

⁵⁷“And why do you not even on your own initiative judge what is right?

⁵⁸“For while you are going with your opponent [at law] to appear before a magistrate, on the way make an effort to settle, so that he does not drag you before the judge, and the judge does not [rule against you and] turn you over to the officer, and the officer does not throw you into prison. [Matt 5:25, 26]

⁵⁹“I say to you, you [absolutely] will not get out of there until you have paid the very last cent.”

13 JUST AT that time some people came who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate [the governor] had mixed with their sacrifices.

²Jesus replied to them, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all *other* Galileans because they have suffered in this way?

³“I tell you, no; but unless you repent [change your old way of thinking, turn from your sinful ways and live changed lives], you will all likewise perish.

⁴“Or do you assume that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed were worse sinners than all the others who live in Jerusalem?

⁵“I tell you, no; but unless you repent [change your old way of thinking, turn from your sinful ways and live changed lives], you will all likewise perish.”

⁶Then He *began* telling them this parable: “A certain man had a fig tree that had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it, but did not find any; ⁷so he said to

the vineyard-keeper, 'For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree and have found none. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground [depleting the soil and blocking the sunlight]?'

⁸"But he replied to him, 'Let it alone, sir, [just] one more year until I dig around it and put in fertilizer;

⁹and if it bears fruit after this, fine; but if not, cut it down.'"

¹⁰Now Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.

¹¹And there was a woman who for eighteen years had had an illness caused by a spirit (demon). She was bent double, and could not straighten up at all.

¹²When Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are released from your illness."

¹³Then He laid His hands on her; and immediately she stood erect again and she *began* glorifying *and* praising God.

¹⁴But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, *began* saying to the crowd in response, "There are six days in which work ought to be done; so come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day." [Ex 20:9, 10]

¹⁵But the Lord replied to him, "You hypocrites (play-actors, pretenders)! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead it away to water it?

¹⁶"And this woman, a daughter (descendant) of Abraham whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?"

¹⁷As He was saying this, all His opponents were being humiliated; and the entire crowd was rejoicing over all the

glorious things that were being done by Him.

¹⁸So this led Him to say, “What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? [Matt 13:31, 32; Mark 4:30–32]

¹⁹“It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his own garden; and it grew and became a tree, and THE BIRDS OF THE SKY FOUND SHELTER *and* NESTED IN ITS BRANCHES.” [Ezek 17:23; Dan 4:12]

²⁰And again He said, “To what shall I compare the kingdom of God?

²¹“It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three peck measures of flour until it was all leavened.” [Matt 13:33]

²²Jesus journeyed on through cities and villages, teaching and making His way toward Jerusalem.

²³And someone asked Him, “Lord, will only a few be saved [from the penalties of the last judgment]?” And He said to them,

²⁴“Strive to enter through the narrow door [force aside unbelief and the attractions of sin]; for many, I tell you, will try to enter [by their own works] and will not be able.

²⁵“Once the head of the house gets up and closes the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door [again and again], saying, ‘Lord, open to us!’ then He will answer you, ‘I do not know where you are from [for you are not of My household].’

²⁶“Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets’;

²⁷but He will say to you, ‘I do not know where you are from; DEPART FROM ME, ALL YOU EVILDOERS!’ [Ps 6:8]

²⁸“In that place there will be weeping [in sorrow and pain] and grinding of teeth [in distress and anger] when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out *and* driven away.

²⁹“And *people* will come from east and west, and from north and south, and they will sit down [and feast at the table] in the kingdom of God.

³⁰“And behold, *some* are last who will be first, and *some* are first who will be last.”

³¹At that very hour some Pharisees came up and said to Him, “Leave and go away from here, because Herod [Antipas] wants to kill You.”

³²And He said to them, “Go and tell that fox [that sly, cowardly man], ‘Listen carefully: I cast out demons and perform healings today and tomorrow, and on the third *day* I reach My goal.’

³³“Nevertheless I must travel on today and tomorrow and the *day* after that—for it cannot be that a prophet would die outside of Jerusalem.

³⁴“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones [to death] those [messengers] who are sent to her [by God]! How often I have wanted to gather your children together [around Me], just as a hen *gathers* her young under her wings, but you were not willing! [Matt 23:37–39]

³⁵“Listen carefully: your house is left to you desolate [abandoned by God and destitute of His protection]; and I say to you, you will not see Me until *the time* comes when you say, ‘BLESSED [to be celebrated with praise] IS HE WHO COMES IN THE

NAME OF THE LORD!” [Ps 118:26; Jer 22:5]

14 IT HAPPENED one Sabbath, when He went for a meal at the house of one of the ruling Pharisees, that they were watching Him closely *and* carefully [hoping to entrap Him].

²And there in front of Him was a man who had dropsy (extreme swelling).

³And Jesus asked the lawyers and the Pharisees, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?”

⁴But they kept silent. Then He took hold of the man and healed him, and sent him on his way.

⁵Then He said to them, “Which one of you, having a son or an ox that falls into a well, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?”

⁶And they were unable to reply to this.

⁷Now Jesus *began* telling a parable to the invited guests when He noticed how they had been selecting the places of honor *at the table*, saying to them, ⁸“When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down [to eat] at the place of honor, since a more distinguished person than you may have been invited by the host, [Prov 25:6, 7]

⁹and he who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this man your place,’ and then, in disgrace you proceed to take the last place.

¹⁰“But when you are invited, go and sit down [to eat] at the last place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher’; and then you will be honored in the presence of all who are at the table with you.

¹¹“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled [before others], and he who *habitually* humbles himself (keeps a realistic self-view) will be exalted.”

¹²Jesus also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or wealthy neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment.

¹³“But when you give a banquet *or* a reception, invite the poor, the disabled, the lame, and the blind,

¹⁴and you will be blessed because they cannot repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous (the just, the upright).”

¹⁵When one of those who were reclining *at the table* with Him heard this, he said to Him, “Blessed (happy, prosperous, to be admired) is he who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!”

¹⁶But Jesus said to him, “A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many *guests*;

¹⁷and at the dinner hour he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, because everything is ready now.’

¹⁸“But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, ‘I have purchased a piece of land and I have to go out and see it; please consider me excused.’

¹⁹“Another one said, ‘I have purchased five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.’

²⁰“And another said, ‘I have [recently] married a wife, and for that reason I am unable to come.’ [Deut 24:5]

²¹“So the servant came back and reported this to his master. Then [his master,] the head of the household, became angry [at the rejections of his invitation] and said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and the lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and the disabled and the blind and the lame.’

²²“And the servant [after returning] said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’

²³“Then the master told the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled [with guests].

²⁴“For I tell you, not one of those who were invited [and declined] will taste my dinner.””

²⁵Now large crowds were going along with Jesus; and He turned and said to them,

²⁶“If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life [in the sense of indifference to or relative disregard for them in comparison with his attitude toward God]—he cannot be My disciple.

²⁷“Whoever does not carry his own cross [expressing a willingness to endure whatever may come] and follow after Me [believing in Me, conforming to My example in living and, if need be, suffering or perhaps dying because of faith in Me] cannot be My disciple.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

The Heart of a Finisher

One of the best habits to develop as God's children is to finish what we start. After all, we want to imitate God and represent Him well in the world—and He always finishes what He begins. In addition, we need a sense of purpose and accomplishment in life. We need to know we are making progress and actually completing the things to which we give our time and energy. We need to exercise diligence in order to finish what we start, and doing so demonstrates that we are trustworthy and have integrity. When we leave projects or activities undone, we may develop a sense of failure and other people may feel they cannot depend on us.

The Bible teaches diligence, steadfastness, and determination—all of which pertain to finishing what we start. Jesus gives us great advice in the form of a question when He asks the disciples in Luke 14:28, “For which one of you, when he wants to build a watchtower [for his guards], does not first sit down and calculate the cost, to see if he has enough to finish it?”

Our ability to finish what we start speaks volumes to those around us. We need to be careful and thoughtful before we commit to anything, making sure that once we start, we can follow through to completion. Finishing what we start is part of being people of excellence, integrity, and effectiveness—and representing Jesus well to those around us.

Are you currently involved in anything that you would like to give up on or discontinue? If so, I ask you to reconsider. Pray and ask God if He really wants you to give up before you complete it. Unless you are certain that He does, I encourage you to press on. The only reason we should ever give up is if we start something and realize along the way that it is not what God wants us to do.

Whatever you are involved in right now, I encourage you to ask yourself, *Have I set my mind to finish what I have started?* I pray that you have, but if not, you can recommit to finish what you have begun. You can develop the heart of a finisher starting today!

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord, I pray that I will choose projects and activities wisely, seeking Your will in everything I do. When I begin something, help me to see it through to completion. In Jesus' name. Amen.

²⁸“For which one of you, when he wants to build a watchtower [for his guards], does not first sit down and calculate the cost, to see if he has enough to finish it?

²⁹“Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is unable to finish [the building], all who see it will begin to ridicule him,

³⁰saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish!’

³¹“Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one who is coming against him with twenty thousand?

³²“Or else [if he feels he is not powerful enough], while the other [king] is still a far distance away, he sends an envoy and asks for terms of peace.

³³“So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not [carefully consider the cost and then for My sake] give up all his own possessions.

³⁴“Therefore, salt is good; but if salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned?

³⁵“It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear *and* heed My words.”

15 NOW ALL the tax collectors and sinners [including non-observant Jews] were coming near Jesus to listen to Him.

²Both the Pharisees and the scribes *began* muttering *and*

complaining, saying, “This man accepts *and* welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

³So He told them this parable:

⁴“What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one which is lost, [searching] until he finds it? [Matt 18:12–14]

⁵“And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

⁶“And when he gets home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, because I have found my lost sheep!’

⁷“I tell you, in the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance.

⁸“Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins [each one equal to a day’s wages] and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?

⁹“And when she has found it, she calls together her [women] friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, because I found the lost coin!’

¹⁰“In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents [that is, changes his inner self—his old way of thinking, regrets past sins, lives his life in a way that proves repentance; and seeks God’s purpose for his life].”

¹¹Then He said, “A certain man had two sons.

¹²“The younger of them [inappropriately] said to his father,

‘Father, give me the share of the property that falls to me.’ So he divided the estate between them. [Deut 21:15–17]

¹³“A few days later, the younger son gathered together everything [that he had] and traveled to a distant country, and there he wasted his fortune in reckless *and* immoral living.

¹⁴“Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to do without *and* be in need.

¹⁵“So he went and forced himself on one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs.

¹⁶“He would have gladly eaten the [carob] pods that the pigs were eating [but they could not satisfy his hunger], and no one was giving *anything* to him. [Jer 30:14]

¹⁷“But when he [finally] came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough food, while I am dying here of hunger!

¹⁸“I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight.

¹⁹“I am no longer worthy to be called your son; [just] treat me like one of your hired men.” ’

²⁰“So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion *for him*, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

POWERPOINT

Refuse to give up on people. Whether you are believing for someone you love to become a Christian, to change behavior, to leave a bad relationship, to stop using drugs, to go back to school, to come home, or to get a job, keep believing that change is possible. Do not give up on the ones you love; your patient love and faithfulness may be exactly what they need to make a complete turnaround. God never gives up on us. His unconditional love is clearly demonstrated in the father of the prodigal son (see Luke 15:20). Choose to live with the same attitude. Believe in the power of love to change and transform anything and anyone.



21“‘And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

22“‘But the father said to his servants, ‘Quickly bring out the best robe [for the guest of honor] and put it on him; and give him a ring for his hand, and sandals for his feet. [Gen 41:42; Zech 3:4]

23‘And bring the fattened calf and slaughter it, and let us [invite everyone and] feast and celebrate;

24for this son of mine was [as good as] dead and is alive again; he was lost and has been found.’ So they began to celebrate.

25“Now his older son was in the field; and when he returned and approached the house, he heard music and dancing.

26“‘So he summoned one of the servants and *began* asking what this [celebration] meant.

27“‘And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.’

28“‘But the elder brother became angry *and* deeply resentful and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and *began* pleading with him.

29“‘But he said to his father, ‘Look! These many years I have served you, and I have never neglected *or* disobeyed your command. Yet you have never given me [so much as] a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; ³⁰but when this [other] son of yours arrived, who has devoured your estate with immoral women, you slaughtered that fattened calf

for him!’

³¹“The father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.

³²“But it was fitting to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was [as good as] dead and *has begun* to live. He was lost and has been found.’”

16 NOW JESUS was also saying to the disciples, “There was a certain rich man who had a manager [of his estate], and accusations [against this man] were brought to him, that this man was squandering his [master’s] possessions.

²“So he called him and said to him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an accounting of your management [of my affairs], for you can no longer be [my] manager.’

³“The manager [of the estate] said to himself, ‘What will I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig [for a living], and I am ashamed to beg.

⁴“I know what I will do, so that when I am removed from the management, people [who are my master’s debtors] will welcome me into their homes.’

⁵“So he summoned his master’s debtors one by one, and he said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’

⁶“He said, ‘A hundred measures of [olive] oil.’ And he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’

⁷“Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ He said, ‘A hundred measures of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and write eighty.’

⁸“And his master commended the unjust manager [not for his misdeeds, but] because he had acted shrewdly [by preparing for his future unemployment]; for the sons of this age [the non-believers] are shrewder in relation to their own kind [that is, to the ways of the secular world] than are the sons of light [the believers].

⁹“And I tell you [learn from this], make friends for yourselves [for eternity] by means of the wealth of unrighteousness [that is, use material resources as a way to further the work of God], so that when it runs out, they will welcome you into the eternal dwellings.

¹⁰“He who is faithful in a very little thing is also faithful in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little thing is also dishonest in much.

¹¹“Therefore if you have not been faithful in the *use of* earthly wealth, who will entrust the true *riches* to you?

¹²“And if you have not been faithful in *the use of* that [earthly wealth] which belongs to another [whether God or man, and of which you are a trustee], who will give you that which is your own?

¹³“No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will stand devotedly by the one and despise the other. You cannot serve *both* God and mammon [that is, your earthly possessions or anything else you trust in and rely on instead of God].”

¹⁴Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were sneering *and* ridiculing Him.

¹⁵So He said to them, “You are the ones who declare

yourselves just *and* upright in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts [your thoughts, your desires, your secrets]; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God. [1 Sam 16:7; Prov 21:2]

16“‘The Law and the [writings of the] Prophets were proclaimed until John; since then the gospel of the kingdom of God has been *and* continues to be preached, and everyone tries forcefully to go into it.

17“‘Yet it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for a single stroke of a letter of the Law to fail *and* become void.

18“‘Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from her husband commits adultery. [Matt 5:31, 32]

19“‘Now there was a certain rich man who was habitually dressed in expensive purple and fine linen, and celebrated *and* lived joyously in splendor every day.

20“‘And a poor man named Lazarus, was laid at his gate, covered with sores.

21“‘He [eagerly] longed to eat the *crumbs* which fell from the rich man’s table. Besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores.

22“‘Now it happened that the poor man died and his spirit was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom (paradise); and the rich man also died and was buried.

23“‘In Hades (the realm of the dead), being in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom (paradise).

24“‘And he cried out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me,

and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in severe agony in this flame.’

²⁵“But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things [all the comforts and delights], and Lazarus likewise bad things [all the discomforts and distresses]; but now he is comforted here [in paradise], while you are in severe agony.

²⁶“And besides all this, between us and you [people] a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to come over from here to you will not be able, and none may cross over from there to us.’

²⁷“So the rich man said, ‘Then, father [Abraham], I beg you to send Lazarus to my father’s house—

²⁸for I have five brothers—in order that he may *solemnly* warn them *and* witness to them, so that they too will not come to this place of torment.’

²⁹“But Abraham said, ‘They have [the Scriptures given by] Moses and the [writings of the] Prophets; let them listen to them.’

³⁰“He replied, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent [they will change their old way of thinking and seek God and His righteousness].’

³¹“And he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to [the messages of] Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’”

17 JESUS SAID to His disciples, “Stumbling blocks

[temptations and traps set to lure one to sin] are sure to come,
but woe (judgment is coming) to him through whom they come!
[Matt 18:7]

Speak God's Word

Even if someone sins against me seven times a day and returns to me seven times and says, "I repent," I will forgive him. I will give up resentment and consider the offense recalled and annulled.

| adapted from LUKE 17:4 |

²“It would be better for him if a millstone [as large as one turned by a donkey] were hung around his neck and he were hurled into the sea, than for him to cause one of these little ones to stumble [in sin and lose faith]. [Matt 18:6; Mark 9:42]

³“Pay attention *and* always be on guard [looking out for one another]! If your brother sins *and* disregards God's precepts, solemnly warn him; and if he repents *and* changes, forgive him.

⁴“Even if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times and says, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him [that is, give up resentment and consider the offense recalled and annulled].”

⁵The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith [our ability to confidently trust in God and in His power].”

⁶And the Lord said, “If you have [confident, abiding] faith in God [even as small] as a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree [which has very strong roots], ‘Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea’; and [if the request was in agreement with the will of God] it would have obeyed you. [Matt 17:20; Mark 11:23; 1 John 5:14]

⁷“Which of you who has a servant plowing or tending sheep will say to him when he comes in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat?’

⁸“Will he not instead say to him, ‘Prepare something for me to eat, and *appropriately* clothe yourself [for service] and serve me while I eat and drink; then afterward you may eat and drink?’

⁹“He does not thank the servant just because he did what he was ordered to do, does he?

¹⁰“So you too, when you have done everything that was assigned *and* commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy servants [undeserving of praise or a reward, for we have not gone beyond our obligation]; we have *merely* done what we ought to do.’”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Handling Compliments Humbly

It is easy to misunderstand what humility is. Some people think humility means to have a low opinion of themselves. Paul says not to have an exaggerated opinion of your own importance (see Rom. 12:3), but he doesn't say to have a low opinion. Some people, in an effort to be humble, don't know how to receive compliments graciously. We all need encouragement, compliments, and appreciation, but they do us no good if they are given and we refuse to receive them.

A good way to handle appreciation without getting into pride is to receive it when it is given. Then, at the end of the day, take the compliments you receive to Jesus and say to Him, "I know that whatever I do that is good or right is the result of Your working in me, so I offer You all the praise I was given today and I thank You for the encouragement." As servants of the Lord, "we have merely done what we ought to do" (Luke 17:10).

¹¹While Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing [along the border] between Samaria and Galilee.

¹²As He entered a village, He was met by ten lepers who stood at a distance;

¹³and they raised their voices and called out, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

¹⁴When He saw them, He said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were [miraculously] healed *and* made clean. [Lev 14:2–32]

¹⁵One of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, glorifying *and* praising *and* honoring God with a loud voice;

¹⁶and he lay face downward at Jesus’ feet, thanking Him [over and over]. He was a Samaritan.

¹⁷Then Jesus asked, “Were not ten [of you] cleansed? Where are the [other] nine?”

¹⁸“Was there no one found to return and to give thanks *and* praise to God, except this foreigner?”

¹⁹Jesus said to him, “Get up and go [on your way]. Your faith [your personal trust in Me and your confidence in God’s power] has restored you to health.”

²⁰Now having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He replied, “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed *or* with a visible display; ²¹nor will people say, ‘Look! Here it is!’ or, ‘There it is!’ For the kingdom of God is among you [because of My presence].”

²²Then He said to the disciples, “The time will come when you will long to see [even] one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it.

²³“They will say to you, ‘Look [the Messiah is] there!’ *or* ‘Look [He is] here!’ Do not go away [to see Him], and do not run after *them*.

²⁴“For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one

part of the sky, gives light to the other part of the sky, so [visible] will the Son of Man be in His day.

²⁵“But first He must suffer many things and be repudiated *and* rejected *and* considered unfit [to be the Messiah] by this [unbelieving] generation.

²⁶“And just as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be in the time of [the second coming of] the Son of Man:

²⁷the people were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, [they were indifferent to God] until the day that Noah went into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. [Gen 6:5–8; 7:6–24]

²⁸“It was the same as it was in the days of Lot. People were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building [carrying on business as usual, without regard for their sins]; ²⁹but on the [very] day that Lot left Sodom it rained fire and brimstone (burning sulfur) from heaven and destroyed them all.

³⁰“It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. [Gen 18:20–33; 19:24, 25]

³¹“On that day, whoever is on the housetop, with his belongings in the house, must not come down [and go inside] to take them out; and likewise whoever is in the field must not turn back.

³²“Remember [what happened to] Lot’s wife [when she looked back]! [Gen 19:26]

³³“Whoever seeks to save his life will [eventually] lose it [through death], and whoever loses *his life* [in this world] will keep it [from the consequences of sin and separation from God]. [Matt 10:39; 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; John 12:25]

³⁴“I tell you, on that night [when Messiah comes again] there will be two [sleeping] in one bed; the one (the non-believer) will be taken [away in judgment] and the other (the believer) will be left.

³⁵“There will be two women grinding [at the mill] together; the one (the non-believer) will be taken [away in judgment] and the other (the believer) will be left.

³⁶[“Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left.”]

³⁷And they asked Him, “Where, Lord?” He answered, “Where the corpse is, there the vultures will be gathered.”

18 NOW JESUS was telling the disciples a parable to make the point that at all times they ought to pray and not give up *and* lose heart, ²saying, “In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and had no respect for man.

POWERPOINT

'Luke 18:1 says that Jesus told the disciples this parable of the widow who wore down the unjust judge "to make the point that at all times they ought to pray and not give up *and* lose heart." He wanted them to learn to persevere in prayer with confidence, and He wants us to do the same. Our confidence is never in ourselves; it is always in Christ. Without Him, we are nothing and can do nothing that merits anything. But in His name we can go boldly to God in prayer and pray without ever giving up.



³“There was a [desperate] widow in that city and she kept coming to him and saying, ‘Give me justice *and* legal protection from my adversary.’

⁴“For a time he would not; but later he said to himself, ‘Even though I do not fear God nor respect man,

⁵yet because this widow *continues* to bother me, I will give her justice *and* legal protection; otherwise by continually coming she [will be an intolerable annoyance and she] will wear me out.’”

⁶Then the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says!

⁷“And will not [our just] God defend *and* avenge His elect [His chosen ones] who cry out to Him day and night? Will He delay [in providing justice] on their behalf?

⁸“I tell you that He will defend *and* avenge them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find [this kind of persistent] faith on the earth?”

⁹He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves *and* were confident that they were righteous [posing outwardly as upright and in right standing with God], and who viewed others with contempt: ¹⁰“Two men went up into the temple [enclosure] to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

¹¹“The Pharisee stood [ostentatiously] and began praying to himself [in a self-righteous way, saying]: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like the rest of men—swindlers, unjust (dishonest), adulterers—or even like this tax collector.

¹²‘I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’

¹³“But the tax collector, standing at a distance, would not even raise his eyes toward heaven, but was striking his chest [in humility and repentance], saying, ‘God, be merciful *and* gracious to me, the [especially wicked] sinner [that I am]!’

¹⁴“I tell you, this man went to his home justified [forgiven

of the guilt of sin and placed in right standing with God] rather than the other man; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself [forsaking self-righteous pride] will be exalted.”

¹⁵Now they were also bringing their babies to Him, so that He would touch *and* bless them, and when the disciples noticed it, they *began* reprimanding them.

¹⁶But Jesus called them to Himself, saying [to the apostles], “Allow the children to come to Me, and do not forbid them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

¹⁷“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God [with faith and humility] like a child will not enter it at all.”

¹⁸A certain ruler asked Him, “Good Teacher [You who are essentially and morally good], what shall I do to inherit eternal life [that is, eternal salvation in the Messiah’s kingdom]?” [Matt 19:16–29; Mark 10:17–30]

¹⁹Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is [essentially and morally] good except God alone.

²⁰“You know the commandments: ‘DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT TESTIFY FALSELY, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER.’” [Ex 20:12–16; Deut 5:16–20]

²¹He replied, “I have kept all these things from my youth.”

²²When Jesus heard this, He said to him, “You still lack one thing; sell everything that you have and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have [abundant] treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me [becoming My disciple, believing and trusting in Me and walking the same path of life that I walk].”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Humility and Faith in Prayer

For prayer to be sincere, it needs to come from a humble heart. In the lesson Jesus taught on prayer in Luke 18:10–14, we see that the Pharisee prayed “ostentatiously,” meaning that he prayed pretentiously, making an extravagant outward show. There was nothing secret or sincere about his prayer. It even says that he “began praying to himself.” In other words, his prayers did not go far; he was focused on the eloquence of what he was saying rather than on God.

The second man in the story, a despised tax collector, wicked in most people’s eyes, “would not even raise his eyes toward heaven.” He humbled himself and quietly, with a repentant heart, acknowledging himself as a sinner, asked God to help him. In response to his sincere, humble prayer, a lifetime of sin was wiped away in a moment. This is the power of simple, believing prayer.

Build your faith on the fact that humble, believing prayer is powerful. Believe that you can pray anywhere, anytime, about anything. Believe that your prayers don’t have to be perfect or eloquent or long. Keep them simple and full of faith.

We receive the grace of God (His favor and help) by humbling ourselves before Him, casting all our cares upon Him, and trusting Him to take care of us as He has promised in His Word.

²³But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.

²⁴Jesus looked at him and said, “How difficult it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!

²⁵“For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man [who places his faith in wealth or status] to enter the kingdom of God.”

²⁶And those who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?”

²⁷But He said, “The things that are impossible with people are possible with God.” [Gen 18:14; Jer 32:17]

²⁸Peter said, “Look, we have left all [things—homes, families, businesses] and followed You.”

²⁹And He said to them, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God, ³⁰who will not receive many times as much in this present age and in the age to come, eternal life.”

³¹Then taking the twelve [disciples] aside, He said to them, “Listen carefully: we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that have been written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled *and* completed. [Is 53:1–12]

³²“He will be betrayed *and* handed over to the Gentiles (Roman authorities), and will be mocked *and* ridiculed and insulted *and* abused and spit on, [Is 50:6]

³³and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and on the third day He will rise [from the dead].” [Ps 16:10]

³⁴But the disciples understood none of these things [about the approaching death and resurrection of Jesus]. This

statement was hidden from them, and they did not grasp the [meaning of the] things that were said [by Jesus].

³⁵As He was approaching Jericho [on His way to Jerusalem], it happened that a blind man was sitting beside the road begging. [Matt 20:29–34; Mark 10:46–52]

³⁶Now when he heard a crowd going by, he *began* to ask what this was [about].

³⁷They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.”

³⁸So he shouted out, saying, “Jesus, Son of David (Messiah), have mercy on me!”

³⁹Those who were leading the way were sternly telling him to keep quiet; but he screamed all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

⁴⁰Then Jesus stopped and ordered that the blind man be led to Him; and when he came near, Jesus asked him,

⁴¹“What do you want Me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, let me regain my sight!”

⁴²Jesus said to him, “Regain your sight; your [personal trust and confident] faith [in Me] has made you well.”

⁴³Immediately he regained his sight and *began* following Jesus, glorifying *and* praising *and* honoring God. And all the people, when they saw it, praised God.

19 JESUS ENTERED Jericho and was passing through.

²And there was a man called Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector [a superintendent to whom others reported], and he was rich.

³Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, but he could not see because of the crowd, for he was short in stature.

⁴So he ran on ahead [of the crowd] and climbed up in a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way.

⁵When Jesus reached the place, He looked up and said to him, “Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.”

⁶So Zaccheus hurried and came down, and welcomed Jesus with joy.

⁷When the people saw it, they all *began* muttering [in discontent], “He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a [notorious] sinner.”

⁸Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, “See, Lord, I am [now] giving half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone out of anything, I will give back four times as much.” [Ex 22:1; Lev 6:5; Num 5:6, 7]

⁹Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this household, because he, too, is a [spiritual] son of Abraham;

¹⁰for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

¹¹While they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they assumed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately [as soon as He reached the city].

¹²So He said, “A nobleman went to a distant country to obtain for himself a kingdom, and [then] to return.

¹³“So he called ten of his servants, and gave them ten minas [one apiece, each equal to about a hundred days’ wages]

and said to them, 'Do business [with this] until I return.'

¹⁴"But his citizens [the residents of his new kingdom] hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to be a king over us.'

¹⁵"When he returned, after receiving the kingdom, he ordered that these servants, to whom he had given the money, be called to him, that he might find out what business they had done.

¹⁶"The first one came before him and said, 'Lord, your mina has made ten more minas.'

¹⁷"And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you proved yourself faithful *and* trustworthy in a very little thing, you shall [now] have authority over ten cities [in my kingdom].'

¹⁸"The second one came and said, 'Lord, your mina has made five minas.'

¹⁹"And he said to him also, 'And you shall take charge over five cities.'

²⁰"Then another came and said, 'Lord, here is your mina, which I have kept laid up in a handkerchief [for safekeeping].

²¹'I was [always] afraid of you, because you are a stern man; you pick up what you did not lay down and you reap what you did not sow.'

²²"He said to the servant, 'I will judge *and* condemn you by your own words, you worthless servant! Did you [really] know that I was a stern man, picking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I did not sow?

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

See People as God Sees Them

It is very important to see people the way God sees them, because what we think about others greatly impacts how we relate to them. If we are willing, we can learn to think about people the way God thinks about them (see 1 Sam. 16:7). We'll recognize each person as a valuable possibility.

Jesus never chose to help or befriend people based on how others perceived them. Zacchaeus was a hated, despised tax collector. Jesus went to his house because He loved him and wanted to help him. He gave Zacchaeus a chance, and because He did, Zacchaeus solemnly declared that he would give half his goods to restore to people what he had dishonestly taken from them (see Luke 19:1–8).

Jesus also touched lepers (see Matt. 8:2–3), which was something no one else did. He spoke to a needy woman at the well, and Jewish men did not talk to Samaritan women (see John 4:9). He traveled with a woman who previously had seven demons and made her living as a prostitute (see Luke 8:2). He chose disciples whom we surely would have rejected as unfit

for the job, and He ate with “sinners” (Matt. 9:11). Jesus broke all the rules of His day and gave us a new one: love one another, just as He loves us (see John 13:34).

To see people the way God sees them, and to think about them the way God thinks about them, comes with spiritual maturity—it is a by-product of walking in the Spirit rather than walking in the flesh. It is often a sacrifice, because getting to know people deeply takes time.

Jesus sees things differently than most people do. He noticed a widow putting into the offering “two small copper coins” that were not worth much (see Luke 21:1–4). Jesus saw beyond the amount of money she gave; He saw that she was giving all that she had. Let’s make a commitment to look deeper than the surface appearances of people and situations. Let’s pray that God will help us not to form our thoughts and opinions of people too quickly, lest we shut them out of our lives and miss the opportunity to know the amazing people God has placed in our path.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord Jesus, help me to begin to see and value others as You do, to think of them the way You think of them, and to love them as You love them. In Your name, I pray. Amen.

²³“Then why did you not [at the very least] put my money in a bank? Then on my return, I would have collected it with interest.’

²⁴“Then he said to the bystanders, ‘Take the mina away from him and give it to the one who has the ten minas.’

²⁵“And they said to him, ‘Lord, he has ten minas *already*!’

²⁶“[Jesus explained,] ‘I tell you that to everyone who has [because he valued his gifts from God and has used them wisely], *more* will be given; but from the one who does not have [because he disregarded his gifts from God], even what he has will be taken away.’

²⁷“[The king ended by saying,] ‘But as for these enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them, bring them here and kill them in my presence.’”

²⁸After saying these things, Jesus went on ahead [of them], going up to Jerusalem.

²⁹When He approached Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, He sent two of the disciples, [Matt 21:1–9; Mark 11:1–10; John 12:12–15]

³⁰saying, “Go into the village ahead of you; there, as you enter, you will find a [donkey’s] colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here.

³¹“If anybody asks you, ‘Why are you untying the colt?’ you will say, ‘The Lord needs it.’”

³²So those who were sent left and found the colt just as He had told them.

³³As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them,

“Why are you untying the colt?”

³⁴They said, “The Lord needs it.”

³⁵They brought it to Jesus, and they threw their robes over the colt and put Jesus on it. [Zech 9:9]

³⁶As He rode along, people were spreading their coats on the road [as an act of homage before a king]. [2 Kin 9:13]

³⁷As soon as He was approaching [Jerusalem], near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the entire multitude of the disciples [all those who were or claimed to be His followers] began praising God [adoring Him enthusiastically and] joyfully with loud voices for all the miracles *and* works of power that they had seen, ³⁸shouting,

“BLESSED (celebrated, praised) IS THE KING WHO COMES IN
THE NAME OF THE LORD!

Peace in heaven and glory (majesty, splendor) in the highest
[heaven]!” [Ps 118:26]

³⁹Some of the Pharisees from the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, rebuke Your disciples [for shouting these Messianic praises].”

⁴⁰Jesus replied, “I tell you, if these [people] keep silent, the stones will cry out [in praise]!” [Hab 2:11]

⁴¹As He approached *Jerusalem*, He saw the city and wept over it [and the spiritual ignorance of its people],

⁴²saying, “If [only] you had known on this day [of salvation], even you, the things which make for peace [and on which peace depends]! But now they have been hidden from your eyes.

⁴³“For a time [of siege] is coming when your enemies will put up a barricade [with pointed stakes] against you, and

surround you [with armies] and hem you in on every side, [Is 29:3; Jer 6:6; Ezek 4:2]

⁴⁴and they will level you to the ground, you [Jerusalem] and your children within you. They will not leave in you one stone on another, all because you did not [come progressively to] recognize [from observation and personal experience] the time of your visitation [when God was gracious toward you and offered you salvation].”

⁴⁵Jesus went into the temple [enclosure] and began driving out those who were selling, [Matt 21:12, 13; Mark 11:15–17; John 2:13–16]

⁴⁶saying to them, “It is written, ‘MY HOUSE SHALL BE A HOUSE OF PRAYER’; but you have made it a ROBBERS’ DEN.” [Is 56:7; Jer 7:11]

⁴⁷He was teaching day after day in the temple [porches and courts]; but the chief priests and scribes and the leading men among the people were seeking [a way] to put Him to death, ⁴⁸and they could not find anything that they could do, for all the people [stayed close to Him and] were hanging on to every word He said.

20 ON ONE of the days, as Jesus was instructing the people in the temple [area] and preaching the good news (gospel), the chief priests and the scribes along with the elders confronted Him, [Matt 21:23–27; Mark 11:27–33]

²and said to Him, “Tell us by what *kind of* authority You are doing these things? Or who is the one who gave You this authority?”

³Jesus replied, “I will also ask you a question. You tell Me:

⁴“The baptism of John [the Baptist]—was it from heaven [that is, ordained by God] or from men?”

⁵They discussed *and* debated it among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say, ‘Why did you not believe him?’

⁶“But if we say, ‘From men,’ all the people will stone us to death, for they are *firmly* convinced that John was a prophet.”

⁷So they replied that they did not know from where *it came*.

⁸Then Jesus said to them, “Nor am I telling you by what [kind of] authority I do these things.”

⁹Then He began to tell the people this parable: “A man planted a vineyard and leased it to tenant farmers, and went on a journey for a long time [to another country]. [Is 5:1–7; Matt 21:33–46; Mark 12:1–12]

¹⁰“At *harvest* time he sent a servant [as his representative] to the tenants, so that they would give him *his share* of the fruit of the vineyard; but the tenants beat the servant and sent him away empty-handed.

¹¹“So he again sent another servant; they also beat him and dishonored *and* treated him disgracefully and sent him away empty-handed.

¹²“And he sent yet a third; and this one too they wounded and threw out [of the vineyard].

¹³“Then the owner of the vineyard said, ‘What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will have respect for him.’

¹⁴“But when the tenants saw him, they discussed it among

themselves, saying, ‘This [man] is the heir; let us kill him so that the inheritance will be ours.’

¹⁵“So they threw the son out of the vineyard and killed him. What, then, will the owner of the vineyard do to them?

¹⁶“He will come and put these tenants to death and will give the vineyard to others.” When the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders heard this, they said, “May it never be!”

¹⁷But Jesus looked at them and said, “What then is [the meaning of] this that is written:

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Unconditional Acceptance

We tend to fear earthly rejection too much. Jesus was rejected, and He survived (see Luke 20:17). You can too! When I say you will survive, I don't mean you will just barely make it. I mean rejection does not have to leave you brokenhearted, and it doesn't need to stop you from doing what God wants you to do. No one enjoys being rejected, but we can experience it and still be victorious.

We are not responsible for our reputations; God is! So relax and keep thinking to yourself, I may not be accepted by everyone, but I am accepted and loved by God. Repeat it over and over until you believe it and are no longer bothered if people reject you.

If you have God, you have all you need. If He knows you need anything else, He will provide that also (see Matt. 6:8, 33–34). Valuing God's unconditional love and approval more than the conditional approval of people will help you overcome rejection.

‘THE [very] STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED,
THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE’? [Ps 118:22, 23]

¹⁸“Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken *and* shattered in pieces; and on whomever it falls, it will crush him.”
[Is 8:14, 15; Dan 2:34, 35]

¹⁹The scribes and the chief priests tried to [find a way to] arrest Him at that very hour, but they were afraid of the people; because they understood that He spoke this parable against them.

²⁰So they watched [for a chance to trap] Him. They sent spies who pretended to be upright *and* sincere, in order that they might catch Him in some statement [that they could distort and use against Him], so that they could turn Him over to the control and authority of [Pilate] the governor. [Matt 22:15–22; Mark 12:13–17]

²¹They asked Him, “Teacher, we know that You speak and teach correctly, and that You show no partiality to anyone, but teach the way of God truthfully.

²²“Is it lawful [according to Jewish law and tradition] for us to pay taxes (tribute money) to Caesar or not?”

²³But He saw through their trickery and said to them,

²⁴“Show Me a [Roman] denarius. Whose image and inscription does the coin have?” They answered, “[the Emperor Tiberius] Caesar’s.”

²⁵He said to them, “Then pay to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

²⁶They were not able to seize on anything He said in the presence of the people; and being unnerved at His reply, they were silent.

²⁷Now some of the Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection) came to Him [Matt 22:23–33; Mark 12:18–27]

²⁸and they questioned Him, saying, “Teacher, Moses wrote for us [a law that] IF A MAN’S BROTHER DIES, leaving a wife AND NO CHILDREN, HIS BROTHER SHOULD MARRY THE WIFE AND RAISE

CHILDREN FOR HIS BROTHER. [Deut 25:5, 6]

²⁹“Now there were seven brothers; and the first took a wife and died childless.

³⁰“And the second,

³¹and the third married her, and in the same way all seven died, leaving no children.

³²“Finally the woman also died.

³³“So in the [life after] resurrection, whose wife does she become? For all seven had married her.”

³⁴Jesus said to them, “The sons of this [world and present] age marry and [the women] are given in marriage;

³⁵but those who are considered worthy to gain that [other world and that future] age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; ³⁶and they cannot die again, because they are [immortal] like the angels (equal to, angel-like). And they are children of God, being participants in the resurrection.

³⁷“But [as for the fact] that the dead are raised [from death], even Moses showed, in the *passage about the burning bush*, when he calls the Lord THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB. [Ex 3:6]

³⁸“Now He is not the God of the dead, but of the living [so these forefathers will be among the resurrected]; for all live [in a definite relationship] to Him.”

³⁹Some of the scribes replied, “Teacher, you have spoken well [so that there is no room for blame].”

⁴⁰And they did not dare to question Him further about anything [because of the wisdom He displayed in His

answers].

⁴¹Then He said to them, “How *is it that* people say that the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed) is David’s son? [Matt 22:41–46; Mark 12:35–37]

⁴²“For David himself says in the book of Psalms,

‘THE LORD (the Father) SAID TO MY LORD (the Son, the Messiah), “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,

⁴³UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.” ’
[Ps 110:1]

⁴⁴“So David calls Him (the Son) ‘Lord,’ and how *then* is He David’s son?”

⁴⁵And with all the people listening, He said to His disciples,

⁴⁶“Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes [displaying their prominence], and love respectful greetings in the [crowded] market places, and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets.

⁴⁷“These [men] who confiscate *and* devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense [to appear devout] offer long prayers. These [men] will receive the greater [sentence of] condemnation.”

21 LOOKING UP, He saw the rich people putting their gifts into the treasury. [Mark 12:41–44]

²And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins.

³He said, “Truly I say to you, this poor widow has put in

[proportionally] more than all *of them*;

⁴for they all put in gifts from their abundance; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”

⁵As some were talking about the temple, that it was decorated with beautiful stones and consecrated offerings [of magnificent gifts of gold which were displayed on the walls and hung in the porticoes], He said, [Matt 24; Mark 13]

⁶“As for all these things which you see, the time will come when there will not be one stone left on another that will not be torn down.”

⁷They asked Him, “Teacher, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign when these things are about to happen?”

⁸He said, “Be careful *and* see to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My name [appropriating for themselves the name Messiah which belongs to Me alone], saying, ‘I am He,’ and, ‘The time is near!’ Do not follow them.

⁹“When you hear of wars and disturbances [civil unrest, revolts, uprisings], do not panic; for these things must take place first, but the end will not *come* immediately.”

¹⁰Then Jesus told them, “Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. [2 Chr 15:6; Is 19:2]

¹¹“There will be violent earthquakes, and in various places famines and [deadly and devastating] pestilences (plagues, epidemics); and there will be terrible sights and great signs from heaven.

¹²“But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, turning you over to the synagogues and prisons, and bringing you before kings and

governors for My name's sake. [Matt 10:19–22; Mark 13:11–13]

¹³“This will be a time *and* an opportunity for you to testify [about Me].

¹⁴“So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves;

¹⁵for I will give you [skillful] words and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.

¹⁶“But you will be betrayed *and* handed over even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put *some* of you to death, ¹⁷and you will be *continually* hated by everyone because of [your association with] My name.

¹⁸“But not a hair of your head will perish. [1 Sam 14:45]

¹⁹“By your [patient] endurance [empowered by the Holy Spirit] you will gain your souls.

²⁰“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by [hostile] armies, then understand [with confident assurance] that her complete destruction is near.

²¹“At that time, those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are inside the city (Jerusalem) must get out, and those who are [out] in the country must not enter the city; ²²for these are days of vengeance [of rendering full justice or satisfaction], so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.

²³“Woe to those women who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For great trouble *and* anguish will be on the land, and wrath *and* retribution on this people [Israel].

²⁴“And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be

led captive into all nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (completed). [Is 63:18; Dan 8:13]

²⁵“There will be signs (attesting miracles) in the sun and moon and stars; and on the earth [there will be] distress *and* anguish among nations, in perplexity at the roaring *and* tossing of the sea and the waves, [Is 13:10; Joel 2:10; Zeph 1:15]

²⁶people fainting from fear and expectation of the [dreadful] things coming on the world; for the [very] powers of the heavens will be shaken.

²⁷“Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with [transcendent, overwhelming] power [subduing the nations] and with great glory. [Dan 7:13, 14]

²⁸“Now when these things begin to occur, stand tall and lift up your heads [in joy], because [suffering ends as] your redemption is drawing near.”

²⁹Then He told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees; [Matt 24:32, 33; Mark 13:28, 29]

³⁰as soon as they put out leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is near.

³¹“So you too, when you see these things happening, know [without any doubt] that the kingdom of God is near.

³²“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, this generation [those living at that definite period of time preceding the second coming] will not pass away until everything takes place.

³³“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

³⁴“But be on guard, so that your hearts are not weighed

down *and* depressed with the giddiness of debauchery and the nausea of self-indulgence and the worldly worries of life, and then that day [when the Messiah returns] will not come on you suddenly like a trap; ³⁵for it will come upon all those who live on the face of all the earth.

³⁶“But keep alert at all times [be attentive and ready], praying that you may have the strength *and* ability [to be found worthy and] to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand in the presence of the Son of Man [at His coming].”

³⁷Now in the daytime Jesus was teaching in [the porches and courts of] the temple, but at night He would go out and spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet.

³⁸And early in the morning all the people would come to Him in the temple to listen to Him.

22 NOW THE Festival of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was approaching. [Lev 23:4, 5; Ezek 45:21; Matt 26:2–5; Mark 14:1, 2]

²The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to put Him to death; for they were afraid of the people [who listened devotedly to His teaching, and who respected His spiritual wisdom].

³Then Satan entered Judas, the one called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve [disciples].

⁴And he went away and discussed with the chief priests and officers how he might betray Him *and* hand Him over to them.

⁵They were delighted and agreed with him to give him money.

⁶So he consented, and *began* looking for a good opportunity to betray Jesus to them [at a time when He was] separated from the crowd [because the people might riot or stop them from seizing Him].

⁷Then came the *preparation* day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover *lamb* had to be sacrificed. [Ex 12:18–20; Deut 16:5–8; Matt 26:17–19; Mark 14:12–16]

⁸So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the Passover meal for us, so that we may eat it.”

⁹They asked Him, “Where do You want us to prepare it?”

¹⁰He replied, “When you have entered the city, a man carrying an *earthen* jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house that he enters.

¹¹“And say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher asks, “Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?”’”

¹²“Then he will show you a large upstairs room, furnished [with carpets and dining couches]; prepare the meal there.”

¹³They left and found it just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

¹⁴When the hour [for the meal] had come, Jesus reclined *at the table*, and the apostles with Him.

¹⁵He said to them, “I have earnestly wanted to eat this Passover with you before I suffer;

¹⁶for I say to you, I will not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”

¹⁷And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; [Matt 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25; 1 Cor 11:23–25]

¹⁸for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes."

¹⁹And when He had taken bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

²⁰And in the same way *He took* the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup, which is poured out for you, is the new covenant [ratified] in My blood.

²¹"But listen, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Mine on the table. [Ps 41:9]

²²"For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe (judgment is coming) to that man by whom He is betrayed *and* handed over!"

²³And they began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this.

²⁴Now a dispute also arose among them as to which of them was regarded to be the greatest.

²⁵Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles have absolute power *and* lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' [Matt 20:25–28; Mark 10:42–45]

²⁶"But it is not to be this way with you; on the contrary, the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest [and least privileged], and the [one who is the] leader, like the servant.

²⁷"For who is the greater, the one who reclines *at the table*

or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines *at the table*? But I am among you as the one who serves.

POWERPOINT

I am always encouraged that there is hope for me when I look at Jesus' disciples and realize that they struggled with many of the same things I do.

In Luke 22:26, we find the disciples arguing over which of them was the greatest. Jesus responded by saying that the greatest was actually the one willing to be considered the least—willing to be a servant. Are you willing to be a servant to the people around you?



²⁸“You are those who have remained *and* have stood by Me in My trials;

²⁹and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you [the privilege]

³⁰that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

³¹“Simon, Simon (Peter), listen! Satan has demanded *permission* to sift [all of] you like grain; [Job 1:6–12; Amos 9:9]

³²but I have prayed [especially] for you [Peter], that your faith [and confidence in Me] may not fail; and you, once you have turned back again [to Me], strengthen *and* support your brothers [in the faith].”

³³And Peter said to Him, “Lord, I am ready to go with You both to prison and to death!” [Matt 26:33–35; Mark 14:29–31; John 13:37, 38]

³⁴Jesus said, “I say to you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will [utterly] deny three times that you know Me.”

³⁵And He said to them, “When I sent you out without a money belt and [provision] bag and [extra] sandals, did you lack anything?” They answered, “Nothing.”

³⁶Then He said to them, “But now, he who has a money belt is to take it along, and also his [provision] bag, and he who has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one.

³⁷“For I tell you that this [Scripture] which is written must be completed *and* fulfilled in Me: ‘AND HE WAS COUNTED WITH THE CRIMINALS’; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment [and is settled].” [Is 53:12]

³⁸They said, “Lord, look, here are two swords.” And He said to them, “It is enough.”

³⁹And He came out and went, as was His habit, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed Him.

⁴⁰When He arrived at the place [called Gethsemane], He said to them, “Pray *continually* that you may not fall into temptation.” [Matt 26:36–46; Mark 14:32–42]

⁴¹And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed,

⁴²saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup [of divine wrath] from Me; yet not My will, but [always] Yours be done."

⁴³Now an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him.

⁴⁴And being in agony [deeply distressed and anguished; almost to the point of death], He prayed more intently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down on the ground. [Heb 5:7]

POWERPOINT

We need to learn to pray regularly about areas that we know to be weaknesses for us. Too often we wait until we are in the midst of temptation and find the pressure of it to be more than we can resist. Jesus said that we are to pray continually that we come not into temptation (see Luke 22:40). We will be tempted, but if we pray regularly and prior to the times of temptation as well as in them, we will find ourselves enjoying more victory. Prayer releases God's power into our lives.



⁴⁵When He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow,

⁴⁶and He said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Get up and

pray that you may not fall into temptation.”

⁴⁷While He was still speaking, a crowd *came*, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve [disciples], was leading the way for them. He approached Jesus to kiss Him. [Matt 26:47–56; Mark 14:43–50; John 18:3–11]

⁴⁸And Jesus said to him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”

⁴⁹When those who were around Him saw what was about to happen, they said, “Lord, should we strike with the sword?”

⁵⁰And one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. [Matt 26:51; Mark 14:47; John 18:10]

⁵¹But Jesus replied, “Stop! No more of this.” And He touched the ear and healed him.

⁵²Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders [of the Sanhedrin] who had come out against Him, “Have you come out with swords and clubs as you would against a robber?

⁵³“Day after day when I was with you in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power *and* authority of darkness are yours.”

⁵⁴Then they seized Him, and led Him *away* and brought Him to the [elegant] house of the [Jewish] high priest. And Peter was following at a [safe] distance.

⁵⁵After they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat among them. [Matt 26:69–75; Mark 14:66–72; John 18:16–18, 25–27]

⁵⁶And a servant-girl, seeing him as he sat in the firelight and looking intently at him, said, “This man was with Him too.”

⁵⁷But Peter denied it, saying, “Woman, I do not know

Him!”

⁵⁸A little later someone else saw him and said, “You are one of them too.” But Peter said, “Man, I am not!”

⁵⁹After about an hour had passed, another man *began* to insist, “This man was with Him, for he is a Galilean too.”

⁶⁰But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about.” Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed.

⁶¹The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, “Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times.”

⁶²And he went out and wept bitterly [deeply grieved and distressed].

⁶³Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking *and* ridiculing Him [and treating Him with contempt] and beating Him.

⁶⁴They blindfolded Him and asked, “Prophecy, who is it that struck You?”

⁶⁵And they were saying many other [evil and slanderous] things against Him, blaspheming [speaking sacrilegiously and abusively about] Him.

⁶⁶When day came, the Council of the elders of the people (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court) assembled, both chief priests and scribes; and they led Jesus away to the council *chamber*, saying, ⁶⁷“If You are the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed), tell us.” But He said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe [what I say],

⁶⁸and if I ask a question, you will not answer.

⁶⁹“But from now on, THE SON OF MAN WILL BE SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND of the power OF GOD.” [Ps 110:1]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Wait Patiently for God

When we are truly trusting God and resting in Him, we do not excessively try to figure out what is going on or think too much about how to solve our problems. When we trust God, our minds can rest, our wills want what God wants for us, and our emotions are calm as we wait for God's answers. We do not try to make anything happen in our own strength; we wait for God to move on our behalf.

As we wait on God, we learn to develop the attitude Jesus demonstrated in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup [of divine wrath] from Me; yet not My will, but [always] Yours be done" (Luke 22:42). That's the place we need to come to in our spiritual lives. We need to reach the point where we can say, "God, I don't like this; this hurts. This is not what I had planned, not what I wanted. And God, I'd like You to take this away, but if that's not Your plan, then give me the grace to endure it."

We find great peace and enter into supernatural rest when we are finally able to surrender everything to God. Life becomes much easier when we sincerely believe God is in control, when we trust that He is working everything for our good (see Rom. 8:28), and when we patiently wait on Him.

⁷⁰And they all said, "Are You the Son of God, then?" He

replied, “*It is just as you say.*”

⁷¹Then they asked, “What further need of testimony do we have? For we ourselves have heard it from His own mouth.”

23 THEN THE whole assembly got up and brought Him before Pilate.

²They began to accuse Jesus, asserting, “We found this Man misleading *and* perverting our nation and forbidding us to pay taxes to Caesar, and claiming that He Himself is Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed), a King.” [Matt 27:11–14; Mark 15:2–5; John 18:29–37]

³So Pilate asked Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?” And He answered him, “*It is just as you say.*”

⁴Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, “I find no guilt in this Man.”

⁵But they were insistent and said, “He stirs up the people [to rebel], teaching throughout Judea, starting from Galilee even as far as here [in Jerusalem].”

⁶When Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man was a Galilean.

⁷And when he learned that He belonged to the jurisdiction of Herod [Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee], he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.

⁸When Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly pleased. He had wanted to see Him for a long time because of what he had heard about Him, and was hoping to see some [miraculous] sign [even something spectacular] done by Him.

⁹And he questioned Him at some length, but Jesus made

no reply. [Is 53:7]

¹⁰The chief priests and the scribes were standing there, *continually* accusing Him heatedly.

¹¹And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking *and* ridiculing Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate. [Is 53:8]

¹²Now that very day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other—before this they had been enemies.

¹³Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people,

¹⁴and said to them, “You brought this man before me as one who corrupts *and* incites the people to rebellion. After examining Him before you, I have found no guilt in this Man regarding the charges which you make against Him.

¹⁵“No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us; and indeed, He has done nothing to deserve death.

¹⁶“Therefore I will punish Him [to teach Him a lesson] and release Him.”

¹⁷[Now he was obligated to release to them one prisoner at the Feast.]

¹⁸But they [loudly] shouted out all together, saying, “Away with this Man, and release Barabbas to us!” [Matt 27:15–26; Mark 15:6–15; John 18:39–19:16]

¹⁹(He was one who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection that happened in the city, and for murder.)

²⁰Pilate addressed them again, wanting to release Jesus,

²¹but they kept shouting out, “Crucify, crucify Him!”

²²A third time he said to them, “Why, what wrong has He

done? I have found no guilt [no crime, no offense] in Him *demanding* death; therefore I will punish Him [to teach Him a lesson] and release Him.”

²³But they were insistent *and* unrelenting, demanding with loud voices that Jesus be crucified. And their voices *began* to prevail *and* accomplish their purpose.

²⁴Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand be granted.

²⁵And he released the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but he handed over Jesus to their will.

²⁶When they led Him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in [to the city] from the country, and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus. [Matt 27:32; Mark 15:21]

²⁷Following Him was a large crowd of the people, including women who were mourning and wailing for Him.

²⁸But Jesus, turning toward them, said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.

²⁹“For behold, the days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that have not given birth, and the breasts that have never nursed.’

³⁰“Then they will begin TO SAY TO THE MOUNTAINS, ‘FALL ON US!’ AND TO THE HILLS, ‘COVER US!’ [Is 2:19, 20; Hos 10:8; Rev 6:16]

³¹“For if they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

³²Two others also, who were criminals, were being led away

to be executed with Him. [Is 53:12]

³³When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and one on the left. [Matt 27:33–44; Mark 15:22–32; John 19:17–24]

³⁴And Jesus was saying, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” And they cast lots, dividing His clothes among themselves. [Ps 22:18]

³⁵Now the people stood by, watching; but even the rulers ridiculed *and* sneered at Him, saying, “He saved others [from death]; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed) of God, His Chosen One.”

³⁶The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him and [cruelly] offering Him sour wine, [Ps 69:21; Matt 27:48; Mark 15:36f; John 19:29, 30]

³⁷and sarcastically saying, “If you are [really] the King of the Jews, save Yourself [from death]!”

³⁸Now there was also an inscription above Him: “THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

³⁹One of the criminals who had been hanged [on a cross beside Him] kept hurling abuse at Him, saying, “Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us [from death]!”

⁴⁰But the other one rebuked him, saying, “Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?

⁴¹“We *are suffering* justly, because we are getting what we deserve for what we have done; but this Man has done nothing wrong.”

⁴²And he was saying, “Jesus, [please] remember me when You come into Your kingdom!”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Speak Well of Your Enemies

Jesus said, “Bless and show kindness to those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you” (Luke 6:28). To bless means “to speak well of.” When someone has hurt you, you can refuse to speak evil about them even if you’re tempted to do so. You can also bless them by talking about their good qualities and the good things they have done.

Speaking well of someone who has hurt you is probably the last thing you feel like doing, but it is a mark of spiritual maturity. It puts you on the road less traveled, the one Jesus Himself traveled. Don’t forget that one of the last things He did was to forgive those who didn’t deserve forgiveness, and He did it while hanging on a cross being crucified (see Luke 23:34, 43). Forgiving our enemies and refusing to speak evil of them shows our willingness to obey God and releases blessings into our lives.

⁴³Jesus said to him, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.” [2 Cor 12:4; Rev 2:7]

⁴⁴It was now about the sixth hour (noon), and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.), [Matt 27:45–56; Mark 15:33–41; John 19:14]

⁴⁵because the sun was obscured; and the veil [of the Holy

of Holies] of the temple was torn in two [from top to bottom]. [Ex 26:31–35]

⁴⁶And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, “Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT!” Having said this, He breathed His last. [Ps 31:5]

⁴⁷Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he *began* praising *and* honoring God, saying, “Certainly this Man was innocent.”

⁴⁸All the crowds who had gathered for this spectacle, when they saw what had happened, *began* to return [to their homes], beating their breasts [as a sign of mourning or repentance].

⁴⁹And all His acquaintances and the women who had accompanied Him from Galilee were standing at a distance, watching these things.

⁵⁰A man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court), a good and honorable man [Matt 27:57–61; Mark 15:42–47; John 19:38–42]

⁵¹(he had not consented to the Council’s plan and action) *a man* from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for *and* expecting the kingdom of God; ⁵²this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

⁵³And [after receiving permission] he took it down and wrapped it in a linen [burial] cloth and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had yet been laid.

⁵⁴It was the day of preparation [for the Sabbath], and the Sabbath was dawning.

⁵⁵Now the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed [closely], and saw the tomb and how His body was laid.

⁵⁶Then they went back and prepared spices and ointments *and* sweet-smelling herbs.

And on the Sabbath they rested in accordance with the commandment [forbidding work]. [Ex 12:16; 20:10]

24 BUT ON the first day of the week, at early dawn, the women went to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared [to finish anointing the body]. [Matt 28:1–8; Mark 16:1–8; John 20:1–8]

²And they found the [large, circular] stone rolled back from the tomb,

³but when they went inside, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

⁴While they were perplexed *and* wondering about this, suddenly, two men in dazzling clothing stood near them;

⁵and as the women were terrified and were bowing their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why are you looking for the living One among the dead?

⁶“He is not here, but has risen. Remember how He told you, while He was still in Galilee,

⁷saying that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise [from death to life].” [Ps 16:10]

⁸And they remembered His words,

⁹and after returning from the tomb, they reported all these things to the eleven [apostles] and to all the rest.

¹⁰Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna [the wife of

Chuza, Herod's steward] and Mary the *mother* of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles.

¹¹But their report seemed to them like idle talk *and* nonsense, and they would not believe them.

¹²But Peter got up and ran to the tomb. Stooping [at the small entrance] and looking in, he saw only the linen wrappings; and he went away, wondering about what had happened. [John 20:3–6]

¹³And then, that very day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, which was about *seven miles from Jerusalem. [Mark 16:12]

¹⁴And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place.

¹⁵While they were talking and discussing it, Jesus Himself came up and *began* walking with them.

¹⁶But their eyes were [miraculously] prevented from recognizing Him.

¹⁷Then Jesus asked them, "What are you discussing with one another as you walk along?" And they stood still, looking brokenhearted.

¹⁸One *of them*, named Cleopas, answered Him, "Are you the only stranger visiting Jerusalem who is unaware of the things which have happened here in these [recent] days?"

¹⁹He asked, "What things?" And they replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet powerful in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people,²⁰ and how the chief priests and our rulers handed Him over to be sentenced to death, and crucified Him.

²¹“But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel *and* set our nation free. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened.

²²“And also some of the women among us shocked us. They were at the tomb early in the morning,

²³and they did not find His body. Then they came back, saying that they had even seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive!

²⁴“Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women had said, but they did not see Him.”

²⁵Then Jesus said to them, “O foolish men, and slow of heart to trust *and* believe in everything that the prophets have spoken!

²⁶“Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and [only then to] enter His glory?”

²⁷Then beginning with Moses and [throughout] all the [writings of the] prophets, He explained *and* interpreted for them the things referring to Himself [found] in all the Scriptures.

²⁸Then they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as if He were going farther.

²⁹But they urged Him [not to go on], saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening, and the day has just about ended.” So He went inside to stay with them.

³⁰And it happened that as He reclined *at the table* with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He *began* giving it to them.

³¹Then their eyes were [suddenly] opened [by God] and

they [clearly] recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight.

³²They said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was talking with us on the road and opening the Scriptures to us?”

³³They got up that very hour and went back to Jerusalem, and found the eleven [apostles] gathered together and those who were with them, ³⁴saying, “The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon [Peter]!”

³⁵They *began* describing in detail what had happened on the road, and how Jesus was recognized by them when He broke the bread.

³⁶While they were talking about this, Jesus Himself [suddenly] stood among them and said to them, “Peace be to you.”

³⁷But they were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a spirit.

³⁸And He said, “Why are you troubled, and why are doubts rising in your hearts?”

³⁹“Look at [the marks in] My hands and My feet, [and see] that it is I Myself. Touch Me and see; a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see that I have.” [John 20:20–27]

⁴⁰After saying this, He showed them His hands and His feet.

⁴¹While they still did not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?”

⁴²They gave Him a piece of broiled fish,

⁴³and He took it and ate it in front of them. [Acts 10:40, 41]

⁴⁴Then He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you, everything which has been written about Me in the Law of Moses and the [writings of the] Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

⁴⁵Then He opened their minds to [help them] understand the Scriptures,

⁴⁶and said, “And so it is written, that the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed) would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, [Hos 6:2]

⁴⁷and that repentance [necessary] for forgiveness of sins would be preached in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

⁴⁸“You are witnesses of these things.

⁴⁹“Listen carefully: I am sending the Promise of My Father [the Holy Spirit] upon you; but you are to remain in the city [of Jerusalem] until you are clothed (fully equipped) with power from on high.” [John 14:26; Acts 1:4]

⁵⁰Then He led them out as far as Bethany, and lifted up His hands and blessed them. [Matt 21:17; Acts 1:9–12]

⁵¹While He was blessing them, He left them and was taken up into heaven.

⁵²And they worshiped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy [fully understanding that He lives and that He is the Son of God];

⁵³and they were continually in the temple blessing *and* praising God.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*I worship You, Jesus, with
great joy, fully understanding
that You live and that You are
the Son of God.*

• *adapted from Luke 24:52*

John

Author: | John
Date: | Near the
close of the first
century

John's Gospel describes the enemy more fully than any other Gospel. He notes the enemy's goal and purpose in our lives: "to steal and kill and destroy" (John 10:10). He also writes that the enemy "does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him" (John 8:44). By simply reading John's Gospel, we gain great understanding of our enemy; he is a thief, a murderer, a destroyer, and a liar. Knowing these things about him should help us to recognize his attempts to work in our minds and make us eager to also know how to defeat him. John speaks about truth and how powerful it is in our lives. Meditating (thinking) on the truth of God's Word is vital for victory in life.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM JOHN:

Satan wants to keep things hidden in darkness, but Jesus is the Light and shines in the darkness (see John 1:4–5).

When you don't know what to do, trust the Holy Spirit to guide you into full and complete truth (see John 16:13).

Jesus does not remove all opposition from us, but He gives us peace as we go through the storms of life (see John 16:33).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM JOHN:

The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life [providing eternal life]. | John 6:63

Do not let your heart be troubled (afraid, cowardly). Believe [confidently] in God and trust in Him, [have faith, hold on to it, rely on it, keep going and] believe also in Me. | John 14:1

I am the [only] Way [to God] and the [real] Truth and the [real] Life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. | John 14:6

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

JOHN

1 IN THE beginning [before all time] was the Word (Christ), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God Himself. [Gen 1:1; Is 9:6]

²He was [continually existing] in the beginning [co-eternally] with God.

³All things were made *and* came into existence through Him; and without Him not even one thing was made that has come into being.

⁴In Him was life [and the power to bestow life], and the life was the Light of men.

⁵The Light shines on in the darkness, and the darkness did not understand it *or* overpower it *or* appropriate it *or* absorb it [and is unreceptive to it]. [Gen 1:3]

⁶There came a man commissioned *and* sent from God, whose name was John. [Mal 3:1]

⁷This man came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe [in Christ, the Light] through him.

⁸John was not the Light, but came to testify about the Light.

⁹There it was—the true Light [the genuine, perfect,

steadfast Light] which, coming into the world, enlightens everyone. [Is 49:6]

¹⁰He (Christ) was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him.

¹¹He came to that which was His own [that which belonged to Him—His world, His creation, His possession], and those who were His own [people—the Jewish nation] did not receive *and* welcome Him.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Jesus, all things were made
and came into existence
through You; and without You
not even one thing was made
that has come into being. In
You is life, and the life is the
Light of men.*

• adapted from John 1:3–4

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Jesus, for
becoming flesh and living
among us. You are wonderful!
You are full of grace and
truth, absolutely free of
deception.*

• adapted from John 1:14

¹²But to as many as did receive *and* welcome Him, He gave the right [the authority, the privilege] to become children of God, *that is*, to those who believe in (adhere to, trust in, and rely on) His name—[Is 56:5]

¹³who were born, not of blood [natural conception], nor of the will of the flesh [physical impulse], nor of the will of man [that of a natural father], but of God [that is, a divine and supernatural birth—they are born of God—spiritually transformed, renewed, sanctified].

¹⁴And the Word (Christ) became flesh, and lived among us;

and we [actually] saw His glory, glory as belongs to the [One and] only begotten *Son* of the Father, [the Son who is truly unique, the only One of His kind, who is] full of grace and truth (absolutely free of deception). [Is 40:5]

¹⁵John testified [repeatedly] about Him and has cried out [testifying officially for the record, with validity and relevance], “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has a higher rank than I *and* has priority over me, for He existed before me.’”

¹⁶For out of His fullness [the superabundance of His grace and truth] we have all received grace upon grace [spiritual blessing upon spiritual blessing, favor upon favor, and gift heaped upon gift].

¹⁷For the Law was given through Moses, but grace [the unearned, undeserved favor of God] and truth came through Jesus Christ. [Ex 20:1]

¹⁸No one has seen God [His essence, His divine nature] at any time; the [One and] only begotten God [that is, the unique Son] who is in the intimate presence of the Father, He has explained Him [and interpreted and revealed the awesome wonder of the Father]. [Prov 8:30]

POWERPOINT

John 1:16 shows us how much God wants to give to us —“favor upon favor” and “gift heaped upon gift.” He desires to show His love for us in tangible ways, and we need to learn to receive His blessings with joy and thanksgiving. God is a giver, and He wants us to pass along to others what He freely gives to us. But before we can share His blessings with others, we have to receive them from Him. If we cannot receive from Him, we interrupt the cycle of giving before it is complete.



¹⁹This is the testimony of John [the Baptist] when the Jews sent priests and Levites to him from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?”

²⁰And he confessed [truthfully] and did not deny [that he was only a man], but acknowledged, “I am not the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed).”

²¹They asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” And he said, “I am not.” “Are you the [promised] Prophet?” And he answered, “No.” [Deut 18:15, 18; Mal 4:5]

²²Then they said to him, “Who are you? *Tell us*, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?”

²³He said, “I am THE VOICE OF ONE SHOUTING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD,’ as the prophet Isaiah said.” [Is 40:3]

²⁴Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.

²⁵They asked him, “Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?”

²⁶John answered them, “I baptize [only] in water, but among you there stands One whom you do not recognize *and* of whom you know nothing. [Mal 3:1]

²⁷“It is He [the preeminent One] who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie [even as His slave].”

²⁸These things occurred in Bethany across the Jordan [at the Jordan River crossing], where John was baptizing.

²⁹The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, “Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! [Ex 12:3; Is 53:7]

³⁰“This is He on behalf of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I *and* has priority over me, for

He existed before me.’

³¹“I did not recognize Him [as the Messiah]; but I came baptizing in water so that He would be [publicly] revealed to Israel.”

³²John gave [further] evidence [testifying officially for the record, with validity and relevance], saying, “I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. [Matt 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:22, 23]

³³“I did not recognize Him [as the Messiah], but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this One is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’

³⁴“I myself have [actually] seen [that happen], and my testimony is that this is the Son of God!”

³⁵Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples,

³⁶and he looked at Jesus as He walked along, and said, “Look! The Lamb of God!”

³⁷The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

³⁸And Jesus turned and saw them following Him, and asked them, “What do you want?” They answered Him, “Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?”

³⁹He said to them, “Come, and you will see.” So they went [with Him] and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.

⁴⁰One of the two who heard what John said and [as a result] followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother.

⁴¹He first looked for *and* found his own brother Simon and

told him, “We have found the Messiah” (which translated means the Christ).

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Do Whatever He Says

The way to live an overcoming life is to be diligent to do whatever God leads you to do. Obedience is a necessary key to victory and shows that we have faith in God. When God told Moses to strike the rock and water would come out, Moses became angry and struck the rock twice instead of once, as God had instructed him. God then told Moses that he had not honored Him in front of the Israelites by doing exactly as He had directed. For that reason, Moses would not be the one to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land (see Num. 20:8–12).

True faith does what God asks. When Jesus' mother noticed that more wine was needed at the wedding they attended at Cana, she told the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it" (John 2:5). They needed a miracle for the wedding to proceed as expected, and in order to experience the miracle, they had to do exactly as Jesus said.

If we hear God's Word and do not obey, we deceive ourselves (see James 1:22). An obedient response to whatever God says is a requirement for victory to take place. I encourage you to always believe God's Word, trust God's Word, and obey God's Word.

⁴²Andrew brought Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and

said, “You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas (which is translated Peter).”

⁴³The next day Jesus decided to go into Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, “Follow Me [as My disciple, accepting Me as your Master and Teacher, and walking the same path of life that I walk].”

⁴⁴Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the One Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote about—Jesus from Nazareth, the son of Joseph [according to public record].”

⁴⁶Nathanael answered him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip replied, “Come and see.”

⁴⁷Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, “Here is an Israelite indeed [a true descendant of Jacob], in whom there is no guile *nor* deceit *nor* duplicity!”

⁴⁸Nathanael said to Jesus, “How do You know [these things about] me?” Jesus answered, “Before Philip called you, when you were still under the fig tree, I saw you.”

⁴⁹Nathanael answered, “Rabbi (Teacher), You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.”

⁵⁰Jesus replied, “Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe [in Me]? You will see greater things than this.”

⁵¹Then He said to him, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man [the bridge between heaven and earth].” [Gen 28:12; Dan 7:13]

2 ON THE third day there was a wedding at Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; ²and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding.

³When the wine was all gone, the mother of Jesus said to Him, “They have no *more* wine.”

⁴Jesus said to her, “[Dear] woman, what is that to you and to Me? My time [to act and to be revealed] has not yet come.” [Eccl 3:1]

⁵His mother said to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.”

⁶Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification (ceremonial washing), containing twenty or thirty gallons each.

⁷Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the waterpots with water.” So they filled them up to the brim.

⁸Then He said to them, “Draw *some* out now and take it to the headwaiter [of the banquet].” So they took it *to him*.

⁹And when the headwaiter tasted the water which had turned into wine, not knowing where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew) he called the bridegroom, ¹⁰and said to him, “Everyone else serves his best wine first, and when *people* have drunk freely, *then he serves* that which is not so good; but you have kept back the good wine until now.”

¹¹This, the first of His signs (attesting miracles), Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and revealed His glory [displaying His deity and His great power openly], and His disciples believed [confidently] in Him [as the Messiah—they adhered to, trusted

in, and relied on Him]. [Deut 5:24; Ps 72:19]

¹²After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and brothers and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days.

¹³Now the Passover of the Jews was approaching, so Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

¹⁴And in the temple [enclosure] He found the people who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers sitting *at their tables*. [Matt 21:12ff; Mark 11:15, 17]

¹⁵He made a whip of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; ¹⁶then to those who sold the doves He said, “Take these things away! Stop making My Father’s house a place of commerce!” [Ps 93:5]

¹⁷His disciples remembered that it is written [in the Scriptures], “ZEAL (love, concern) FOR YOUR HOUSE [and its honor] WILL CONSUME ME.” [Ps 69:9]

¹⁸Then the Jews retorted, “What sign (attesting miracle) can You show us as [proof of] your authority for doing these things?”

¹⁹Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

²⁰Then the Jews replied, “It took forty-six years to build this temple, and You will raise it up in three days?”

²¹But He was speaking of the temple which was His body.

²²So when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered what He had said. And they believed *and* trusted

in *and* relied on the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken. [Ps 16:10]

²³Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many believed in His name [identifying themselves with Him] after seeing His signs (attesting miracles) which He was doing.

²⁴But Jesus, for His part, did not entrust Himself to them, because He knew all *people* [and understood the superficiality and fickleness of human nature], ²⁵and He did not need anyone to testify concerning man [and human nature], for He Himself knew what was in man [in their hearts—in the very core of their being]. [1 Sam 16:7]

3 NOW THERE was a certain man among the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler (member of the Sanhedrin) among the Jews, ²who came to Jesus at night and said to Him, “Rabbi (Teacher), we know [without any doubt] that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs [these wonders, these attesting miracles] that You do unless God is with him.”

³Jesus answered him, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, unless a person is born again [reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, sanctified], he cannot [ever] see *and* experience the kingdom of God.”

⁴Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter his mother’s womb a second time and be born, can he?”

⁵Jesus answered, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot [ever] enter the kingdom of God. [Ezek 36:25–27]

⁶“That which is born of the flesh is flesh [the physical is merely physical], and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

⁷“Do not be surprised that I have told you, ‘You must be born again [reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, sanctified].’

⁸“The wind blows where it wishes and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it is coming from and where it is going; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

⁹Nicodemus said to Him, “How can these things be *possible*?”

¹⁰Jesus replied, “You are the [great and well-known] teacher of Israel, and yet you do not know *nor* understand these things [from Scripture]?”

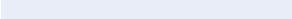
¹¹“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, we speak only of what we [absolutely] know and testify about what we have [actually] seen [as eyewitnesses]; and [still] you [reject our evidence and] do not accept our testimony.

¹²“If I told you earthly things [that is, things that happen right here on earth] and you do not believe, how will you believe *and* trust Me if I tell you heavenly things?

¹³“No one has gone up into heaven, but there is One who came down from heaven, the Son of Man [Himself—whose home is in heaven].

¹⁴“Just as Moses lifted up the [bronze] serpent in the desert [on a pole], so must the Son of Man be lifted up [on the cross], [Num 21:9]

¹⁵so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life [after physical death, and will actually live forever].



A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Thank You, Father, for so greatly loving and dearly prizing the world, that You gave Your One and only begotten Son, so that whoever believes and trusts in Him as Savior shall not perish, but have eternal life.

• adapted from John 3:16

POWERPOINT

God loves us whether or not we ever love Him back, and that is a totally different kind of love than what we normally think love is. Romantic love, parental love, and the love we have for friends are all based, at least in part, on what others do for us and on how they treat us.

God's amazing and unconditional love for us is based on who He is. God's love is defined in John 3:16, "For God so [greatly] loved *and* dearly prized the world, that He [even] gave His [One and] only begotten Son." God sacrificed His own Son so we could be forgiven of our sins, live in intimate relationship with Him, and have eternal life.



¹⁶“For God so [greatly] loved *and* dearly prized the world, that He [even] gave His [One and] only begotten Son, so that whoever believes *and* trusts in Him [as Savior] shall not perish, but have eternal life.

¹⁷“For God did not send the Son into the world to judge *and* condemn the world [that is, to initiate the final judgment of the world], but that the world might be saved through Him.

¹⁸“Whoever believes *and* has decided to trust in Him [as personal Savior and Lord] is not judged [for this one, there is no judgment, no rejection, no condemnation]; but the one who does not believe [and has decided to reject Him as personal Savior and Lord] is judged already [that one has been convicted and sentenced], because he has not believed *and* trusted in the name of the [One and] only begotten Son of God [the One who is truly unique, the only One of His kind, the One who alone can save him].

¹⁹“This is the judgment [that is, the cause for indictment, the test by which people are judged, the basis for the sentence]: the Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. [Is 5:20]

Speak God's Word

I know that God did not send the Son into the world to judge and condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

| adapted from JOHN 3:17 |

²⁰“For every wrongdoer hates the Light, and does not come to the Light [but shrinks from it] for fear that his [sinful, worthless] activities will be exposed *and* condemned.

²¹“But whoever practices truth [and does what is right—morally, ethically, spiritually] comes to the Light, so that his works may be plainly shown to be what they are—accomplished in God [divinely prompted, done with God’s help, in dependence on Him].”

²²After these things Jesus and His disciples went into the land of Judea, and there He spent time with them and baptized. [John 4:1, 2]

²³Now John was also baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was an abundance of water there; and *people* were coming and were being baptized—²⁴for John had not yet been thrown into prison.

²⁵Therefore there arose a controversy between John's disciples and a Jew in regard to purification (ceremonial washing).

²⁶So they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi (Teacher), the Man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan [at the Jordan River crossing]—and to whom you have testified—look, He is baptizing too, and everyone is going to Him!"

²⁷John replied, "A man can receive nothing [he can claim nothing at all] unless it has been granted to him from heaven [for there is no other source than the sovereign will of God].

²⁸"You yourselves are my witnesses that I stated, 'I am not the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed),' but, 'I have [only] been sent ahead of Him [as His appointed forerunner and messenger to announce and proclaim His coming].' [Mal 3:1]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Faith, Not Works

John 3:18 teaches us that we are accepted by God because we believe in His Son, Jesus, and not because of any good works we do. As believers, we will never come up for judgment, but those who don't believe have already been convicted and are living out their sentence.

As long as we believe that our acceptance from God comes as a result of our own good works, we will always struggle and experience guilt and condemnation. Why? Simply because we cannot perform perfectly. We make mistakes, and no matter how hard we try to be good all the time, it never happens. If God's love and acceptance were based on our own efforts, He would love us and approve of us only when we do what is right; and when we do something wrong, He would have to reject us.

We would then feel the need to make sacrifices or to think we need to be punished in some way. Thankfully, God's love isn't based on what we "do," but on our faith in Jesus. We are God's children, and because of His great love, grace, and mercy, He forgives our sins and loves us as if we had never sinned.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Be Content with What God Gives You

John the Baptist came to tell people to “MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD” (John 1:23). That was his purpose on earth, and he knew it. Meanwhile, John’s disciples tried to make John jealous of Jesus’ ministry by saying, “He is baptizing too, and everyone is going to Him!” (John 3:26).

John responded by basically saying, “If He is doing that, then God has anointed Him to do it, and it’s His time to do it. God gave me the gift of being His messenger, and if my time’s up, then my time’s up and this pleasure and joy of mine is now complete! He must increase, but I must decrease” (see John 3:27–30). God doesn’t want you to be jealous of the gifts He has given others. He wants you to enjoy and be content with the gifts He has given you.

²⁹“He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands by and listens to him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. So this pleasure and joy of mine is now complete. [Song 5:1]

³⁰“He must increase [in prominence], but I must decrease. [Is 9:7]

³¹“He who comes from [heaven] above is above all *others*; he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks [about things] of the earth [his viewpoint and experience are earthly].

He who comes from heaven is above all.

³²“What He has [actually] seen and heard, of that He testifies; and yet no one accepts His testimony [as true].

³³“Whoever receives His testimony has set his seal [of approval] to this: God is true [and he knows that God cannot lie].

³⁴“For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God [proclaiming the Father’s own message]; for God gives the [gift of the] Spirit without measure [generously and boundlessly]! [Deut 18:18]

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, God, for giving
the gift of the Spirit without
measure, generously and
boundlessly.*

• adapted from John 3:34

³⁵“The Father loves the Son and has given *and* entrusted all things into His hand. [Dan 7:14]

³⁶“He who believes *and* trusts in the Son *and* accepts Him [as Savior] has eternal life [that is, already possesses it]; but he who does not believe the Son *and* chooses to reject Him, [disobeying Him and denying Him as Savior] will not see [eternal] life, but [instead] the wrath of God hangs over him *continually*.” [Heb 3:18]

4 SO WHEN the Lord learned that the Pharisees had been told that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John ²(although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were),

³He left Judea and returned again to Galilee.

⁴Now He had to go through Samaria.

⁵So He arrived at a Samaritan town called Sychar, near the tract of land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph;

⁶and Jacob’s well was there. So Jesus, tired as He was from His journey, sat down by the well. It was then about the sixth hour (noon).

⁷Then a woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give Me a drink”—

⁸For His disciples had gone off into the city to buy food—

⁹The Samaritan woman asked Him, “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?” (For Jews have nothing to do with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus answered her, “If you knew [about] God’s gift [of eternal life], and who it is who says, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him [instead], and He would have given you living water (eternal life).”

¹¹She said to Him, “Sir, You have nothing to draw with [no bucket and rope] and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water?”

¹²“Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and who used to drink from it himself, and his sons and his cattle also?”

¹³Jesus answered her, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again.

¹⁴“But whoever drinks the water that I give him will never be thirsty again. But the water that I give him will become in him a spring of water [satisfying his thirst for God] welling up [continually flowing, bubbling within him] to eternal life.”

¹⁵The woman said to Him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not get thirsty nor [have to continually] come all the way here to draw.”

¹⁶At this, Jesus said, “Go, call your husband and come back.”

¹⁷The woman answered, “I do not have a husband.” Jesus said to her, “You have correctly said, ‘I do not have a husband’;

¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and the man you are now living with is not your husband. You have said this truthfully.”

¹⁹The woman said to Him, “Sir, I see that You are a prophet.

²⁰“Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you *Jews* say that the place where one ought to worship is in Jerusalem [at the temple].”

²¹Jesus replied, “Woman, believe Me, a time is coming [when God’s kingdom comes] when you will worship the Father

neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

²²“You [Samaritans] do not know what you worship; we [Jews] do know what we worship, for salvation is from the Jews.

²³“But a time is coming and is already here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit [from the heart, the inner self] and in truth; for the Father seeks such people to be His worshipers.

²⁴“God is spirit [the Source of life, yet invisible to mankind], and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

True Worship

Worship is so much more than singing songs. It is a condition of the heart and a state of mind. Our worship for God is born in our hearts, it fills our thoughts, and it is expressed through our words and actions. Worship is about a personal relationship, spiritual intimacy, and passionate expressions of devotion to God from people who love Him with all their hearts.

The Bible says that God the Father is seeking those who genuinely worship Him in spirit and in truth (see John 4:23). He wants us to worship Him in all that we do and from sincerely devoted hearts. He does not want to be worshiped out of fear, obligation, or religion. True worship is never the result of mere obligation; it is a result of intimacy with God.

²⁵The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ—the Anointed); when that One comes, He will tell us everything [we need to know].”

²⁶Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you, am *He* (the Messiah).”

²⁷Just then His disciples came, and they were surprised to find Him talking with a woman. However, no one said, “What are You asking about?” or, “Why are You talking to her?”

²⁸Then the woman left her water jar, and went into the city

and began telling the people,

²⁹“Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done! Can this be the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed)?”

³⁰So the people left the city and were coming to Him.

³¹Meanwhile, the disciples were urging Jesus [to have a meal], saying, “Rabbi (Teacher), eat.”

³²But He told them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.”

³³So the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought Him *something* to eat?”

³⁴Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to completely finish His work.

³⁵“Do you not say, ‘It is still four months until the harvest comes?’ Look, I say to you, raise your eyes and look at the fields *and* see, they are white for harvest.

³⁶“Already the reaper is receiving *his* wages and he is gathering fruit for eternal life; so that he who plants and he who reaps may rejoice together.

³⁷“For in this *case* the saying is true, ‘One [person] sows and another reaps.’

³⁸“I sent you to reap [a crop] for which you have not worked. Others have worked and you have been privileged to reap the results of their work.”

³⁹Now many Samaritans from that city believed in Him *and* trusted Him [as Savior] because of what the woman said when she testified, “He told me all the things that I have done.”

⁴⁰So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they asked Him to remain with them; and He stayed there two days.

⁴¹Many more believed in Him [with a deep, abiding trust] because of His word [His personal message to them];

⁴²and they told the woman, “We no longer believe *just* because of what you said; for [now] we have heard *Him* for ourselves and know [with confident assurance] that this One is truly the Savior of [all] the world.”

⁴³After the two days He went on from there into Galilee.

⁴⁴For Jesus Himself declared that a prophet has no honor in his own country.

⁴⁵So when He arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed Him, since they had seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they too came to the feast.

⁴⁶So Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee, where He had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son was sick in Capernaum.

⁴⁷Having heard that Jesus had come back from Judea to Galilee, he went to *meet* Him and began asking Him to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death.

⁴⁸Then Jesus said to him, “Unless you [people] see [miraculous] signs and wonders, you [simply] will not believe.”

⁴⁹The royal official pleaded with Him, “Sir, do come down [at once] before my child dies!”

⁵⁰Jesus said to him, “Go; your son lives!” The man believed what Jesus said to him and started home.

⁵¹As he was already going down [the road], his servants met him and reported that his son was living [and was healthy].

⁵²So he asked them at what time he began to get better. They said, “Yesterday during the seventh hour the fever left

him.”

⁵³Then the father realized that it was at that *very* hour when Jesus had said to him, “Your son lives”; and he and his entire household believed *and* confidently trusted [in Him as Savior].

⁵⁴This is the second sign (attesting miracle) that Jesus performed [in Cana] after He had come from Judea to Galilee [revealing that He is the Messiah].

5 LATER ON there was a Jewish feast (festival), and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

²Now in Jerusalem, near the Sheep Gate, there is a pool, which is called in Hebrew (Jewish Aramaic) Bethesda, having five porticoes (alcoves, colonnades).

POWERPOINT

When Jesus met the man who was waiting for a miracle by the pool of Bethesda, He asked him if he wanted to get well, even though He knew the man had been crippled for a long time (see John 5:6). I think He asked the question simply to demonstrate care and compassion and to find out what the man really wanted for himself. Though Jesus already knew that He could heal the man, He was interested enough to want to know more about him. God has given us the ability to help and encourage others with our words. One way to do that is to simply ask how they are doing and what they would like to see happen in their lives.



³In these *porticoes* lay a great number of people who were sick, blind, lame, withered, [waiting for the stirring of the water; ⁴for an angel of the Lord went down into the pool at appointed seasons and stirred up the water; the first one to go in after the water was stirred was healed of his disease.]

⁵There was a certain man there who had been ill for thirty-eight years.

⁶When Jesus noticed him lying there [helpless], knowing that he had been *in that condition* a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to get well?"

⁷The invalid answered, "Sir, I have no one to put me in the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am coming [to get into it myself], someone else steps down ahead of me."

⁸Jesus said to him, "Get up; pick up your pallet and walk."

⁹Immediately the man was healed *and* recovered his strength, and picked up his pallet and walked.

Now that day was the Sabbath.

¹⁰So the Jews kept saying to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath, and you are not permitted to pick up your pallet [because it is unlawful]."

¹¹He answered them, "The Man who healed me *and* gave me back my strength was the One who said to me, 'Pick up your pallet and walk.'"

¹²They asked him, "Who is the Man who told you, 'Pick up *your pallet* and walk'?"

¹³Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away [unnoticed] since there was a crowd in that place.

¹⁴Afterward, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well! Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.”

¹⁵The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

¹⁶For this reason the Jews began to persecute Jesus *continually* because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.

¹⁷But Jesus answered them, “My Father has been working until now [He has never ceased working], and I too am working.”

¹⁸This made the Jews more determined than ever to kill Him, for not only was He breaking the Sabbath [from their viewpoint], but He was also calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

¹⁹So Jesus answered them by saying, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself [of His own accord], unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever things the Father does, the Son [in His turn] also does in the same way.

²⁰“For the Father *dearly* loves the Son and shows Him everything that He Himself is doing; and *the Father* will show Him greater works than these, so that you will be filled with wonder.

²¹“Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life [and allows them to live on], even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.

²²“For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment [that is, the prerogative of judging] to the Son

[placing it entirely into His hands],

²³so that all will give honor (reverence, homage) to the Son just as they give honor to the Father. [In fact] the one who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who has sent Him.

²⁴“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, the person who hears My word [the one who heeds My message], and believes *and* trusts in Him who sent Me, has (possesses now) eternal life [that is, eternal life actually begins—the believer is transformed], and does not come into judgment *and* condemnation, but has passed [over] from death into life.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The Conviction of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is given to us for many reasons. One of the most important reasons is to convict us “about [the guilt of] sin [and the need for a Savior]” (John 16:8)—not to condemn or make us feel guilty, but to teach us how to be lifted out of sin. Jesus reassures us that anyone who believes and trusts in Him “does not come into judgment and condemnation, but has passed [over] from death into life” (John 5:24).

We should love and appreciate the conviction of sin, because without it we could easily live lives of self-deception. Spiritually mature people can receive conviction and not let it condemn them. Correction from God is never rejection. The fact that He is unwilling to leave us as we are in our sin is a sign of His love for us. He works daily to change us into His image and to help us develop His character.

25“*I assure you and most solemnly say to you, a time is coming and is [here] now, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear it will live.*

26“*For just as the Father has life in Himself [and is self-existent], even so He has given to the Son to have life in Himself [and be self-existent].*

27“*And He has given Him authority to execute judgment,*

because He is a Son of Man [sinless humanity, qualifying Him to sit in judgment over mankind]. [Dan 7:13, 14]

²⁸“Do not be surprised at this; for a time is coming when all those who are in the tombs will hear His voice,

²⁹and they will come out—those who did good things [will come out] to a resurrection of [new] life, but those who did evil things [will come out] to a resurrection of judgment [that is, to be sentenced]. [Dan 12:2; Rev 20:11–15]

³⁰“I can do nothing on my own initiative *or* authority. Just as I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just (fair, righteous, unbiased), because I do not seek My own will, but only the will of Him who sent Me.

³¹“If I *alone* testify about Myself, My testimony is not valid.

³²“There is another [My Father] who testifies about Me, and I know [without any doubt] that His testimony on My behalf is true *and* valid.

³³“You have sent [an inquiry] to John [the Baptist] and he has testified [as an eyewitness] to the truth.

³⁴“But the testimony I receive is not from man [a merely human witness]; but I say these things so that you may be saved [that is, have eternal life].

³⁵“John was the lamp that kept on burning and shining [to show you the way], and you were willing for a while to rejoice in his light. [John 1:23–25]

³⁶“But the testimony which I have is far greater than *the testimony of* John; for the works that the Father has given Me to finish—the very same works [that is, the miracles and proofs of My deity] that I am [now] doing—testify about Me, [by

providing evidence] that the Father has sent Me.

³⁷“And the Father who sent Me has Himself testified about Me. You have never heard His voice nor seen His form [His majesty and greatness—what He is like].

³⁸“You do not have His word (Scripture) abiding in you [actually living in your hearts and minds], because you do not believe in Him whom He has sent.

³⁹“You search *and* keep on searching *and* examining the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and yet it is those [very Scriptures] that testify about Me;
⁴⁰and still you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.

⁴¹“I do not receive glory *and* approval from men;

⁴²but I know you *and* recognize that you do not have the love of God in yourselves.

⁴³“I have come in My Father’s name *and* with His power, and you do not receive Me [because your minds are closed]; but if another comes in his own name *and* with no authority or power except his own, you will receive him *and* give your approval to an imposter.

⁴⁴“How can you believe [in Me], when you [seek and] receive glory *and* approval from one another, and yet you do not seek the glory *and* approval which comes from the *one and* only God?

⁴⁵“Do not think that I [am the One who] will accuse you before the Father. There [already] is one who accuses you: Moses, [the very one] in whom you have placed your hope [for salvation].

⁴⁶“For if you believed *and* relied on [the Scriptures written

by] Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me [personally]. [Gen 3:15; 22:18; 49:10; Num 24:17; Deut 18:15]

⁴⁷“But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?”

6 AFTER THIS, Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Sea of Tiberias). [Matt 14:13–21; Mark 6:32–44; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:23; 21:1]

²A large crowd was following Him because they had seen the signs (attesting miracles) which He *continually* performed on those who were sick.

³And Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down there with His disciples.

⁴Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was approaching. [Ex 12:1–36]

⁵Jesus looked up and saw that a large crowd was coming toward Him, and He said to Philip, “Where will we buy bread for these *people* to eat?”

⁶But He said this to test Philip, because He knew what He was about to do.

⁷Philip answered, “Two hundred denarii (200 days’ wages) worth of bread is not enough for each one to receive even a little.”

⁸One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to Him,

⁹“There is a little boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what are these for so many people?”

¹⁰Jesus said, “Have the people sit down [to eat].” Now [the ground] there was [covered with] an abundance of grass, so the men sat down, about 5,000 in number.

¹¹Then Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks, He distributed them to those who were seated; the same also with the fish, as much as they wanted.

¹²When they had eaten enough, He said to His disciples, “Gather up the leftover pieces so that nothing will be lost.”

¹³So they gathered them up, and they filled twelve large baskets with pieces from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.

¹⁴When the people saw the sign (attesting miracle) that He had done, they *began* saying, “This is without a doubt the promised Prophet who is to come into the world!” [Deut 18:15, 18; John 1:21; Acts 3:22]

¹⁵Then Jesus, knowing that they were going to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountainside by Himself.

¹⁶When evening came, His disciples went down to the sea,

¹⁷and they got into a boat and started to cross the sea to Capernaum. It was already dark, and Jesus had still not come [back] to them.

¹⁸The sea was getting rough *and* rising high because a strong wind was blowing.

¹⁹Then, when they had rowed three or four miles [and were near the center of the sea], they saw Jesus walking on the sea and approaching the boat; and they were [terribly] frightened.

Speak God's Word

*I choose to obey Jesus'
instruction when He said,
"Do not be afraid."*

| adapted from JOHN 6:20 |

²⁰But Jesus said to them, "It is I (I AM); do not be afraid."
[Matt 14:27; John 8:58]

²¹Then they were willing to take Him on board the boat, and immediately the boat reached the [shore of the] land to which they were going.

²²The next day the crowd that stood on the other side of the sea realized that there had been only one small boat there, and that Jesus had not boarded the boat with His disciples, but that His disciples had gone away alone.

²³[Now some] other small boats from Tiberias had come in near the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks.

²⁴So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor His disciples were there, they boarded the small boats themselves and came to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

²⁵And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they asked Him, "Rabbi, when did You get here?"

²⁶Jesus answered, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, you have been searching for Me, not because you saw the signs (attesting miracles), but because you ate the loaves and were filled.

²⁷“Do not work for food that perishes, but for food that endures [and leads] to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you; for God the Father has authorized Him *and* put His seal on Him.”

²⁸Then they asked Him, “What are we to do, so that we may *habitually* be doing the works of God?”

²⁹Jesus answered, “This is the work of God: that you believe [adhere to, trust in, rely on, and have faith] in the One whom He has sent.”

³⁰So they said to Him, “What sign (attesting miracle) will You do that we may see it and believe You? What [supernatural] work will You do [as proof]?”

³¹“Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written [in Scripture], ‘HE GAVE THEM BREAD OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT.’” [Ex 16:15; Neh 9:15; Ps 78:24]

³²Then Jesus said to them, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Be a Believer

Our work—the work God asks of each believer—is simply to believe in Jesus Christ (see John 6:29). We are accepted because of our faith, not because of our good works. Christians are referred to as “believers.” If our job or purpose were to achieve, we would be called “achievers.” We often want to place emphasis on what we do, but our focus should be on what God has done for us in Jesus Christ.

God loves and accepts us unconditionally. His love is not based on our performance. The Bible says that God’s glorious grace and favor have been freely bestowed on us in the Beloved (see Eph. 1:6). It is through the sacrifice of the Beloved (Jesus) that we have been made acceptable, and not that we achieved acceptance. God loves us no matter what, and it is our faith in Jesus that makes us acceptable to God and pleases Him, not our performance.

**A Prayer To
Renew Your
Mind**



Thank You, Jesus, for being the Bread of Life. Because I believe in You, I will never be hungry. And since I believe in You as Savior, I will never be thirsty, because You will sustain me spiritually.

• adapted from John 6:35

³³“For the Bread of God is He who comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.”

³⁴Then they said to Him, “Lord, always give us this bread.”

³⁵Jesus replied to them, “I am the Bread of Life. The one who comes to Me will never be hungry, and the one who believes in Me [as Savior] will never be thirsty [for that one will be sustained spiritually].

³⁶“But as I told you, you have seen Me and still you do not believe.

³⁷“All that My Father gives Me will come to Me; and the one who comes to Me I will most certainly not cast out [I will never, never reject anyone who follows Me].

³⁸“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but to do the will of Him who sent Me.

³⁹“This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He

has given Me I lose nothing, but that I [give new life and] raise it up at the last day.

POWERPOINT

Jesus talks about our heavenly Father in John 6:37. Many people, including me, have not had good relationships with our earthly fathers. Our fathers were not people in whom we could place our confidence. Thankfully, we have a heavenly Father Whom we can go to with the promise that we will never be rejected. Our heavenly Father, Who is perfect, is far better than even the world's best earthly father.



⁴⁰“For this is My Father’s will *and* purpose, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him [as Savior] will have eternal life, and I will raise him up [from the dead] on the last day.”

⁴¹Now the Jews murmured *and* found fault with Him because He said, “I am the Bread that came down out of

heaven.”

⁴²They kept saying, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now [have the arrogance to] say, ‘I have come down out of heaven’?”

⁴³So Jesus answered, “Stop murmuring among yourselves.

⁴⁴“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him [giving him the desire to come to Me]; and I will raise him up [from the dead] on the last day.

⁴⁵“It is written in the prophets, ‘AND THEY WILL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.’ Everyone who has listened to and learned from the Father, comes to Me. [Is 54:13]

⁴⁶“Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He [who was with the Father and] who is from God; He [alone] has seen the Father.

⁴⁷“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, he who believes [in Me as Savior—whoever adheres to, trusts in, relies on, and has faith in Me—already] has eternal life [that is, now possesses it].

⁴⁸“I am the Bread of Life [the Living Bread which gives and sustains life].

⁴⁹“Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.

⁵⁰“This is the Bread that comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.

⁵¹“I am the Living Bread that came down out of heaven. If anyone eats of this Bread [believes in Me, accepts Me as Savior], he will live forever. And the Bread that I will give for the life of the world is My flesh (body).”

⁵²Then the Jews *began* to argue with one another, saying, “How can this man give us His flesh to eat?”

⁵³And Jesus said to them, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood [unless you believe in Me as Savior and believe in the saving power of My blood which will be shed for you], you do not have life in yourselves.

⁵⁴“The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood [believes in Me, accepts Me as Savior] has eternal life [that is, now possesses it], and I will raise him up [from the dead] on the last day.

⁵⁵“For My flesh is true [spiritual] food, and My blood is true [spiritual] drink.

⁵⁶“He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood [believes in Me, accepts Me as Savior] remains in Me, and I [in the same way remain] in him.

⁵⁷“Just as the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, even so the one who feeds on Me [believes in Me, accepts Me as Savior] will also live because of Me.

⁵⁸“This is the Bread which came down out of heaven. It is not like [the manna that] our fathers ate and they [eventually] died; the one who eats this Bread [believes in Me, accepts Me as Savior] will live forever.”

⁵⁹He said these things in a synagogue while He was teaching in Capernaum.

⁶⁰When many of His disciples heard *this*, they said, “This is a difficult *and* harsh *and* offensive statement. Who can [be expected to] listen to it?”

⁶¹But Jesus, aware that His disciples were complaining

about it, asked them, “Does this cause you to stumble *and* take offense?

⁶²“*What* then [will you think] if you see the Son of Man ascending to [the realm] where He was before?

⁶³“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh conveys no benefit [it is of no account]. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life [providing eternal life].

⁶⁴“But [still] there are some of you who do not believe *and* have faith.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who did not believe, and who would betray Him.

⁶⁵And He was saying, “This is the reason why I have told you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him [that is, unless he is enabled to do so] by the Father.”

⁶⁶As a result of this many of His disciples abandoned Him, and no longer walked with Him.

⁶⁷So Jesus said to the twelve [disciples], “You do not want to leave too, do you?”

⁶⁸Simon Peter answered, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You [alone] have the words of eternal life [you are our only hope].

⁶⁹“We have believed *and* confidently trusted, and [even more] we have come to know [by personal observation and experience] that You are the Holy One of God [the Christ, the Son of the living God].”

⁷⁰Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the twelve [disciples]? And yet one of you is a devil (ally of Satan).”

⁷¹Now He was speaking of Judas, *the son* of Simon Iscariot; for he, one of the twelve [disciples], was about to betray Him.

7 AFTER THIS, Jesus walked [from place to place] in Galilee, for He would not walk in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him.

²Now the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles (Booths) was approaching.

³So His brothers said to Him, “Leave here and go to Judea, so that Your disciples [there] may also see the works that You do.

⁴“No one does anything in secret when he wants to be *known* publicly. If You [must] do these things, show Yourself openly to the world *and* make Yourself known!”

⁵For not even His brothers believed in Him.

⁶So Jesus said to them, “My time has not yet come; but any time is right for you.

⁷“The world cannot hate you [since you are part of it], but it does hate Me because I denounce it *and* testify that its deeds are evil.

⁸“Go up to the feast yourselves. I am not going up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come.”

⁹Having said these things to them, He stayed behind in Galilee.

¹⁰But [afterward], when His brothers had gone up to the feast, He went up too, not publicly [with a caravan], but quietly [because He did not want to be noticed].

¹¹So the Jews kept looking for Him at the feast and asking, “Where is He?”

¹²There was a lot of whispered discussion *and* murmuring among the crowds about Him. Some were saying, “He is a good

man”; others said, “No, on the contrary, He misleads the people [giving them false ideas].”

¹³Yet no one was speaking out openly *and* freely about Him for fear of [the leaders of] the Jews.

¹⁴When the feast was already half over, Jesus went up into the temple [court] and *began to* teach.

¹⁵Then the Jews were perplexed. They said, “How did this man become learned [so versed in the Scriptures and theology] without formal training?”

¹⁶Jesus answered them by saying, “My teaching is not My own, but His who sent Me.

¹⁷“If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know whether the teaching is of God or whether I speak on My own accord *and* by My own authority.

¹⁸“He who speaks on his own accord seeks glory *and* honor for himself. But He who seeks the glory *and* the honor of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness *or* deception in Him.

¹⁹“Did not Moses give you the Law? And yet not one of you keeps the Law. Why do you want to kill Me [for not keeping it]?”

²⁰The crowd answered, “You have a demon [You are out of Your mind]! Who wants to kill You?”

²¹Jesus replied, “I did one work, and you are all astounded. [John 5:1–9]

²²“For this reason Moses has given you [God’s law regarding] circumcision (not that it originated with Moses, but with the patriarchs) and you circumcise a man [even] on the Sabbath.

²³“If, to avoid breaking the Law of Moses, a man undergoes circumcision on the Sabbath, why are you angry with Me for making a man’s whole body well on the Sabbath?

²⁴“Do not judge by appearance [superficially and arrogantly], but judge fairly *and* righteously.”

²⁵Then some of the people of Jerusalem said, “Is this not the Man they want to kill?

²⁶“Look, He is speaking publicly, and they say nothing to Him! Is it possible that the rulers really know that this is the Christ?

²⁷“But we know where this Man is from; whenever the Christ comes, no one will know where He is from.”

²⁸Then Jesus called out as He taught in the temple, “You know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come on my own initiative [as self-appointed], but He who sent Me is true, and Him you do not know.

²⁹“I know Him Myself because I am from Him [I came from His very presence] and it was He [personally] who sent Me.”

³⁰So they were eager to arrest Him; but no one laid a hand on Him, because His time had not yet come.

³¹But many from the crowd believed in Him. And they kept saying, “When the Christ comes, will He do more signs *and* exhibit more proofs than this Man?”

³²The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things [under their breath] about Him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent guards to arrest Him.

³³Therefore Jesus said, “For a little while longer I am [still] with you, and then I go to Him who sent Me.

³⁴“You will look for Me, and will not [be able to] find Me; and where I am, you cannot come.”

³⁵Then the Jews said among themselves, “Where does this Man intend to go that we will not find Him? Does He intend to go to the Dispersion [of Jews scattered and living] among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks?

³⁶“What does this statement of His mean, ‘You will look for Me, and will not [be able to] find Me; and where I am, you cannot come’?”

³⁷Now on the last and most important day of the feast, Jesus stood and called out [in a loud voice], “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink!

³⁸“He who believes in Me [who adheres to, trusts in, and relies on Me], as the Scripture has said, ‘From his innermost being will flow *continually* rivers of living water.’” [Is 58:11; John 4:14]

³⁹But He was speaking of the [Holy] Spirit, whom those who believed in Him [as Savior] were to receive *afterward*. The Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified (raised to honor).

POWERPOINT

Jesus said in John 7:37, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink!” What an open invitation! When we have any kind of need, we may simply come to Him and He will meet it. It seems that the only requirement for approaching Jesus is to have a need. He promises to never cast out anyone who comes to Him (see John 6:37)! Knowing this should definitely put our minds at ease!



KEYS to a Victorious Life

Celebrate What You Do Right

God's Spirit is working in you (see Phil. 2:13). You can relax and let His Spirit do a thorough work in you, changing your thoughts and attitudes until you can see everything and every person the way God sees them. Even when you are doing your worst, God believes the best about you, and He works with you to bring the best out of you. He not only sees what you are, He also sees what you can become.

You can start allowing the Holy Spirit to bring out the best in you by thinking, God loves me unconditionally. He has given me His Spirit and put a new heart and attitude in me. Everything in my spirit is good and positive and full of faith, and out of it "will flow continually rivers of living water" (John 7:38). Anytime you do anything sinful, you can immediately ask God to forgive you and then decide to go in a new direction. It isn't good to ignore the wrong things you do—it's important to always acknowledge the wrong and then ask for forgiveness. It's also important to recognize and celebrate what you do right.

⁴⁰Listening to these words, some of the people said, "This is certainly the Prophet!" [Deut 18:15, 18; John 1:21; 6:14; Acts 3:22]

⁴¹Others said, "This is the Christ (the Messiah, the

Anointed!)” But others said, “Surely the Christ is not going to come out of Galilee, is He?

⁴²“Does the Scripture not say that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?” [Ps 89:3, 4; Mic 5:2]

⁴³So the crowd was divided because of Him.

⁴⁴Some of them wanted to arrest Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

⁴⁵Then the guards went [back] to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, “Why did you not bring Him [here with you]?”

⁴⁶The guards replied, “Never [at any time] has a man talked the way this Man talks!”

⁴⁷Then the Pharisees said to them, “Have you also been deluded *and* swept off your feet?

⁴⁸“Has any of the rulers or Pharisees believed in Him?

⁴⁹“But this [ignorant, contemptible] crowd that does not know the Law is accursed *and* doomed!”

⁵⁰Nicodemus (the one who came to Jesus before and was one of them) asked,

⁵¹“Does our Law convict someone without first giving him a hearing and finding out what he is [accused of] doing?”

⁵²They responded, “Are you also from Galilee? Search [and read the Scriptures], and see [for yourself] that no prophet comes from Galilee!”

⁵³[And everyone went to his own house.

8 BUT JESUS went to the Mount of Olives.

²Early in the morning He came back into the temple [court], and all the people were coming to Him. He sat down and *began* teaching them.

³Now the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery. They made her stand in the center *of the court*,

⁴and they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the very act of adultery.

⁵“Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women [to death]. So what do You say [to do with her—what is Your sentence]?” [Deut 22:22–24]

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Jesus, You are the Light of the world. Those who follow You will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.

• adapted from John 8:12

⁶They said this to test Him, hoping that they would have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and began writing on the ground with His finger.

⁷However, when they persisted in questioning Him, He straightened up and said, “He who is without [any] sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” [Deut 17:7]

⁸Then He stooped down again and started writing on the ground.

⁹They listened [to His reply], and they *began* to go out one by one, starting with the oldest ones, until He was left alone, with the woman [standing there before Him] in the center of *the court*.

¹⁰Straightening up, Jesus said to her, “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?”

¹¹She answered, “No one, Lord!” And Jesus said, “I do not condemn you either. Go. From now on sin no more.”]

¹²Once more Jesus addressed the crowd. He said, “I am the Light of the world. He who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”

¹³Then the Pharisees told Him, “You are testifying on Your own behalf; Your testimony is not valid.”

¹⁴Jesus replied, “Even if I do testify on My own behalf, My testimony is valid, because I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from or where I am going.

¹⁵“You judge according to human standards [just by what you see]. I do not judge anyone.

¹⁶“But even if I do judge, My judgment is true *and* My decision is right; for I am not alone [in making it], but I and the

Father who sent Me [make the same judgment].

¹⁷“Even in your own law it is written that the testimony of two persons is true [valid and admissible]. [Deut 19:15]

¹⁸“I am One [of the Two] who testifies about Myself, and My Father who sent Me testifies about Me.”

¹⁹Then the Pharisees said to Him, “Where is this Father of Yours?” Jesus answered, “You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also.”

²⁰Jesus said these things in the treasury, as He taught in the temple [courtyard]; and no one seized Him, because His time had not yet come.

²¹Then He said again to them, “I am going away, and you will look for Me, and you will die [unforgiven and condemned] in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.”

²²So the Jews were asking [among themselves], “Will He kill Himself? Is that why He says, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come’?”

²³He said to them, “You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world.

²⁴“That is why I told you that you will die [unforgiven and condemned] in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am *the One* [I claim to be], you will die in your sins.” [Ex 3:14; Matt 24:5; Mark 13:6; Luke 21:8]

²⁵So they said to Him, “Who are You [anyway]?” Jesus replied, “What have I been saying to you from the beginning?

POWERPOINT

Jesus said, “Abide in My word. ... And You will know the truth [regarding salvation], and the truth will set you free [from the penalty of sin]” (John 8:31–32).

Abiding in the Word is a process that takes time, but you can get started right away—being excited each day about the progress you are making. Learn to agree with all that God says to you in His Word and to disagree with all the lies of Satan. God has a good plan for you, a plan that He desires to release in your life.



POWERPOINT

Satan is always waging war on the battlefield of our minds. In

John 8:31–32, Jesus gave us the first principle to follow if we want to win the battle of the mind. He said that if we abide in His Word, continually obeying and living in accordance with His teachings, we will know the truth and the truth will set us free. God's Word is truth, and God's truth will be effective for us if we receive it in our hearts and apply it to our everyday circumstances through obedience.



²⁶“I have many things to say and judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I say to the world [only] the things that I have heard from Him.”

²⁷They did not realize [or have the spiritual insight to

understand] that He was speaking to them about the Father.

²⁸So Jesus said, “When you lift up the Son of Man [on the cross], you will know then [without any doubt] that I am *He*, and that I do nothing on My own authority, but I say these things just as My Father taught Me.

²⁹“And He who sent Me is [always] with Me; He has not left Me alone, because I always do what pleases Him.”

³⁰As He said these things, many believed in Him.

³¹So Jesus was saying to the Jews who had believed Him, “If you abide in My word [continually obeying My teachings and living in accordance with them, then] you are truly My disciples.

³²“And you will know the truth [regarding salvation], and the truth will set you free [from the penalty of sin].”

³³They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been enslaved to anyone. What do You mean by saying, ‘You will be set free’?”

³⁴Jesus answered, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, everyone who practices sin *habitually* is a slave of sin.

³⁵“Now the slave does not remain in a household forever; the son [of the master] does remain forever.

³⁶“So if the Son makes you free, then you are unquestionably free.

³⁷“I know that you are Abraham’s descendants; yet you plan to kill Me, because My word has no place [to grow] in you [and it makes no change in your heart].

³⁸“I tell the things that I have seen at My Father’s side [in His very presence]; so you also do the things that you heard from your father.”

³⁹They answered, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you are [truly] Abraham’s children, then do the works of Abraham *and* follow his example.

⁴⁰“But as it is, you want to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God. This is not the way Abraham acted.

⁴¹“You are doing the works of your [own] father.” They said to Him, “We are not illegitimate children; we have one [spiritual] Father: God.”

⁴²Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father [but He is not], you would love *and* recognize Me, for I came from God [out of His very presence] and have arrived *here*. For I have not even come on My own initiative [as self-appointed], but He [is the One who] sent Me.

POWERPOINT

John 8:44 describes Satan as “a liar and the father of lies *and* half-truths.” The enemy strives to give us trouble and then uses it to influence us to speak that same kind of trouble into our future. How are you talking about your life? How do you speak of your future?

According to God’s Word, you can prophesy a better future for yourself and your loved ones by speaking the good things His Word says about you and your life.



WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Defeat the Devil with the Word

Jesus said of the devil, “He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks what is natural to him, for he is a liar and the father of lies *and* half-truths” (John 8:44).

The devil lies. In fact, he doesn’t know how to speak the truth. He tells us things that simply are not true about ourselves, about other people, and about circumstances. Most Christians know this, yet they still listen to his evil words. Sometimes the lies seem to just pop into our minds for no apparent reason; sometimes Satan even speaks to us through other people. He puts critical or hurtful thoughts in their minds about us, and they speak them for us to hear. If we listen and accept the deceptive information we hear, we will become greatly discouraged and deal with multiple problems.

Instead of listening to and believing the enemy’s untruths and deceptions, look at what Jesus did and follow His example. After fasting for forty days in the wilderness, Satan tempted Him three times. Each time Jesus defeated the devil by

declaring, “It is written *and* forever remains written,” and quoting from the Word of God (Matt. 4:1–11). No wonder the devil fled from Him. Learn the truth of God’s Word, and every time that Satan lies to you, quote a scripture back to him.

We need to know how to use God’s Word to defeat Satan’s lies. There are many Christians who don’t seem to realize that they can recognize and refuse to listen to Satan’s voice. Too many people don’t realize that the devil attacks their minds with negative or wrong thoughts. It’s his nature to lie; he is out to enslave everyone.

You are not alone in your spiritual battles. Satan comes against everyone. His entire goal is to kill, steal, and destroy, but Jesus came that we might have and enjoy our lives abundantly (see John 10:10). By learning how to use the spiritual weapons the Lord has made available to us, we can break the strongholds the devil has built in our minds. Every time we win one battle, the next one becomes easier. When we know the truth and act on it, that truth will free us from Satan’s strongholds (see John 8:32).

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God of all power, thank You for giving me the weapons to defeat the lies of the devil. Help me to always use them effectively. Thank You, Jesus, for being my friend and for being with me in my difficulties and struggles. Amen.

⁴³“Why do you misunderstand what I am saying? It is because [your spiritual ears are deaf and] you are unable to hear [the truth of] My word.

⁴⁴“You are of *your* father the devil, and it is your will to practice the desires [which are characteristic] of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks what is natural to him, for he is a liar and the father of lies *and* half-truths.

⁴⁵“But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me [and continue in your unbelief].

⁴⁶“Which one of you [has proof and] convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?

⁴⁷“Whoever is of God *and* belongs to Him hears [the truth of] God’s words; for this reason you do not hear them: because you are not of God *and* you are not in fellowship with Him.”

⁴⁸The Jews answered Him, “Are we not right when we say You are a Samaritan and [that You] have a demon [and are under its power]?”

⁴⁹Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon. On the contrary, I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me.

⁵⁰“However, I am not seeking glory for Myself. There is One who seeks [glory for Me] and judges [those who dishonor Me].

⁵¹“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, if anyone keeps My word [by living in accordance with My message] he will indeed never, ever see *and* experience death.”

⁵²The Jews said to Him, “Now we know that You have a demon [and are under its power]. Abraham died, and also the prophets; yet You say, ‘If anyone keeps My word, he will never, ever taste of death.’

⁵³“Are You greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too! Whom do You make Yourself out to be?”

⁵⁴Jesus answered, “If I glorify Myself, My glory is [worth] nothing. It is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’

⁵⁵Yet you do not know Him, but I know Him fully. If I said I did not know Him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know Him and keep His word.

⁵⁶“Your father Abraham [greatly] rejoiced to see My day (My incarnation). He saw it and was delighted.” [Heb 11:13]

⁵⁷Then the Jews said to Him, “You are not even fifty years old, and You [claim to] have seen Abraham?”

⁵⁸Jesus replied, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, before Abraham was born, I Am.” [Ex 3:14]

⁵⁹So they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus concealed Himself and left the temple.

9 WHILE HE was passing by, He noticed a man [who had been] blind from birth.

²His disciples asked Him, “Rabbi (Teacher), who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?”

³Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,

but it was so that the works of God might be displayed *and* illustrated in him.

⁴“We must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work.

⁵“As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world [giving guidance through My word and works].”

⁶When He had said this, He spat on the ground and made mud with His saliva, and He spread the mud [like an ointment] on the man’s eyes.

⁷And He said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came back seeing.

⁸So the neighbors, and those who used to know him as a beggar, said, “Is not this the man who used to sit and beg?”

⁹Some said, “It is he.” Still others said, “No, but he looks like him.” But he kept saying, “I am the man.”

¹⁰So they said to him, “How were your eyes opened?”

¹¹He replied, “The Man called Jesus made mud and smeared it on my eyes and told me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed, and I received my sight!”

¹²They asked him, “Where is He?” He said, “I do not know.”

¹³Then they brought the man who was formerly blind to the Pharisees.

¹⁴Now it was on a Sabbath day that Jesus made the mud and opened the man’s eyes.

¹⁵So the Pharisees asked him again how he received his sight. And he said to them, “He smeared mud on my eyes, and

I washed, and now I see.”

¹⁶Then some of the Pharisees said, “This Man [Jesus] is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner (a non-observant Jew) do such signs *and* miracles?” So there was a difference of opinion among them.

¹⁷Accordingly they said to the blind man again, “What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?” And he said, “[It must be that] He is a prophet!”

¹⁸However, the Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the man’s parents.

¹⁹They asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?”

²⁰His parents answered, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind;

²¹but as to how he now sees, we do not know; or who has opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him [and stop asking us]; he is of age, he will speak for himself *and* give his own account of it.”

²²His parents said this because they were afraid of [the leaders of] the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone acknowledged Jesus to be the Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue (excommunicated).

²³Because of this his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

²⁴So a second time they called the man who had been [born] blind, and said to him, “Give God glory *and* praise [for your sight]! We know this Man [Jesus] is a sinner [separated from God].”

²⁵Then he answered, “I do not know whether He is a sinner

[separated from God]; but one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.”

²⁶So they said to him, “What did He [actually] do to you? How did He open your eyes?”

²⁷He answered, “I already told you and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again *and* again? Do you want to become His disciples, too?”

Speak God's Word

*I believe in God and in His
Word.*

| adapted from JOHN 9:38 |

²⁸And [at that remark] they stormed at him and jeered, “You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses!

²⁹“We know [for certain] that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this Man, we do not know where He is from.”

³⁰The man replied, “Well, this is astonishing! You do not know where He comes from, and yet He opened my eyes!

³¹“We know [according to your tradition] that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone fears God and does His will, He hears him.

³²“Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind.

³³“If this Man were not from God, He would not be able to do anything [like this because God would not hear His prayer].”

³⁴They answered him, “You were born entirely in sins [from head to foot], and you [presume to] teach us?” Then they threw him out [of the synagogue].

³⁵Jesus heard that they had put him out [of the

synagogue], and finding him, He asked, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

³⁶He answered, “Who is He, Sir? Tell me so that I may believe in Him.”

³⁷Jesus said to him, “You have both seen Him, and [in fact] He is the one who is talking with you.”

³⁸And he said, “Lord, I believe [in You and Your word]!” And he worshiped Him [with reverence and awe].

³⁹Then Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment [to separate those who believe in Me from those who reject Me—to declare judgment on those who choose to be separated from God], so that the sightless would see, and those who see would become blind.”

⁴⁰Some Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, “Are we also blind?”

⁴¹Jesus said to them, “If you were blind [to spiritual things], you would have no sin [and would not be blamed for your unbelief]; but since you claim to have [spiritual] sight, [you have no excuse so] your sin *and* guilt remain. [Prov 26:12]

10 “I ASSURE you *and* most solemnly say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up from some other place [on the stone wall], that one is a thief and a robber.

²“But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep [the protector and provider].

³“The doorkeeper opens [the gate] for this man, and the sheep hear his voice *and* pay attention to it. And [knowing

that they listen] he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out [to pasture].

⁴“When he has brought all his own *sheep* outside, he walks on ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice *and* recognize his call.

⁵“They will never follow a stranger, but will run away from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.”

⁶Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what He was talking about.

⁷So Jesus said again, “I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, I am the Door for the sheep [leading to life].

⁸“All who came before Me [as false messiahs and self-appointed leaders] are thieves and robbers, but the [true] sheep did not hear them.

⁹“I am the Door; anyone who enters through Me will be saved [and will live forever], and will go in and out [freely], and find pasture (spiritual security).

¹⁰“The thief comes only in order to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have *and* enjoy life, and have it in abundance [to the full, till it overflows].

¹¹“I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His [own] life for the sheep. [Ps 23; Is 40:11]

¹²“But the hired man [who merely serves for wages], who is neither the shepherd nor the owner of the sheep, when he sees the wolf coming, deserts the flock and runs away; and the wolf snatches the sheep and scatters *them*.

¹³“The *man runs* because he is a hired hand [who serves only for wages] and is not concerned about the [safety of the] sheep.

¹⁴“I am the Good Shepherd, and I know [without any doubt those who are] My own and My own know Me [and have a deep, personal relationship with Me]—

¹⁵even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father—and I lay down My [very own] life [sacrificing it] for *the benefit of* the sheep.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Happy Christians

Some people perceive Christianity as a stern, severe, and joyless lifestyle. That's because some people who call themselves Christians have sour attitudes, sad faces, or are critical of and quick to judge others. Those of us who love and serve God and His Son, Jesus Christ, should be the happiest people on earth. We should be able to enjoy everything we do, simply because we know God is present and that He loves us. Jesus said, "I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance [to the full, till it overflows]" (John 10:10).

Happiness is an emotion that fosters well-being, and it is contagious. One of the best ways to be a witness to others about Jesus is to be happy and enjoy everything you do. Since most people simply want to be happy, if they see truly happy Christians, they will be open to learning about and receiving Jesus for themselves.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

How To Have Abundant Life

Jesus said, “I came that they may have *and* enjoy life, and have it in abundance [to the full, till it overflows]” (John 10:10). We want to be happy and enjoy life!

Sadly, we can waste a lot of time believing the misconception that joy and enjoyment come from our circumstances when they actually come from our attitude toward each circumstance rather than from the circumstance itself. Obviously, nobody enjoys a troubling or painful circumstance, but if we look at it in a hopeful, faith-filled way, we can watch God work out all things in our life for our good (see Rom 8:28).

Enjoying life begins with the thoughts you choose to think. No matter what is going on in your life today, if you will choose happy, hope-filled thoughts, you will feel happier. Our thoughts are intricately connected to our feelings; if we want to feel better, we need to think better. Nothing good comes from thinking sour, critical, and negative thoughts; something good always comes when we think according to God’s plan for

our life.

God has promised us salvation, redemption, restoration, joy, peace, His constant presence in our lives, and His power to assist us in all we do. He desires for us to enjoy an intimate relationship with Him through Jesus Christ and good relationships with people. He wants to bless us, make us strong in Him, and see us enjoy our position of right standing with Him through our faith in Jesus. He sets before us life and death and tells us to choose life! Choose good!

Choosing good does not mean that goodness merely falls on us with no effort on our part. We need to follow through and obediently work with the Holy Spirit, but our efforts will be divinely directed and energized by God Himself. When God asks us to do anything, He always empowers us to do it.

I like to say, “Nothing good happens accidentally.” We cannot “catch” good thinking, but we can choose good, positive, and godly thoughts on purpose every day. I don’t think they will ever come so automatically that we never have to put forth an effort, but I do know that if we leave our minds empty and fruitless, our enemy, the devil, will be more than happy to fill them with every kind of life-stealing thought that exists.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You that You came that I may have and enjoy life and have it in abundance. Help me to know what that means in every area of my life and to experience a relationship with You that overflows in me and through me to others. Amen.

POWERPOINT

From the beginning of time God has had a good plan for our lives, but the enemy upset that plan by orchestrating the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. God had given Adam and Eve dominion over everything in the Garden. However, they lost their authority when they disobeyed God. Suddenly Satan had the upper hand. Satan is a thief and a liar (see John 10:10). From the beginning he has sought to divert the good things that are ours, and he will continue to do that if we allow him to do so. Thankfully, we have the authority to overcome him.



¹⁶“I have other sheep [beside these] that are not of this fold. I must bring those also, and they will listen to My voice

and pay attention to My call, and they will become one flock with one Shepherd. [Ezek 34:23; Eph 2:13–18]

¹⁷“For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My [own] life so that I may take it back.

¹⁸“No one takes it away from Me, but I lay it down voluntarily. I am authorized *and* have power to lay it down *and* to give it up, and I am authorized *and* have power to take it back. This command I have received from My Father.”

¹⁹A division [of opinion] occurred again among the Jews because of these words [of His].

²⁰Many of them said, “He has a demon and He is mad [insane—He raves and rambles]. Why listen to Him?”

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Jesus, You are the Good Shepherd. You know without any doubt those who are Your own, and Your own know You and have a deep, personal relationship with You.

²¹Others were saying, “These are not the words *and* thoughts of one possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

²²At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem.

²³It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple [area] in Solomon’s portico.

²⁴So the Jews surrounded Him and began saying to Him, “How long are You going to keep us in suspense? If You are [really] the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed), tell us so plainly *and* openly.”

²⁵Jesus answered them, “I have told you so, yet you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name testify concerning Me [they are My credentials and the evidence declaring who I am].

²⁶“But you do not believe Me [so you do not trust and follow Me] because you are not My sheep.

²⁷“The sheep that are My own hear My voice *and* listen to Me; I know them, and they follow Me.

²⁸“And I give them eternal life, and they will never, ever [by any means] perish; and no one will ever snatch them out of My hand.

²⁹“My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater *and* mightier than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father’s hand.

³⁰“I and the Father are One [in essence and nature].”

³¹ Again the Jews picked up stones to stone Him.

³² Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works [and many acts of mercy] from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?"

³³ The Jews answered Him, "We are not going to stone You for a good work, but for blasphemy, because You, a *mere* man, make Yourself out to be God."

³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I SAID, YOU ARE GODS [human judges representing God, not divine beings]'? [Ps 82:6]

³⁵ "If He called them gods, men to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be undone *or* annulled *or* broken),

³⁶ [if that is true] then do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified *and* set apart *for Himself* and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"

Speak God's Word

I am one of God's sheep. He knows me, and I hear His voice, listen to Him, and follow Him. He gives me eternal life. I will never perish, and no one will ever snatch me out of His hand.

| adapted from JOHN 10:27-28 |

³⁷“If I do not do the works of My Father [that is, the miracles that only God could perform], then do not believe Me.

³⁸“But if I am doing them, even if you do not believe Me *or* have faith in Me, [at least] believe the works [that I do—admit that they are the works of God], so that you may know and keep on knowing [clearly—without any doubt] that the Father is in Me, and I am in the Father [that is, I am One with Him].”

³⁹So they tried again to seize Him, but He eluded their grasp.

⁴⁰He went back again across the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing, and He was staying there.

⁴¹Many came to Him, and they were saying, “John did not perform a single sign (attesting miracle), but everything John said about this Man was true *and* accurate.”

⁴²And many there believed *and* confidently trusted in Him [accepting Him as Savior, and following His teaching].

11 NOW A certain man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village where Mary and her sister Martha lived.

²It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. [John 12:3]

³So the sisters sent *word* to Him, saying, “Lord, he [our brother and Your friend] whom You love is sick.”

⁴When Jesus heard this, He said, “This sickness will not end in death; but [on the contrary it is] for the glory *and* honor of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.”

⁵Now Jesus loved *and* was concerned about Martha and her sister and Lazarus [and considered them dear friends].

⁶So [even] when He heard that Lazarus was sick, He stayed in the same place two more days.

⁷Then He said to His disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.”

⁸The disciples said to Him, “Rabbi (Teacher), the Jews were only recently going to stone You, and You are [thinking of] going back there again?”

⁹Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours [of light] in the day? Anyone who walks in the daytime does not stumble, because he sees [by] the light of this world.

¹⁰“But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because there is no light in him.”

¹¹He said this, and after that said, “Our friend Lazarus has

fallen asleep; but I am going *there* to wake him.”

¹²The disciples answered, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.”

¹³However, Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was referring to natural sleep.

¹⁴So then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead.

¹⁵“And for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”

¹⁶Then Thomas, who was called Didymus (the twin), said to his fellow disciples, “Let us go too, that we may die with Him.”

¹⁷So when Jesus arrived, He found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.

¹⁸Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away;

¹⁹and many of the Jews had come to see Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning [the loss of] their brother.

²⁰So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet Him, while Mary remained sitting in the house.

²¹Then Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.

²²“Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give to You.”

²³Jesus told her, “Your brother will rise [from the dead].”

²⁴Martha replied, “I know that he will rise [from the dead] in the resurrection on the last day.”

²⁵Jesus said to her, “I am the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in (adheres to, trusts in, relies on) Me [as Savior] will live even if he dies; ²⁶and everyone who lives and

believes in Me [as Savior] will never die. Do you believe this?"

²⁷She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed *and* continue to believe that You are the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed), the Son of God, He who was [destined and promised] to come into the world [and it is for You that the world has waited]."

²⁸After she had said this, she left and called her sister Mary, privately whispering [to her], "The Teacher is here and is asking for you."

²⁹And when she heard this, she got up quickly and went to Him.

³⁰Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met Him.

³¹So when the Jews who were with her in the house comforting her, saw how quickly Mary got up and left, they followed her, assuming that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

³²When Mary came [to the place] where Jesus was and saw Him, she fell at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."

³³When Jesus saw her sobbing, and the Jews who had come with her also sobbing, He was deeply moved in spirit [to the point of anger at the sorrow caused by death] and was troubled, ³⁴and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said, "Lord, come and see."

³⁵Jesus wept.

³⁶So the Jews were saying, "See how He loved him [as a close friend]!"

³⁷But some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened

the blind man's eyes, have kept this man from dying?"

38 So Jesus, again deeply moved within [to the point of anger], approached the tomb. It was a cave, and a boulder was lying against it [to cover the entrance].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Maintain Your Confession

If we believe that words have power, we can easily understand why maintaining a confession of faith in Jesus Christ in all circumstances is so important. When Jesus stood in front of Lazarus' tomb, intending to raise him from death, Martha spoke out of fear, not out of her faith. She said to Him, "Lord, by this time there will be an offensive odor, for he has been dead four days! [It is hopeless!]" (John 11:39).

Jesus responded, "Did I not say to you that if you believe [in Me], you will see the glory of God [the expression of His excellence]?" (John 11:40). I rely on this scripture when I don't understand anything that is going on around me. Even when my circumstances seem unbearable, I try to remember to say, "I believe, and I will see the glory of God."

According to the amplification of John 11:40, glory means "the expression of God's excellence." Seeing the glory of God does not necessarily mean that we get everything we want and in the way we want it all the time. It does mean that we can trust God for His best in every situation. We don't have to understand all God's ways to stay in faith, "I believe God, and I will see His glory."

POWERPOINT

In John 11:41–42, just before Jesus called Lazarus forth from the tomb, He prayed: “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. I knew that You always hear Me *and* listen to Me; but I have said this because of the people standing around, so that they may believe that You have sent Me [and that You have made Me Your representative].” What confidence! Satan does not want us to have that kind of confidence and conviction. But I encourage you: *Be confident!* Make a decision that you are a believer, not a beggar. Go to God and ask boldly in prayer for what you need.



³⁹Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of

the dead man, said to Him, “Lord, by this time there will be an offensive odor, for he has been *dead* four days! [It is hopeless!]”

⁴⁰Jesus said to her, “Did I not say to you that if you believe [in Me], you will see the glory of God [the expression of His excellence]?”

⁴¹So they took away the stone. And Jesus raised His eyes [toward heaven] and said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.

⁴²“I knew that You always hear Me *and* listen to Me; but I have said this because of the people standing around, so that they may believe that You have sent Me [and that You have made Me Your representative].”

⁴³When He had said this, He shouted with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!”

⁴⁴Out came the man who had been dead, his hands and feet *tightly* wrapped in burial cloths (linen strips), and with a [burial] cloth wrapped around his face. Jesus said to them, “Unwrap him and release him.”

⁴⁵So then, many of the Jews who had come to [be with] Mary and who were eyewitnesses to what Jesus had done, believed in Him.

⁴⁶But some of them went back to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

⁴⁷So the chief priests and Pharisees convened a council [of the leaders in Israel], and said, “What are we doing? For this man performs many signs (attesting miracles).

⁴⁸“If we let Him go on like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our [holy]

place (the temple) and our nation.”

⁴⁹But one of them, Caiaphas, who was the high priest that year [the year of Christ’s crucifixion], said to them, “You know nothing at all!

⁵⁰“Nor do you understand that it is expedient *and* politically advantageous for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish.”

⁵¹Now he did not say this [simply] on his own initiative; but being the high priest that year, he [was unknowingly used by God and] prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, [Is 53:8]

⁵²and not only for the nation, but also for the purpose of gathering together into one body the children of God who have been scattered abroad. [Is 49:6]

⁵³So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.

⁵⁴For that reason Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews, but left there *and* went to the district that borders on the uninhabited wilderness, to a town called Ephraim; and He stayed there with the disciples.

POWERPOINT

Sometimes we look at our lives and feel that there is no hope for any change. When Lazarus had already been dead for four days, his sister Martha did not believe that Jesus could do anything about it. As far as she was concerned, the situation was beyond hope of seeing her brother once again alive on earth (see John 11:39). But Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (see John 11:43–44) and proved once again that nothing is impossible with God (see Luke 1:37).



⁵⁵Now the Passover of the Jews was approaching, and many from the country went up to Jerusalem before Passover to purify themselves [ceremonially, so that they would be able to participate in the feast].

⁵⁶So they were looking for Jesus as they stood in the temple [area], and saying among themselves, “What do you think? Will He not come to the feast at all?”

⁵⁷Now the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it so that they might arrest Him.

12 SIX DAYS before the Passover, Jesus went to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom He had raised from the dead. [Matt 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9]

²So they gave a supper for Him there. Martha was serving, and Lazarus was one of those reclining *at the table* with Him.

³Then Mary took a pound of very expensive perfume of pure nard, and she poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

⁴But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, the one who was going to betray Him, said,

⁵“Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and [the money] given to the poor?”

⁶Now he said this, not because he cared about the poor [for he had never cared about them], but because he was a thief; and since he had the money box [serving as treasurer for the twelve disciples], he used to pilfer what was put into it.

⁷So Jesus said, “Let her alone, so that she may keep [the rest of] it for the day of My burial.

⁸“You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me.”

⁹A large crowd of Jews learned that He was there [at Bethany]; and they came, not only because of Jesus, but also to see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead.

¹⁰So the chief priests planned to kill Lazarus also,

¹¹because on account of him many of the Jews were going away [from the teaching and traditions of the Jewish leaders] and believing in Jesus [following Him as Savior and Messiah].

¹²The next day, when the large crowd who had come to the *Passover* feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, [Matt 21:4–9; Mark 11:7–10; Luke 19:35–38]

¹³they took branches of palm trees [in homage to Him as King] and went out to meet Him, and they *began* shouting *and* kept shouting “Hosanna! BLESSED (celebrated, praised) IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, even the King of Israel!” [Ps 118:26]

¹⁴And Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; just as it is written [in Scripture],

¹⁵“DO NOT FEAR, DAUGHTER OF ZION; BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING, SEATED ON A DONKEY’S COLT.” [Zech 9:9]

¹⁶His disciples did not understand [the meaning of] these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified *and* exalted, they remembered that these things had been written about Him and had been done to Him.

¹⁷So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to tell others *about Him*.

¹⁸For this reason the crowd went to meet Him, because they heard that He had performed this [miraculous] sign.

¹⁹Then the Pharisees [argued and] said to one another, “You see that your efforts are futile. Look! The whole world has gone [running] after Him!”

²⁰Now there were some Greeks (Gentiles) among those who were going up to worship at the feast;

²¹these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request, saying, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

Speak God's Word

*I believe that the one who
loves his life selfishly
eventually loses it through
death, but the one who hates
life in this world compared to
his love for God, and is
concerned with pleasing
God, will keep it for life
eternal.*

| *adapted from* JOHN 12:25 |

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Live To Please God

John 12:42–43 states that many of the leading men in Jerusalem believed in Jesus but would not confess their faith for fear of being expelled from the synagogue because of it. “They loved the approval of men more than the approval of God” (John 12:43). We learn from this example that some people are hindered from a relationship with Jesus because they are addicted to approval. Although they want a relationship with the Lord, they love the approval of other people more and end up never fulfilling their destiny.

Wanting to be pleasing and acceptable to others is natural, but it is not good to become a people-pleaser. I define people-pleasers as those who try to please people even if they have to compromise their conscience to do so. They fear rejection, judgment, what people think and say, especially anger and disapproval, and they allow others to control, manipulate, and use them. They are not led by the Holy Spirit, as Scripture instructs us to be (see Rom. 8:14).

Live to please God, and you will not become addicted to others’ approval. What you think of yourself is more important than what others think of you. You cannot feel good about yourself if you know that what you are doing does not have God’s approval. Don’t let anyone steal from you what Jesus died to give to you—the freedom to follow the leading of Holy Spirit as an individual.

²²Philip came and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

²³And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified *and* exalted.

²⁴“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone [just one grain, never more]. But if it dies, it produces much grain *and* yields a harvest.

²⁵“The one who loves his life [eventually] loses it [through death], but the one who hates his life in this world [and is concerned with pleasing God] will keep it for life eternal.

²⁶“If anyone serves Me, he must [continue to faithfully] follow Me [without hesitation, holding steadfastly to Me, conforming to My example in living and, if need be, suffering or perhaps dying because of faith in Me]; and wherever I am [in heaven’s glory], there will My servant be also. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

²⁷“Now My soul is troubled *and* deeply distressed; what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour [of trial and agony]’? But it is for this [very] purpose that I have come to this hour [this time and place].

²⁸“[Rather, I will say,] ‘Father, glorify (honor, extol) Your name!’” Then a voice came from heaven saying, “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”

²⁹The crowd *of people* who stood nearby and heard the voice said that it had thundered; others said, “An angel has spoken to Him!”

³⁰Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not

for mine.

³¹“Now judgment is upon this world [the sentence is being passed]. Now the ruler of this world (Satan) will be cast out.

³²“And I, if *and* when I am lifted up from the earth [on the cross], will draw all *people* to Myself [Gentiles, as well as Jews].”

³³He said this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.

³⁴At this the crowd answered Him, “We have heard from the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; how then can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?” [Ps 110:4]

³⁵So Jesus said to them, “The Light is among you [only] a little while longer. Walk while you have the Light [keep on living by it], so that darkness will not overtake you. He who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going [he is drifting aimlessly].

³⁶“While you have the Light, believe *and* trust in the Light [have faith in it, hold on to it, rely on it], so that you may become sons of Light [being filled with Light as followers of God].”

Jesus said these things, and then He left and hid Himself from them.

³⁷Even though He had done so many signs (attesting miracles) right before them, yet they still did not believe *and* failed to trust Him—

³⁸*This was* to fulfill what Isaiah the prophet said: “LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR MESSAGE? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM (the power) OF THE LORD BEEN SHOWN (unveiled, revealed)?” [Is

53:1]

³⁹Therefore they could not believe, for Isaiah said again,

⁴⁰“HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART, TO KEEP THEM FROM SEEING WITH THEIR EYES AND UNDERSTANDING WITH THEIR HEART AND BEING CONVERTED; OTHERWISE, I [their God] WOULD HEAL THEM.”

⁴¹Isaiah said these things because he saw His glory and spoke about Him. [Is 6:9, 10]

⁴²Nevertheless, even many of the leading men believed in Him [as Savior and Messiah], but because of the Pharisees they would not confess it, for fear that [if they acknowledged Him openly] they would be put out of the synagogue (excommunicated);

Speak God's Word

Jesus has come as Light into the world. Because I believe and trust in Him as Savior, anchoring my hope in Him and relying on the truth of His message, I will not continue to live in darkness.

| adapted from JOHN 12:46 |

⁴³for they loved the approval of men more than the approval of God.

⁴⁴But Jesus loudly declared, “The one who believes *and* trusts in Me does not believe [only] in Me but [also believes] in Him who sent Me.

⁴⁵“And whoever sees Me sees the One who sent Me.

⁴⁶“I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes *and* trusts in Me [as Savior—all those who anchor their hope in Me and rely on the truth of My message] will not continue to live in darkness.

⁴⁷“If anyone hears My words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge *and* condemn the world [that is, to initiate the final judgment of the world], but to save the world.

⁴⁸“Whoever rejects Me and refuses to accept My teachings, has one who judges him; the *very* word that I spoke will judge *and* condemn him on the last day.

⁴⁹“For I have never spoken on My own initiative *or* authority, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment *regarding* what to say and what to speak. [Deut 18:18, 19]

⁵⁰“I know that His commandment is eternal life. So the things I speak, I speak [in accordance with His exact instruction,] just as the Father has told Me.”

13 NOW BEFORE the Passover Feast, Jesus knew that His hour had come [and it was time] for Him to leave this world *and* return to the Father. Having [greatly] loved His own who were in the world, He loved them [and continuously loves them with His perfect love] to the end (eternally).

²It was during supper, when the devil had already put [the thought of] betraying Jesus into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son,

³that Jesus, knowing that the Father had put everything into His hands, and that He had come from God and was [now] returning to God,

⁴got up from supper, took off His [outer] robe, and taking a [servant's] towel, He tied it around His waist.

⁵Then He poured water into the basin and began washing the disciples' feet and wiping them with the towel which was tied around His waist.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The Importance of Serving Others

Christ came as a servant, yet many of us, His followers, find it difficult to serve the people around us. In John 13:14, Jesus provided a powerful example of serving others by washing His disciples' feet and saying, "So if I, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet as well." Jesus was not speaking only about literal foot washing; He was actually saying to His disciples, and to us, "Help one another. Take care of one another. Do for one another. Meet each other's needs."

Jesus said in John 13:17, "If you know these things, you are blessed [happy and favored by God] if you put them into practice [and faithfully do them]."

You and I are not going to be blessed because we know we should do good for others or because we know we should have a servant's attitude. We'll be blessed because we do what Jesus did. Serving others means living the way Jesus lived. It takes time, sacrifice, and effort, and with God's help, we can do it.

⁶When He came to Simon Peter, he said to Him, "Lord, are You going to wash my feet?"

⁷Jesus replied to him, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but you will [fully] understand it later."

⁸Peter said to Him, “You will never wash my feet!” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me [we can have nothing to do with each other].”

⁹Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, [in that case, wash] not only my feet, but also my hands and my head!”

¹⁰Jesus said to him, “Anyone who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, and is completely clean. And you [My disciples] are clean, but not all *of you*.”

¹¹For He knew who was going to betray Him; for that reason He said, “Not all of you are clean.”

¹²So when He had washed their feet and put on His [outer] robe and reclined *at the table* again, He said to them, “Do you understand what I have done for you?”

¹³“You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you are right in doing so, for *that is who* I am.

¹⁴“So if I, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet as well.

¹⁵“For I gave you [this as] an example, so that you should do [in turn] as I did to you.

¹⁶“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.

¹⁷“If you know these things, you are blessed [happy and favored by God] if you put them into practice [and faithfully do them].

¹⁸“I am not speaking of all of you. I know whom I have chosen; but [this has happened] in order that the Scripture may be fulfilled: ‘HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS RAISED UP HIS HEEL

AGAINST ME [as My enemy].’ [Ps 41:9]

¹⁹“From now on I am telling you [what will happen] before it occurs, so that when it does take place you may believe that I am *He* [who I say I am—the Christ, the Anointed, the Messiah].

²⁰“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, the one who receives *and* welcomes whomever I send receives Me; and the one who receives Me receives Him who sent Me [in that same way].”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Love Proves Discipleship

What are you doing to help someone else? Are you making a difference in someone's life? That's how you show your love for God. The cycle of love God pours into your life is not complete until it is pouring out of you to meet other people's needs.

If love has no action to back it up, it becomes empty words with no power. God proved His love for us by giving His only Son to die for our sins, and we can prove our love for God by letting Him use us to help other people. Jesus said, "By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you have love and unselfish concern for one another" (John 13:35). Don't wait to feel like being a blessing; rather, start doing it on purpose, and you will realize that it adds joy to your life.

²¹After Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, one of you will betray Me *and* hand Me over."

²²The disciples *began* looking at one another, puzzled *and* disturbed as to whom He could mean.

²³One of His disciples, whom Jesus loved (esteemed), was leaning against Jesus' chest.

²⁴So Simon Peter motioned to him (John) and [quietly] asked [him to ask Jesus] of whom He was speaking.

²⁵Then leaning back against Jesus' chest, he (John) asked

Him [privately], “Lord, who is it?”

²⁶Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I am going to give this piece [of bread] after I have dipped it.” So when He had dipped the piece of bread [into the dish], He gave it to Judas, *son* of Simon Iscariot.

²⁷After [Judas had taken] the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly [without delay].”

²⁸But no one reclining *at the table* knew why He said *this* to him.

²⁹Some thought that, since Judas [as the treasurer of the group] had the money box, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the feast,” or that he was to give something to the poor.

³⁰After taking the piece of bread, he went out immediately; and it was night.

³¹So when Judas had left, Jesus said, “Now is [the time for] the Son of Man [to be] glorified, and God is glorified in Him;

³²[if God is glorified in Him,] God will also glorify Him (the Son) in Himself, and will glorify Him at once.

³³“Little children, I am with you [only] a little longer. You will look for Me and, as I told the Jews, so I tell you now, ‘Where I am going, you are not able to come.’ [John 8:21]

³⁴“I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, so you too are to love one another.

³⁵“By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you have love *and* unselfish concern for one another.”

³⁶Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, where are You going?” Jesus answered, “Where I am going, you cannot follow Me now; but you will be able to follow later.”

³⁷Peter said to Him, “Lord, why cannot I follow You now? I will lay down my life for You!” [Matt 26:33–35; Mark 14:29–31; Luke 22:33, 34]

³⁸Jesus answered, “Will you [really] lay down your life for Me? I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, before a rooster crows you will deny *and* completely disown Me three times.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

How To Recognize Disciples

In John 13:34–35, Jesus said that people would recognize us as His disciples by our expressions of love and unselfish concern for one another. Love is an action verb. If we love others, we do things for them.

The Bible also says, “The one who... hates (works against) his brother [in Christ] is in the darkness until now” (1 John 2:9). To *hate* (in the biblical sense) is to do nothing or to turn away in indifference. We may not even really dislike people, but when we don’t care enough to help them when they have troubles and problems, we are not acting in love. To make matters worse, we often judge others and think, *If they really loved God, they wouldn’t be in such a predicament.* This attitude opens a door of opportunity for Satan to separate us from those who most need our love.

Years ago, I became extremely sick during my fourth pregnancy, and I truly wanted people to have empathy for me and help me. I remained sick for several months, and as I prayed sincerely asking God to show me what I could do to get

well, He reminded me of something for which I needed to repent. I had criticized another woman who was always sick during her pregnancy. I should have helped her, but instead I considered her to be uncommitted and weak. This became a time of learning for me. God taught me to realize how often I had judged or criticized others because they didn't measure up to the standards I thought they should hold.

We all make mistakes and have weaknesses. God didn't call us to point out those weaknesses to one other, but He did call us to care for one another—to show Christ's love in any way we can. Ephesians 4:32 says, “Be kind *and* helpful to one another, tender-hearted [compassionate, understanding], forgiving one another [readily and freely], just as God in Christ also forgave you.” That's how we can win over satanic attacks.

If you practice God's “love walk,” you will grow personally and enable others to grow too. The devil can't do you much harm if you truly walk in loving relationship with others as Christ loves you.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord Jesus, I want to love others, and I want to be kind and caring. I also know that I fail at times. In Your name, I ask You to forgive me and enable me to forgive others who hurt me or do not live up to my standards. Amen.

POWERPOINT

Jesus says in John 14:6 that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. This means He will show us how to live. All the answers we need are in the Bible, so it's very important that we both study it and obey it each day.

Following the Way and the Truth and the Life will lead to peace, joy, and blessings in our lives.



14 “DO NOT let your heart be troubled (afraid, cowardly).

Believe [confidently] in God *and* trust in Him, [have faith, hold on to it, rely on it, keep going and] believe also in Me.

²“In My Father’s house are many dwelling places. If it were not so, I would have told you, because I am going there to prepare a place for you.

³“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and I will take you to Myself, so that where I am you may

be also.

⁴“And [to the place] where I am going, you know the way.”

⁵Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going; so how can we know the way?”

⁶Jesus said to him, “I am the [only] Way [to God] and the [real] Truth and the [real] Life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

⁷“If you had [really] known Me, you would also have known My Father. From now on you know Him, and have seen Him.”

⁸Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father and then we will be satisfied.”

⁹Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you for so long a time, and you do not know Me yet, Philip, *nor* recognize clearly who I am? Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’

¹⁰“Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words I say to you I do not say on My own initiative *or* authority, but the Father, abiding *continually* in Me, does His works [His attesting miracles and acts of power].

¹¹“Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe [Me] because of the [very] works themselves [which you have witnessed].

¹²“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, anyone who believes in Me [as Savior] will also do the things that I do; and he will do even greater things than these [in extent and outreach], because I am going to the Father.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Power in Jesus' Name

When our youngest son was still in school, friends stayed with him whenever Dave and I traveled. In order for them to seek medical treatment for him if needed, we had to sign a legal document stating that they had the right to use our names on our son's behalf—literally to make decisions in our place.

This is exactly what Jesus did for His disciples and, ultimately, for all who would believe in Him—He gave us the right to use His name when we go to God in prayer (see John 14:13–14; 16:23–24). When we pray in His name, it is as if He Himself is praying. This privilege seems almost too wonderful to believe! But we can believe it because we have Scripture to back it up.

Speak God's Word

*Because I really love the
Lord, I will keep and obey
His commandments.*

| adapted from JOHN 14:15 |

¹³“And I will do whatever you ask in My name [as My representative], this I will do, so that the Father may be glorified *and* celebrated in the Son. [Ex 3:14]

¹⁴“If you ask Me anything in My name [as My representative], I will do it.

¹⁵“If you [really] love Me, you will keep *and* obey My commandments.

¹⁶“And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counselor, Strengthener, Standby), to be with you forever— ¹⁷the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive [and take to its heart] because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He (the Holy Spirit) remains with you *continually* and will be in you.

¹⁸“I will not leave you as orphans [comfortless, bereaved, and helpless]; I will come [back] to you.

¹⁹“After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but

you will see Me; because I live, you will live also.

POWERPOINT

When you think about the changes you need to make in your life, isn't it good to know that you do not have to make them alone? You have a divine Helper (see John 14:26) Who will not only remind you what to do, but also strengthen you to do it. You can lean on Him at all times.



²⁰“On that day [when that time comes] you will know for yourselves that I am in My Father, and you *are* in Me, and I *am* in you.

²¹“The person who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who [really] loves Me; and whoever [really] loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and reveal Myself to him [I will make Myself real to him].”

²²Judas (not Iscariot) asked Him, “Lord, what has happened that You are going to reveal Yourself to us and not to the world?”

²³Jesus answered, “If anyone [really] loves Me, he will keep My word (teaching); and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling place with him.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Perfect Peace

Perhaps you have never thought about how important it is to manage your emotions. I imagine we all think, I can't help how I act when I am having a hard time. That is a normal human reaction, but with God on your side helping you, you don't have to behave in the same way as a "normal" person would.

It is obvious from Jesus' words in John 14:27 that He desires for you to have wonderful peace, His perfect peace. Please notice He is also giving you the responsibility of letting His peace "calm you in every circumstance and give you courage and strength for every challenge." He wants you to choose to control the negative emotions that can trouble your heart and make you afraid. You cannot always control your circumstances, but with God's help you can control your responses to them.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

How To Speak in Times of Trouble

John 14:30 teaches us the absolute importance of not speaking rashly from our emotions during times of stress and pressure. Jesus had been telling His disciples that He would be leaving the world very soon, and that now the time had finally come. It was time for Him to do what His Father had sent Him to do—to take upon Himself the sins of the world and to die in our place. I wonder what any one of us would have said under those circumstances. What would have come out of our mouth—fear, worry, panic, complaining, doubt, or unbelief?

Jesus was determined not to give place to the enemy by speaking words that would give him an opportunity to hinder God's plan.

How do you speak when trouble comes? I believe we sometimes lose battles in life because of the way we speak about them. We won't defeat Satan with complaining, self-pity, fear, or worry.

Nothing takes more self-control than resisting the temptation to speak negatively in a stressful or difficult situation. The mouth wants to give expression to the soul, blurting out whatever we think, feel, or want. In such times, we need to go deeper than our thoughts, feelings, and desires and to think and speak out of our new nature. These are important times to

agree with God and speak what He says in His Word.

²⁴“One who does not [really] love Me does not keep My words. And the word (teaching) which you hear is not Mine, but is the Father’s who sent Me.

²⁵“I have told you these things while I am still with you.

²⁶“But the Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counselor, Strengthener, Standby), the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name [in My place, to represent Me and act on My behalf], He will teach you all things. And He will help you remember everything that I have told you. [Matt 5:7, 13, 24, 25; Luke 24:49; John 14:16; Acts 1:4]

²⁷“Peace I leave with you; My [perfect] peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid. [Let My perfect peace calm you in every circumstance and give you courage and strength for every challenge.]

²⁸“You heard Me tell you, ‘I am going away, and I am coming *back* to you.’ If you [really] loved Me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going [back] to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

²⁹“I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does take place, you may believe *and* have faith [in Me].

³⁰“I will not speak with you much longer, for the ruler of the world (Satan) is coming. And he has no claim on Me [no power over Me nor anything that he can use against Me]; ³¹but so that the world may know [without any doubt] that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father has commanded Me [and act in full agreement with Him]. Get up, let us go from here.

15 “I AM the true Vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

²“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every *branch* that continues to bear fruit, He [repeatedly] prunes, so that it will bear more fruit [even richer and finer fruit].

POWERPOINT

We see from John 14:27 that peace is a choice. When faced with potentially upsetting circumstances, we can allow our hearts to be troubled or afraid, or we can let Jesus' "perfect peace calm" us "in every circumstance and give" us "courage and strength for every challenge." We can permit ourselves to be fearful and unsettled, or we can be at peace. I encourage you to always choose peace.



³“You are already clean because of the word which I have given you [the teachings which I have discussed with you].

⁴“Remain in Me, and I [will remain] in you. Just as no branch can bear fruit by itself without remaining in the vine, neither can you [bear fruit, producing evidence of your faith] unless you remain in Me.

⁵“I am the Vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in Me and I in him bears much fruit, for [otherwise] apart from Me [that is, cut off from vital union with Me] you can do nothing.

⁶“If anyone does not remain in Me, he is thrown out like a [broken off] branch, and withers *and* dies; and they gather such branches and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Stay Connected to the Vine

John 15:5 compares our relationship with Christ to the relationship between a vine and a branch. Jesus said, “I am the Vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in Me and I in him bears much fruit, for [otherwise] apart from Me [that is, cut off from vital union with Me], you can do nothing.”

To remain in Him does not mean to sit around being “super spiritual” all the time. We do not need to strive to remain in Him, or to feel obligated to read our Bibles for hours each day or to confine ourselves to a prayer closet for a long time. Of course, we want to study God’s Word and pray, but to think those activities are the only times we are abiding in Him is incorrect. When we really love God and He is first in our lives, everything we do becomes spiritual in a way because we are doing it with Him, in Him, through Him, by Him, and to His glory. This is what it means to remain in Him.

All the life and growth potential of a branch is in the vine, and the branch can only receive it as long as it remains connected to the vine. The branch is entirely dependent on the vine for everything it needs to grow and bear fruit.

If we do not remain in Jesus, if we allow ourselves to be apart from Him, we can do nothing. If we live, dwell in, and remain in Him, we will grow and bear good fruit. Sometimes we want

to do things independently, by ourselves, but God has designed our lives to thrive only as we abide in Jesus, the Vine. Let's believe this and stay connected to Him at all times.

Speak God's Word

*God is glorified and honored
when I bear much fruit and
prove to be a true disciple of
Jesus. He has loved me just as
He has loved Jesus; I remain
in His love and do not doubt
His love for me.*

| adapted from JOHN 15:8–9 |

⁷“If you remain in Me and My words remain in you [that is, if we are vitally united and My message lives in your heart], ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.

⁸“My Father is glorified *and* honored by this, when you bear much fruit, and prove yourselves to be My [true] disciples.

⁹“I have loved you just as the Father has loved Me; remain in My love [and do not doubt My love for you].

¹⁰“If you keep My commandments *and* obey My teaching, you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and remain in His love.

¹¹“I have told you these things so that My joy *and* delight may be in you, and that your joy may be made full *and* complete *and* overflowing.

¹²“This is My commandment, that you love *and* unselfishly seek the best for one another, just as I have loved you.

¹³“No one has greater love [nor stronger commitment] than to lay down his own life for his friends.

¹⁴“You are my friends if you keep on doing what I command you.

¹⁵“I do not call you servants any longer, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you [My] friends, because I have revealed to you everything that I have heard from My Father.

¹⁶“You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and I have appointed *and* placed *and* purposefully planted you, so that you would go and bear fruit *and* keep on bearing, and that your fruit will remain *and* be lasting, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name [as My representative] He may give to you.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, I will follow Your
commandment to love and*

*unselfishly seek the best for
others, just as You have loved
me.*

• *adapted from John 15:12*

POWERPOINT

John 15:16 says that God chose you and called you into a relationship with Himself. He did it for a reason. God wants you to enjoy your life and to bear good fruit. That is the very purpose for which He chose and appointed you.



¹⁷“This [is what] I command you: that you love *and* unselfishly seek the best for one another.

¹⁸“If the world hates you [and it does], know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you.

¹⁹“If you belonged to the world, the world would love [you as] its own *and* would treat you with affection. But you are not of the world [you no longer belong to it], but I have chosen you out of the world. And because of this the world hates you.

²⁰“Remember [and continue to remember] that I told you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

21“But they will do all these [hurtful] things to you for My name’s sake [because you bear My name and are identified with Me], for they do not know the One who sent Me.

22“‘If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have [the guilt of their] sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin.

23“‘The one who hates Me also hates My Father.

24“‘If I had not done among them the works (attesting miracles) which no one else [ever] did, they would not have [the guilt of their] sin; but now [the fact is that] they have both seen [these works] and have hated Me [and continue to hate Me] and My Father as well.

25“‘But [this is so] that the word which has been written in their Law would be fulfilled, ‘THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE.’ [Ps 35:19; 69:4]

26“‘But when the Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counselor, Strengtheners, Standby) comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *that is* the Spirit of Truth who comes from the Father, He will testify *and* bear witness about Me.

27“‘But you will testify also *and* be My witnesses, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

16 “I HAVE told you these things so that you will not stumble *or* be caught off guard *and* fall away.

2“‘They will put you out of the synagogues *and* make you outcasts. And a time is coming when whoever kills you will think that he is offering service to God.

³“And they will do these things because they have not known the Father or Me.

⁴“I have told you these things [now], so that when their time comes, you will remember that I told you about them. I did not say these things to you at the beginning, because I was with you.

⁵“But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’

⁶“But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts [and taken complete possession of them].

⁷“But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counselor, Strengtheners, Standby) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him (the Holy Spirit) to you [to be in close fellowship with you].

⁸“And He, when He comes, will convict the world about [the guilt of] sin [and the need for a Savior], and about righteousness, and about judgment:

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Jesus Left Us His Name

How wonderful it would have been to walk in person with Jesus! However, He told His followers they would be better off when He went away, because then He could send His Spirit to dwell in every believer (see John 16:7). He also told them that even though they were sorrowful at the news of His upcoming departure, they would rejoice again just as a woman has sorrow during her labor and travail but rejoices when the child is born (see John 16:19–22).

Jesus assured the disciples they would change their minds when they realized the glory of His Spirit in them and the power available to them through the privilege of using His name in prayer. He was literally giving to them—and has given to all those who believe in Him—His “power of attorney,” the legal right to use His name. His name takes His place; His name represents Him (see John 16:23–28).

Jesus has already been perfect for us. He has already pleased the Father for us; therefore, there is no pressure on us to feel that we must have a perfect record of right behavior before we can pray. When we come before the Father in Jesus’ name, we can confess our sin, receive His forgiveness, and boldly make our requests known to Him.

When a believer speaks the name of Jesus in faith all of heaven comes to attention.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The Holy Spirit Convicts of Righteousness

When Jesus ascended into heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to be in close fellowship with His people and said, “And He, when He comes, will convict the world about [the guilt of] sin [and the need for a Savior], and about righteousness, and about judgment” (John 16:8). Please notice that the Holy Spirit not only convicts us of sin, but goes on to convict (meaning, “to convince”) us of righteousness. We are in right standing with God through the blood of Jesus, and we need to remember that always—especially when we sin. We don’t lose our fellowship with God when we make a mistake. But the moment you are convicted of sin, turn to Jesus because it is His blood that saves us. He never leaves us or forsakes us; He is with us always.

God has already provided a solution for sin. It is not a problem for Him, because He is able to forgive it, forget it, and offer mercy to the sinner. Sin is only a problem for us if we continue in it after having been shown the awfulness of it. I am not saying there are no consequences for sin; I am saying we do not have to live under condemnation for sin once we have repented.

God’s grace meets us where we are, but never leaves us where it found us. When the Holy Spirit convicts you of sin, confess it, repent, receive God’s forgiveness, and move forward in the righteousness Jesus died to give you.

⁹about sin [and the true nature of it], because they do not believe in Me [and My message];

¹⁰about righteousness [personal integrity and godly character], because I am going to My Father and you will no longer see Me;

¹¹about judgment [the certainty of it], because the ruler of this world (Satan) has been judged *and* condemned.

¹²“I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear [to hear] them now.

¹³“But when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth [full and complete truth]. For He will not speak on His own initiative, but He will speak whatever He hears [from the Father—the message regarding the Son], and He will disclose to you what is to come [in the future].

¹⁴“He will glorify *and* honor Me, because He (the Holy Spirit) will take from what is Mine and will disclose it to you.

¹⁵“All things that the Father has are Mine. Because of this I said that He [the Spirit] will take from what is Mine and will reveal it to you.

¹⁶“A little while, and you will no longer see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me.”

¹⁷Some of His disciples said to one another, “What does He mean when He tells us, ‘A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me’; and, ‘because I am going to My Father’?”

Speak God's Word

*The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of
Truth, has come, and I trust
Him to guide me into all the
truth.*

| *adapted from* JOHN 16:13 |

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Ask, Receive, Enjoy

I really want you to receive the goodness and abundance God has for you. Sometimes as the enemy wages war against your mind, he tries to convince you that you do not deserve God's blessings and abundance. That is simply not true! Jesus said, "Until now you have not asked [the Father] for anything in My name; but now ask *and* keep on asking and you will receive, so that your joy may be full *and* complete" (John 16:24). Notice the progression: ask—in Jesus' name, based on His merits, not on your own works; receive—from God; enjoy. It's that simple.

I encourage you to begin living as a "receiver" by approaching God with faith in His goodness and in readiness to receive what He has done for you. You might begin to pray in the following ways: "God, I ask You to forgive my sins, and I receive that forgiveness right now. I believe You have given it to me. You keep Your word, and I take Your forgiveness right now and I call myself free." Or, "God, I need mercy. I don't deserve Your help in this situation, but I'm asking You to be merciful to me, God, and bless me anyway. I'm asking for Your

blessing because of Who You are, not because of what I have or have not done, and I receive it right now. I receive Your help. I receive Your blessings. I receive Your favor. I'm asking You to pour out Your goodness not because I am good, but because *You* are good."

When you begin to approach God this way, it will provoke you to praise Him like never before. I cannot even count how many times a day I say, "Thank You, Lord, for all Your goodness in my life." Once I learned to freely receive from God, rather than feeling I had to deserve everything I received, my blessings and my peace and joy increased dramatically. The increase in blessing has also led to an increase in praise and thanksgiving. I see so many things for which I can be thankful that it has helped me to be more cautious about complaining and to start praising even more.

Remember, the key to experiencing God's goodness and abundance in your life is to first ask, then receive, then enjoy.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God of Abundance, help me to remember to ask for Your blessings not because I could ever earn them, but because You are good and You love me. Help me to receive them with praise and thanksgiving, and help me to enjoy them. In Jesus' name. Amen.

¹⁸So they were saying, “What does He mean when He says, ‘A little while’? We do not know what He is talking about.”

¹⁹Jesus knew that they wanted to ask Him, so He said to them, “Are you wondering among yourselves about what I meant when I said, ‘A little while, and you will not see Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me’?”

²⁰“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, that you will weep and grieve [in great mourning], but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.

²¹“A woman, when she is in labor, has pain because her time [to give birth] has come; but when she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of her joy that a child has come into the world.

²²“So for now you are in grief; but I will see you again, and [then] your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take away from you your [great] joy.

²³“In that day you will not [need to] ask Me about anything. I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name [as My representative], He will give you.

²⁴“Until now you have not asked [the Father] for anything in My name; but now ask *and* keep on asking and you will receive, so that your joy may be full *and* complete.

²⁵“I have told you these things in figurative language (veiled language, proverbs); the hour is now coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech, but I will tell

you plainly about the Father.

²⁶“In that day you will ask in My name, and I am not saying to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf [because it will be unnecessary];

²⁷for the Father Himself [tenderly] loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came from the Father.

²⁸“I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father.”

²⁹His disciples said, “Ah, now You are speaking plainly to us and not in figures of speech!

³⁰“Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; because of this we believe [without any doubt] that you came from God.”

POWERPOINT

John 16:33 teaches us that we can count on difficulties in our lives, but we can also be courageous (some translations say “be of good cheer”), which is another way of saying we can stay positive, because Jesus has deprived the hardship of any power to harm us. I don’t think this verse means we will never hurt, grieve, or encounter challenges, only that painful situations cannot do any permanent harm. All things work together for our good (see Rom. 8:28). We must believe this truth no matter what happens and develop positive, hope-filled attitudes toward life based on it.



³¹ Jesus answered them, “Do you now [at last] believe?

³²“Take careful notice: an hour is coming, and has arrived, when you will all be scattered, each to his own *home*, leaving Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.

³³“I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have [perfect] peace. In the world you have tribulation *and* distress *and* suffering, but be courageous [be confident, be undaunted, be filled with joy]; I have overcome the world.” [My conquest is accomplished, My victory abiding.]

17 WHEN JESUS had spoken these things, He raised His eyes to heaven [in prayer] and said, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, so that Your Son may glorify You.

²“Just as You have given Him power *and* authority over all mankind, [now glorify Him] so that He may give eternal life to all whom You have given Him [to be His—permanently and forever].

³“Now this is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true [supreme and sovereign] God, and [in the same manner know] Jesus [as the] Christ whom You have sent.

Speak God's Word

*This is eternal life: that I may
know God, the only supreme
and sovereign God, and that I
may know Jesus Christ whom
He has sent.*

| adapted from JOHN 17:3 |

⁴“I have glorified You [down here] on the earth by completing the work that You gave Me to do.

⁵“Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory *and* majesty that I had with You before the world existed.

⁶“I have manifested Your name [and revealed Your very self, Your real self] to the people whom You have given Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept *and* obeyed Your word.

⁷“Now [at last] they know [with confident assurance] that all You have given Me is from You [it is really and truly Yours].

⁸“For the words which You gave Me I have given them; and they received *and* accepted them and truly understood [with confident assurance] that I came from You [from Your presence], and they believed [without any doubt] that You sent Me.

⁹“I pray for them; I do not pray for the world, but for those You have given Me, because they belong to You;

¹⁰and all things that are Mine are Yours, and [all things that are] Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them.

¹¹“I am no longer in the world; yet they are still in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, *the name* which You have given Me, so that they may be one just as We are.

¹²“While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them *and* protected them, and not one of them was lost except the son of destruction, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled. [Ps 41:9; John 6:70]

¹³“But now I am coming to You; and I say these things [while I am still] in the world so that they may experience My joy made full *and* complete *and* perfect within them [filling their hearts with My delight].

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, I pray as Jesus prayed,
not that You take me out of*

*the world, but that You keep
me and protect me from the
evil one.*

• adapted from John 17:15

¹⁴“I have given to them Your word [the message You gave Me]; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world *and* do not belong to the world, just as I am not of the world *and* do not belong to it.

¹⁵“I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but that You keep them *and* protect them from the evil one.

¹⁶“They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

¹⁷“Sanctify them in the truth [set them apart for Your purposes, make them holy]; Your word is truth.

¹⁸“Just as You commissioned *and* sent Me into the world, I also have commissioned *and* sent them (believers) into the world.

¹⁹“For their sake I sanctify Myself [to do Your will], so that they also may be sanctified [set apart, dedicated, made holy] in [Your] truth.

POWERPOINT

In John 17:16, Jesus said that though we are *in* the world, we are not *of* the world. As believers, it's important to resist the pull of the world that continually tugs at us. We can choose to refuse to be like the world and determine to live holy lives. Being a Christian does not simply mean attending church or reading a Bible verse each day. It is a lifestyle, a way of living and approaching every area of our lives with God's Word. It is not the way the world lives; it is the way God means for us to live, and it brings peace, joy, hope, wisdom, strength, and spiritual enablement.



A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, I pray that the love with
which You have loved Your
Son may be in Me,
overwhelming my heart.*

• adapted from John 17:26

²⁰“I do not pray for these alone [it is not for their sake only that I make this request], but also for [all] those who [will ever] believe *and* trust in Me through their message, ²¹that they all may be one; just as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be one in Us, so that the world may believe [without any doubt] that You sent Me.

²²“I have given to them the glory *and* honor which You have given Me, that they may be one, just as We are one;

²³I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected *and* completed into one, so that the world may know [without any doubt] that You sent Me, and [that You] have loved them, just as You have loved Me.

²⁴“Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given to Me [as Your gift to Me], may be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, because You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

²⁵“O just *and* righteous Father, although the world has not known You *and* has never acknowledged You [and the revelation of Your mercy], yet I have *always* known You; and these [believers] know [without any doubt] that You sent Me; ²⁶and I have made Your name known to them, and will *continue to* make it known, so that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them [overwhelming their heart], and I [may be] in them.”

18 HAVING SAID these things, Jesus left with His disciples and went across the ravine of the Kidron. There was a garden there, which He and His disciples entered.

²Now Judas, who was betraying Him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with His disciples.

³So Judas, having obtained the *Roman* cohort and some officers from the high priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. [Matt 26:47–56; Mark 14:43–50; Luke 22:47–53]

⁴Then Jesus, knowing all that was about to happen to Him, went to them and asked, “Whom do you want?”

⁵They answered Him, “Jesus the Nazarene.” Jesus said, “I am *He*.” And Judas, who was betraying Him, was also standing with them.

⁶When Jesus said, “I am *He*,” they drew back and fell to the

ground.

⁷Again He asked them, “Whom do you want?” And they said, “Jesus the Nazarene.”

⁸Jesus answered, “I told you that I am *He*; so if you want Me, let these men go on their way.”

⁹*This was to fulfill and* verify the words He had spoken, “Of those whom You have given Me, I have not lost even one.” [John 6:39; 17:12]

¹⁰Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant, cutting off his right ear. The servant’s name was Malchus.

¹¹So Jesus said to Peter, “Put the sword [back] in its sheath! Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?”

¹²So the cohort and their commander and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him,

¹³and led Him to Annas first; for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.

¹⁴It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people. [John 11:49, 50]

¹⁵Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, so he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the [residence of the] high priest; ¹⁶but Peter was standing outside at the door. So the other disciple (John), who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter inside. [Matt 26:69–75; Mark 14:66–72; Luke 22:55–62]

¹⁷Then the servant girl who kept the door said to Peter,

“You are not one of this Man’s disciples, are you?” He said, “I am not.”

¹⁸Now the servants and the officers had made a fire of coals, because it was cold, and they were standing and warming themselves. And Peter was with them, standing and warming himself.

¹⁹Then the high priest questioned Jesus about His disciples and about His teaching. [Matt 26:59–68; Mark 14:55–65; Luke 22:63–71]

²⁰Jesus answered him, “I have spoken openly to the world. I always taught in a synagogue and in the temple [area], where all the Jews *habitually* congregate; and I said nothing in secret.

²¹“Why question Me? Question those who have heard what I said to them. They know what I said.”

²²But when He said this, one of the officers who was standing nearby struck Jesus [in the face], saying, “Is that how You answer the high priest?”

²³Jesus replied, “If I have said *anything* wrong, make a formal statement about the wrong; but if [I spoke] properly, why did you strike Me?”

²⁴So Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

²⁵Now Simon Peter was [still] standing and warming himself. So they said to him, “You are not one of His disciples, are you?” He denied it and said, “I am not.” [Matt 26:71–75; Mark 14:69–72; Luke 22:58–62]

²⁶One of the high priest’s servants, a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, “Did I not see you with Him in the garden?”

²⁷ So Peter denied it again, and immediately a rooster crowed.

²⁸ Then the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium (governor's palace). Now it was early and the Jews did not enter the Praetorium so that they would not be [ceremonially] unclean, but might [be able to] eat [and participate in the Feast of Unleavened Bread which began after] the Passover [supper].

²⁹ So Pilate came out to them and asked, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?" [Matt 27:11–14; Mark 15:2–5; Luke 23:2, 3]

³⁰ They answered, "If He were not a criminal, we would not have handed Him over to you [for judgment]."

³¹ Then Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves and judge Him according to your own law." The Jews said, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death."

³² *This was* to fulfill the word which Jesus had spoken to indicate by what manner of death He was going to die. [John 12:32–34]

³³ So Pilate went into the Praetorium again, and called Jesus and asked Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?"

³⁴ Jesus replied, "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?"

³⁵ Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own people and their chief priests have handed You over to me. What have You done [that is worthy of death]?"

³⁶ Jesus replied, "My kingdom is not of this world [nor does it have its origin in this world]. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would be fighting [hard] to keep Me from being handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not

of this world.”

³⁷So Pilate said to Him, “Then You are a King?” Jesus answered, “You say [correctly] that I am a King. This is why I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth [who is a friend of the truth and belongs to the truth] hears *and* listens carefully to My voice.” [Dan 7:13, 14; Luke 1:32, 33]

³⁸Pilate said to Him [scornfully], “What is truth?”

And when he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, “I find no guilt in Him [no crime, no cause for an accusation].

³⁹“But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. So shall I release for you the King of the Jews?” [Matt 27:15–26; Mark 15:6–15; Luke 23:18–25]

⁴⁰Then they all shouted back again, “Not this Man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a robber.

19 SO THEN Pilate took Jesus and had Him scourged (flogged, whipped).

²And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe around Him; [Matt 27:27–30; Mark 15:16–19]

³and they kept coming up to Him, saying [mockingly], “Hail, King of the Jews [Good health! Peace! Long life to you, King of the Jews]!” And they slapped Him *in the face*. [Is 53:3, 5, 7]

⁴Then Pilate came out again and said to them, “Look, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no

guilt in Him [no crime, no cause for an accusation].”

⁵ So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, and *Pilate* said to them, “Look! The Man!”

⁶ When the chief priests and officers saw Him, they shouted, “Crucify [Him]! Crucify [Him]!” Pilate said to them, “Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him [no crime, no cause for an accusation].” [Luke 23:4, 14, 22; John 18:38; 19:4]

⁷ The Jews answered him, “We have a law [regarding blasphemy], and according to that law He should die, because He made Himself out to be the Son of God.” [Lev 24:16]

⁸ So when Pilate heard this said, he was [even] more alarmed *and* afraid.

⁹ He went into the Praetorium again and said to Jesus, “Where are You from?” But Jesus did not answer him. [Is 53:7]

¹⁰ So Pilate said to Him, “You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?”

¹¹ Jesus answered, “You would have no authority over Me at all if it had not been given to you from above. For this reason the sin *and* guilt of the one who handed Me over to you is greater [than your own].”

¹² As a result of this, Pilate kept making efforts to release Him, but the Jews kept screaming, “If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar! Anyone who makes himself out [to be] a king opposes Caesar [and rebels against the emperor]!”

¹³ When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha.

¹⁴Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover [week], and it was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, “Look, your King!”

¹⁵But they shouted, “Away with *Him*, away with *Him*, crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar!”

¹⁶Then he handed Him over to them to be crucified.

¹⁷So they took Jesus, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of the Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. [Matt 27:33–44; Mark 15:22–32; Luke 23:33–43]

¹⁸There they crucified Him, and with Him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. [Is 53:12]

¹⁹Pilate also wrote an inscription [on a placard] and put it on the cross. And it was written: “JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS.” [Matt 27:33–44; Mark 15:22–32; Luke 23:33–43]

²⁰And many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek.

²¹Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews’; but, ‘He said, “I am King of the Jews.””

²²Pilate replied, “What I have written I have written [and it remains written].”

²³Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer clothes and made four parts, a part for each soldier, and also the tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven [in one piece] from the top throughout. [Matt 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke

23:34]

²⁴So they said to one another, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, *to decide* whose it will be.” *This was* to fulfill the Scripture, “THEY DIVIDED MY OUTER CLOTHING AMONG THEM, AND FOR MY CLOTHING THEY CAST LOTS.” [Ps 22:18]

²⁵So the soldiers did these things.

But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, His mother’s sister [Salome], Mary the *wife* of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. [Mark 15:40]

²⁶So Jesus, seeing His mother, and the disciple whom He loved (esteemed) standing near, said to His mother, “[Dear] woman, look, [here is] your son!”

²⁷Then He said to the disciple (John), “Look! [here is] your mother [protect and provide for her]!” From that hour the disciple took her into his own *home*.

²⁸After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said in fulfillment of the Scripture, “I am thirsty.” [Ps 69:21]

²⁹A jar full of sour wine was placed there; so they put a sponge soaked in the sour wine on [a branch of] hyssop and held it to His mouth. [Matt 27:48, 50; Mark 15:36f; Luke 23:36]

³⁰When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And He bowed His head and [voluntarily] gave up His spirit.

³¹Since it was the day of Preparation [for the Sabbath], in order to prevent the bodies from hanging on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high holy day) the Jews asked Pilate to have their legs broken [to hasten death] and the bodies taken away.

³²So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man,

and of the other who had been crucified with Him.

³³But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.

³⁴But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came [flowing] out.

³⁵And he (John, the eyewitness) who has seen it has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also [who read this] may believe.

³⁶For these things took place to fulfill the Scripture, “NOT A BONE OF HIS SHALL BE BROKEN.” [Ex 12:46; Num 9:12; Ps 34:20]

³⁷And again another Scripture says, “THEY SHALL LOOK AT HIM WHOM THEY HAVE PIERCED.” [Zech 12:10]

³⁸And after this, Joseph of Arimathea—a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews—asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away His body. [Matt 27:57–61; Mark 15:42–47; Luke 23:50–56]

³⁹Nicodemus, who had first come to Him at night, also came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, [weighing] about a hundred [Roman] pounds.

⁴⁰So they took Jesus’ body and bound it in linen wrappings with the fragrant spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.

⁴¹Now there was a garden at the place where He was crucified, and in the garden a new tomb [cut out of solid rock] in which no one had yet been laid.

⁴²Therefore, because of the Jewish day of Preparation, and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

20 NOW ON the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw the stone [already] removed from the [groove across the entrance of the] tomb. [Matt 28:1–8; Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–10]

²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple (John), whom Jesus loved (esteemed), and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him!”

³So Peter and the other disciple left, and they were going to the tomb. [Luke 24:12]

⁴And the two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and arrived at the tomb first.

⁵Stooping down and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings [neatly] lying *there*; but he did not go in.

⁶Then Simon Peter came up, following him, and went into the tomb and saw the linen wrappings [neatly] lying *there*;

⁷and the [burial] face-cloth which had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the [other] linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.

⁸So the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, went in too; and he saw [the wrappings and the face-cloth] and believed [without any doubt that Jesus had risen from the dead].

⁹For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise from the dead. [Ps 16:10]

¹⁰Then the disciples went back again to their own homes.

¹¹But Mary [who had returned] was standing outside the tomb sobbing; and so, as she wept, she stooped down and

looked into the tomb;

¹²and she saw two angels in white sitting *there*, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

¹³And they said to her, “Woman, why are you crying?” She told them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.”

¹⁴After saying this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing *there*, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you crying? For whom are you looking?” Supposing that He was the gardener, she replied, “Sir, if you are the one who has carried Him away *from here*, tell me where you have put Him, and I will take Him away.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Christ's Representatives

We all need a strong foundation of good, solid biblical doctrine. Along with doctrine, we also need to know how to live our lives practically. If we are going to represent Jesus properly as He commissioned us to do (see John 20:21), we need to walk victoriously (see 2 Cor. 5:20). We are not of the world, but we walk in the world and the world needs to see Jesus through us.

The Bible states that we are more than conquerors (see Rom. 8:37), and we are to reign as kings in life through Jesus Christ (see Rom. 5:17). When we are victorious, others see it and want the same victories in their lives. To put it plainly, if we want other people to accept Jesus, we must show them that having a relationship with Him makes a real difference in our lives. We are His personal representatives on earth, and we need to represent Him well.

¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, “Rabboni!” (which means, Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.’”

¹⁸Mary Magdalene came, reporting to the disciples that

she had seen the Lord and that He had said these things to her.

¹⁹So when it was evening on that *same* day, the first day of the week, though the disciples were [meeting] behind barred doors for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them, and said, “Peace to you.”

²⁰After He said this, He showed them His hands and His side. When the disciples saw the Lord, they were filled with great joy.

²¹Then Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you [as My representatives].”

²²And when He said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. [Acts 1:8; 2:1–3]

²³“If you forgive the sins of anyone they are forgiven [because of their faith]; if you retain *the sins* of anyone, they are retained [and remain unforgiven because of their unbelief].”

²⁴But Thomas, one of the twelve [disciples], who was called Didymus (the twin), was not with them when Jesus came.

²⁵So the other disciples kept telling him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the marks of the nails, and put my finger into the nail prints, and put my hand into His side, I will never believe.”

²⁶Eight days later His disciples were again inside *the house*, and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, though the doors had been barred, and stood among them and said, “Peace to you.”

²⁷Then He said to Thomas, “Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and put out your hand and place it in My side. Do not be unbelieving, but [stop doubting and] believe.” [Luke 24:39]

²⁸Thomas answered Him, “My Lord and my God!”

²⁹Jesus said to him, “Because you have seen Me, do you now believe? Blessed [happy, spiritually secure, and favored by God] are they who did not see [Me] and yet believed [in Me].”

Speak God's Word

*I will not be unbelieving.
With God's help, I will stop
doubting and always believe.*

| adapted from JOHN 20:27 |

³⁰There are also many other signs (attesting miracles) that Jesus performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹but these have been written so that you may believe [with a deep, abiding trust] that Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed), the Son of God; and that by believing [and trusting in and relying on Him] you may have life in His name. [Ps 2:7, 12]

21 AFTER THIS Jesus revealed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias (Galilee). And He did it in this way: ²Simon Peter, and Thomas who is called Didymus (the twin), and Nathanael from Cana of Galilee, as well as [John and James] the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together.

³Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said, "And we are coming with you." So they went out and got into

the boat; and that night they caught nothing.

⁴As morning was breaking, Jesus [came and] stood on the beach; however, the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.

⁵So Jesus said to them, “Children, do you have any fish [to eat along with your bread]?” They answered, “No.”

⁶And He said to them, “Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat (starboard) and you will find some.” So they cast [the net], and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great catch of fish.

⁷Then that disciple (John) whom Jesus loved (esteemed) said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer tunic (for he was stripped *for work*) and threw himself into the sea [and swam ashore].

⁸But the other disciples came in the small boat, for they were not far from shore, only about a hundred yards away, dragging the net full of fish.

⁹So when they got out on the beach, they saw a charcoal fire set up and fish on it *cooking*, and bread.

¹⁰Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish which you have just caught.”

¹¹So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three [of them]; and although there were so many, the net was not torn.

POWERPOINT

In John 21:15–17, Jesus asked Peter three times, “Do you love Me?” According to the Amplified Bible, Jesus was asking Peter if he loved Him “with total commitment and devotion” (John 21:15–16) and if he loved Him with the deep personal affection a person feels for a close friend (see John 21:17). Each time, Peter said yes. Jesus told him to “Feed My sheep.” Jesus was telling Peter to help other people as a way of expressing his love for Him. In the same way, you and I prove our love for Him by caring for others (see John 13:35).



¹²Jesus said to them, “Come *and* have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared to ask Him, “Who are You?” They knew

[without any doubt] that it was the Lord.

¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish.

¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples, after He had risen from the dead.

¹⁵ So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me more than these [others do—with total commitment and devotion]?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You [with a deep, personal affection, as for a close friend].” Jesus said to him, “Feed My lambs.”

¹⁶ Again He said to him a second time, “Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me [with total commitment and devotion]?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You [with a deep, personal affection, as for a close friend].” Jesus said to him, “Shepherd My sheep.”

¹⁷ He said to him the third time, “Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me [with a deep, personal affection for Me, as for a close friend]?” Peter was grieved that He asked him the third time, “Do you [really] love Me [with a deep, personal affection, as for a close friend]?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know everything; You know that I love You [with a deep, personal affection, as for a close friend].” Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Don't Compare, Just Comply

An important key to overcoming insecurity is simple: Never compare yourself to anyone else, because doing so invites condemnation.

I strongly encourage you to stop comparing yourself to other people concerning how you look, what position you occupy, or how long you pray. Comparison only thwarts God's working in your life. God can only help you be "you." He will not help you be someone else.

In the same way, comparing our trials and tribulations to those of other people does no one any good. In the midst of dealing with some hard situations in your life, you cannot look at somebody else and say, "Why is all this happening to me while everything comes up roses for you?" Sometimes, other people are going through difficulties too, and you may not be aware of their struggles.

Jesus revealed to Peter ahead of time some of the suffering he would go through. Peter immediately wanted to compare his suffering and his lot in life with somebody else's by saying, "What about this man?"

Jesus said to Peter, "If I want him to stay alive until I come [again], what is that to you? You follow Me!" (John 21:22).

That is His answer to us as well. We are not called to compare,

only to comply to His will for us.

God wants you to know that you are unique and that He has a distinctively specialized plan for your life. Totally trusting God and His wisdom and goodness will bring an amazing peace into your life.

¹⁸“I assure you *and* most solemnly say to you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and walked wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands *and* arms, and someone else will dress you, and carry you where you do not wish to go.”

¹⁹Now He said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. And after saying this, He said to him, “Follow Me [walk the same path of life that I have walked]!”

²⁰Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; the one who also had leaned back on His chest at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is it that is going to betray You?”

²¹So when Peter saw him, he asked Jesus, “Lord, and what about this man [what is in his future]?”

²²Jesus said to him, “If I want him to stay alive until I come [again], what *is that* to you? You follow Me!”

²³So this word went out among the brothers that this disciple (John) was not going to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not going to die, but *only*, “If I want him to stay alive until I come [again], what *is that* to you?”

! REMEMBER, God always

leads you in triumph in
Christ!

24 This is the *same* disciple who is testifying to these things and has recorded them; and we know [without any doubt] that his testimony is true.

25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were recorded one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

Acts

Author: |
Attributed to Luke
Date: | About AD
62

Through the years, people have described the book of Acts in various ways. Some have called it “The Acts of the Apostles,” while others have referred to it as “The Acts of the Holy Spirit.” Certainly, the book includes many stories about both the apostles and the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 1:8, Jesus spoke to His disciples about the Holy Spirit, saying that He would give them “power *and* ability.” What kind of power and ability does He give us? All the power and ability we need to live the life that Jesus died to give us. Because this Bible focuses on winning the battle of the mind, I want to say this about the Holy Spirit: Only He can give you the power and ability to change your thoughts. Only He can enable you to gain victory over the enemy who attacks your mind. I encourage you to stay filled with the Holy Spirit so that you have access to the power and ability

He offers you.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM ACTS:

Be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will empower you, lead you, and fill you with joy (see Acts 2:1–6; 13:9, 52).

The name of Jesus is powerful and brings strength, healing, and wholeness (see Acts 3:16).

The same power that freed Paul and Silas from prison is available to set free those who are imprisoned by wrong thinking and the problems it causes (see Acts 16:26).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM ACTS:

You will receive power and ability when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be My witnesses [to tell people about Me]. | Acts 1:8

There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven... by which we must be saved. | Acts 4:12

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness and courage. | Acts 4:31

God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with great power; and He went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with Him. | Acts 10:38

THE
ACTS
OF THE APOSTLES

1 THE FIRST account I made, Theophilus, was [a continuous report] about all the things that Jesus began to do and to teach [Luke 1:1–4]

²until the day when He ascended *to heaven*, after He had by the Holy Spirit given instruction to the apostles (special messengers) whom He had chosen.

³To these [men] He also showed Himself alive after His suffering [in Gethsemane and on the cross], by [a series of] many infallible proofs *and* unquestionable demonstrations, appearing to them over *a period of* forty days and talking to them about the things concerning the kingdom of God.

⁴While being together *and* eating with them, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, “Of which,” *He said*, “you have heard Me speak. [John 14:16, 26; 15:26]

⁵“For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized *and* empowered *and* united with the Holy Spirit, not long from now.”

⁶So when they had come together, they asked Him *repeatedly*, “Lord, are You at this time reestablishing the kingdom *and* restoring it to Israel?”

⁷He said to them, “It is not for you to know the times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority.

⁸“But you will receive power *and* ability when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be My witnesses [to tell people about Me] both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the ends of the earth.”

⁹And after He said these things, He was caught up as they looked on, and a cloud took Him up out of their sight.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that I will
receive power and ability
when the Holy Spirit comes
upon me; and I can be Your
witness even to the ends of the
earth.*

• *adapted from Acts 1:8*

¹⁰While they were looking intently into the sky as He was going, two men in white clothing suddenly stood beside them,

¹¹who said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This [same] Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will return in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”

¹²Then the disciples returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet (Olive Grove), which is near Jerusalem, [only] a Sabbath day’s journey (less than one mile) away.

¹³When they had entered *the city*, they went upstairs to the upper room where they were staying [indefinitely]; that is, Peter, and John and [his brother] James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew (Nathanael) and Matthew, James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas (Thaddaeus) the son of James.

¹⁴All these with one mind *and* one purpose were continually devoting themselves to prayer, [waiting together] along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

¹⁵Now on one of these days Peter stood up among the brothers and sisters (a gathering of about a hundred and twenty believers was there) and he said, ¹⁶“Brothers and sisters, it was necessary that the Scripture be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the lips of David [king of Israel] about Judas [Iscaiot], who acted as guide to those who arrested Jesus.

¹⁷“For he (Judas) was counted among us and received his share [by divine allotment] in this ministry.”

¹⁸(Now Judas Iscaiot acquired a piece of land [indirectly] with the [money paid him as a] reward for his treachery, and falling headlong, his body burst open in the middle and all his

intestines poured out.

¹⁹All the people in Jerusalem learned about this, so in their own dialect—Aramaic—they called the piece of land Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

KEYS to a Victorious Life

United Faith

Throughout the book of Acts, we read that God's people "came together" in unity (Acts 1:14; 2:1, 46; 4:24; 5:12; 15:25). It was their united faith, their corporate agreement, and the presence of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit that made their prayers so effective (see Acts 1:14). They saw God move in mighty ways to confirm the truth of His Word as they gave testimony to their faith in Jesus.

Paul writes in Philippians 2:2, "make my joy complete by being of the same mind, having the same love [toward one another], knit together in spirit, intent on one purpose [and living a life that reflects your faith and spreads the gospel—the good news regarding salvation through faith in Christ]."

This verse teaches us an important principle about corporate prayer: If we will heed its words and come into harmony and agreement with God and with one another, we will experience the same kind of powerful results the first-century disciples enjoyed.

When you gather together to pray with other believers, expect God to show His power!

²⁰“For in the book of Psalms it is written,

‘LET HIS PLACE OF RESIDENCE BECOME DESOLATE,

AND LET THERE BE NO ONE TO LIVE IN IT’;
and [again],

‘LET ANOTHER TAKE HIS POSITION AS OVERSEER.’ [Ps 69:25;
109:8]

²¹“So of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus spent with us,

²²beginning with the baptism by John [at the outset of Jesus’ ministry] until the day when He was taken up from us—one of these men *must* become a witness with us [to testify] of His resurrection.”

²³And they put forward two men, Joseph, the one called Barsabbas (who was surnamed Justus), and Matthias.

²⁴They prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know all hearts [their thoughts, motives, desires], show us which one of these two You have chosen

²⁵to occupy this ministry and apostleship which Judas left to go to his own place [of evil].”

²⁶And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

2 WHEN THE day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place, ²and suddenly a sound came from heaven like a rushing violent wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

³There appeared to them tongues resembling fire, which were being distributed [among them], and they rested on each one of them [as each person received the Holy Spirit].

⁴And they were all filled [that is, diffused throughout their being] with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other ~~—~~*tongues (different languages), as the Spirit was giving them the ability to speak out [clearly and appropriately].

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Pray To Be Filled with the Power of the Spirit

On the day of Pentecost, 120 believers were gathered together in one place, where they had been waiting and praying for the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:1). Suddenly, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance (see Acts 2:4). They received a supernatural spiritual language that came from their spirit, a language their minds did not understand. At that time, people from every country were residing in Jerusalem. They heard the disciples speak in their own native languages, even though the disciples had never learned those languages. They were beside themselves with amazement! This event was a way of God's showing His miraculous power.

Acts 2:7 says that they "were completely astonished." I am sure that everyone was behaving very emotionally. Some people thought that those who were filled with the Spirit were

drunk, but it was only 9 o'clock in the morning (see Acts 2:15)! They also witnessed Peter, who due to fear had recently denied even knowing Jesus, now boldly proclaiming the gospel! When we are filled with the Spirit, we too will become bold rather than fearful.

We should all pray to be completely filled with the power of the Holy Spirit as these disciples were on Pentecost. Today's world needs to witness the power of God. The Bible teaches that if we ask the Father for the Holy Spirit and keep on asking, God will give Him to us (see Luke 11:13). I believe that anyone who is born again has the Holy Spirit, but we need to be *filled* with the Spirit. Paul said we are to “be filled with the [Holy] Spirit *and* constantly guided by Him” (Eph. 5:18).

There are wonderful supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit available to us, and they will enable us to be effective in living our lives for God and being an example to other people (see 1 Cor. 12:1–13). I encourage you to study God's Word in this area and always be filled with the Holy Spirit.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord, I pray that I will always be filled with the Holy Spirit, and that any fear in my life will be replaced with boldness. In Jesus' name. Amen.

⁵Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout *and* God-fearing men from every nation under heaven.

⁶And when this sound was heard, a crowd gathered, and they were bewildered because each one was hearing those in the upper room speaking in his own language *or* dialect.

⁷They were completely astonished, saying, “Look! Are not all of these who are speaking Galileans?”

⁸“Then how is it that each of us hears in our own language *or* native dialect?”

⁹“[Among us there are] Parthians, Medes and Elamites, and people of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia [Minor],

¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and the visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes (Gentile converts to Judaism), ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—we all hear them speaking in our [native] tongues about the mighty works of God!”

¹²And they were beside themselves with amazement and were greatly perplexed, saying one to another, “What could this mean?”

¹³But others were laughing *and* joking *and* ridiculing them, saying, “They are full of sweet wine *and* are drunk!”

¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be explained to you; listen closely *and* pay attention to what I have to say.

¹⁵“These people are not drunk, as you assume, since it is

[only] the third hour of the day (9:00 a.m.);

¹⁶but this is [the beginning of] what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷‘AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,’ says God,

‘THAT I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT UPON ALL MANKIND; AND
YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY,
AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE [divinely prompted]
VISIONS,

AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM [divinely prompted]
DREAMS;

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that
everyone who calls upon Your
Name—invoking, adoring,
and worshiping the Lord
Jesus—shall be saved!*

• *adapted from Acts 2:21*

- 18EVEN ON MY BOND-SERVANTS, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN,
I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR OUT MY SPIRIT
And they shall prophesy.
- 19‘AND I WILL BRING ABOUT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE
AND SIGNS (attesting miracles) ON THE EARTH BELOW,
BLOOD AND FIRE AND SMOKING VAPOR.
- 20‘THE SUN SHALL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS
AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD,
BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD COMES.
- 21‘AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS UPON THE NAME
OF THE LORD [invoking, adoring, and worshiping the Lord
Jesus] SHALL BE SAVED (rescued spiritually).’ [Joel 2:28–32]

22“Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man accredited *and* pointed out *and* attested to you by God with [the power to perform] miracles and wonders and signs which God worked through Him in your [very] midst, just as you yourselves know—²³this *Man*, when handed over [to the Roman authorities] according to the predetermined decision and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross and put to death by the hands of lawless *and* godless men.

24“But God raised Him up, releasing Him *and* bringing an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in death’s power.

25“For David says of Him,

‘I SAW THE LORD CONSTANTLY BEFORE ME;

FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN
[from my state of security].

- 26‘THEREFORE MY HEART REJOICED AND MY TONGUE EXULTED
EXCEEDINGLY;
MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE [that is, will
encamp in anticipation of the resurrection];
- 27‘FOR YOU WILL NOT FORSAKE ME *and* ABANDON MY SOUL TO
HADES (the realm of the dead), NOR LET YOUR HOLY ONE
UNDERGO DECAY [after death].
- 28‘YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE;
YOU WILL FILL ME [infusing my soul] WITH JOY WITH YOUR
PRESENCE.’ [Ps 16:8–11]

29“Brothers, I may confidently *and* freely say to you
regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried,
and his tomb is with us to this day.

30“And so, being a prophet and knowing fully that GOD
HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH THAT HE WOULD SEAT *one* OF
HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, [2 Sam 7:12–16; Ps 132:11]

31he foresaw and spoke [prophetically] of the resurrection
of the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed), that HE WAS NOT
ABANDONED [in death] TO HADES (the realm of the dead), NOR
DID His body UNDERGO DECAY. [Ps 16:10]

32“God raised this Jesus [bodily from the dead], and of that
[fact] we are all witnesses.

33“Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God,
and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy
Spirit, He has poured out this [blessing] which you both see
and hear.

34“For David did not ascend into the heavens, yet he
himself says,

‘THE LORD [the Father] SAID TO MY LORD [the Son], “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,

³⁵UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.” ’
[Ps 110:1]

³⁶“Therefore let all the house of Israel recognize beyond all doubt that God has made Him both Lord and Christ (Messiah, Anointed)—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

³⁷Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart [with remorse and anxiety], and they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what are we to do?”

³⁸And Peter said to them, “Repent [change your old way of thinking, turn from your sinful ways, accept and follow Jesus as the Messiah] and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ because of the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

³⁹“For the promise [of the Holy Spirit] is for you and your children and for all who are far away [including the Gentiles], as many as the Lord our God calls to Himself.” [Is 57:19; Joel 2:32]

⁴⁰And Peter solemnly testified and continued to admonish *and* urge them with many more words, saying, “Be saved from this crooked *and* unjust generation!”

⁴¹So then, those who accepted his message were baptized; and on that day about 3,000 souls were added [to the body of believers].

⁴²They were continually *and* faithfully devoting themselves to the instruction of the apostles, and to fellowship, to eating meals together and to prayers.

⁴³A sense of awe was felt by everyone, and many wonders

and signs (attesting miracles) were taking place through the apostles.

⁴⁴And all those who had believed [in Jesus as Savior] were together and had all things in common [considering their possessions to belong to the group as a whole].

⁴⁵And they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing the proceeds with all [the other believers], as anyone had need.

⁴⁶Day after day they met in the temple [area] continuing with one mind, and breaking bread in various private homes. They were eating their meals together with joy and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God *continually*, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord kept adding to their number daily those who were being saved.

3 NOW PETER and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.), ²and a man who had been unable to walk from birth was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at that gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, so that he could beg alms from those entering the temple.

³So when he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he *began* asking [them] for coins.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Prayer as a Lifestyle

Some people feel vaguely guilty about their prayer life because they compare themselves to others. God is very creative and wants each person to have his or her own individual prayer life. Yours doesn't have to be just like anyone else's.

Yet there are definite principles of prayer that we can follow. As we see in Acts 3:1, the early disciples set aside certain hours of the day when they went to a designated place to pray. That is good self-discipline, but it is only one of the options available to us as we pursue a life of prayer. We may also pray anytime, anywhere, with all kinds of prayer (see Eph. 6:18). I like to pray my way through the day. What I mean is that I pray anytime I feel the desire or the need, as well as having a set-apart prayer time each morning. I urge you not to take a legalistic approach to prayer, because if you do, you will not enjoy it and will find being diligent in it difficult.

All through the day we can continue to communicate with the Lord, praising and worshiping Him, thanking Him for His presence with us, and asking for His help with all our problems. Then just before we go to sleep at night, we can offer up a final prayer of gratitude for the blessings of the day and a request for a peaceful and refreshing night's sleep. God wants prayer to be a normal, regular part of our lives.

⁴But Peter, along with John, stared at him intently and said, “Look at us!”

⁵And the man *began* to pay attention to them, eagerly expecting to receive something from them.

⁶But Peter said, “Silver and gold I do not have; but what I do have I give to you: In the name (authority, power) of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—[begin now to] walk *and* go on walking!”

⁷Then he seized the man’s right hand with a firm grip and raised him up. And at once his feet and ankles became strong *and* steady,

⁸and with a leap he stood up and *began* to walk; and he went into the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.

⁹All the people saw him walking and praising God;

¹⁰and they recognized him as the very man who usually sat *begging* for coins at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, and they were filled with wonder and amazement *and* were mystified at what had happened to him.

¹¹Now while he was still holding on to Peter and John, all the people, utterly amazed, ran together *and* crowded around them at the covered porch called Solomon’s portico.

¹²And Peter, seeing this, said to the people, “You men of Israel, why are you amazed at this? Why are you staring at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?

¹³“The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Servant *and* Son Jesus [doing Him this honor], *the One* whom you handed over and disowned

and rejected before Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. [Ex 3:6; Is 52:13]

¹⁴“But you disowned *and* denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked for [the pardon of] a murderer to be granted to you.

¹⁵“But you killed the Prince (Author, Originator, Source) of life, whom God raised [bodily] from the dead. To this [fact] we are witnesses [for we have seen the risen Christ].

¹⁶“And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which *comes* through Him has given him this perfect health *and* complete wholeness in your presence.

¹⁷“Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance [not fully aware of what you were doing], just as your rulers did also.

¹⁸“And so God has fulfilled what He foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ (Messiah, Anointed) would suffer.

¹⁹“So repent [change your inner self—your old way of thinking, regret past sins] and return [to God—seek His purpose for your life], so that your sins may be wiped away [blotted out, completely erased], so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord [restoring you like a cool wind on a hot day]; ²⁰and that He may send [to you] Jesus, the Christ, who has been appointed for you,

²¹whom heaven must keep until the time for the [complete] restoration of all things about which God promised through the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.

²²“Moses said, ‘THE LORD GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A

PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR COUNTRYMEN; YOU SHALL LISTEN TO HIM *and* OBEY everything He tells you.

²³‘And it will be that every person that does not listen to *and* heed that Prophet will be utterly destroyed from among the people.’ [Deut 18:15–19]

²⁴“Indeed, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also announced these days.

²⁵“You are the sons (descendants) of the prophets and [heirs] of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘AND IN YOUR SEED (descendant) ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED.’ [Gen 22:18; Gal 3:16]

²⁶“*It was* for you first *of all that* God raised up His Servant *and* Son [Jesus], and sent Him to bless you by turning every one *of you* from your wicked ways.” [Acts 2:24; 3:22]

4 AND WHILE Peter and John were talking to the people, the priests and the captain [who was in charge of the temple area and] of the temple *guard* and the Sadducees came up to them,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Jesus' Name Is Power

The name of Jesus is power (see Acts 4:10). We should realize that we have the privilege of using His name and expecting great things to take place. We pray in Jesus' name, and when we do, we are presenting to God all that Jesus is!

Peter and John used the name of Jesus to heal a crippled man, and all who witnessed it were astounded (see Acts 3:1–10). They directed the people to give praise to God, because it was the power in Jesus' name that had raised him.

We can resist the devil and his deceptions in Jesus' name; we can ask for healing for the sick in Jesus' name, and of course we can pray any type of prayer in His name. I believe that when the name of Jesus is spoken in faith from our mouths, it gets attention in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth. When Jesus gave us His name, He gave us power of attorney to act on His behalf, so let us realize how precious and powerful that holy name is and believe that great things will happen.

²being extremely disturbed and thoroughly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in [the case of] Jesus the resurrection of the dead.

³So they arrested them and put them in jail until the next day, because it was evening.

⁴But many of those who heard the message [of salvation] believed [in Jesus and accepted Him as the Christ]. And the number of the men came to be about 5,000.

⁵On the next day, their magistrates and elders and scribes (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court) were gathered together in Jerusalem;

⁶and Annas the high priest *was there*, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all others who were of high-priestly descent.

⁷When they had put the men in front of them, they repeatedly asked, “By what sort of power, or in what name [that is, by what kind of authority], did you do this [healing]?”

⁸Then Peter, filled with [the power of] the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers and elders of the people [members of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish High Court],

⁹if we are being put on trial today [to interrogate us] for a good deed done to [benefit] a disabled man, as to how this man has been restored to health,

¹⁰let it be known *and* clearly understood by all of you, and by all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you [demanded be] crucified [by the Romans and], whom God raised from the dead—in this name [that is, by the authority and power of Jesus] this man stands here before you in good health.

¹¹“This Jesus is the STONE WHICH WAS DESPISED *and* REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, *but* WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE. [Ps 118:22]

Speak God's Word

I know and believe that there is salvation in no one except Jesus Christ, the Lord. There is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved. God has provided the world no other alternative for salvation.

| adapted from ACTS 4:12 |

¹²“And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among people by which we must be saved [for God has provided the world no alternative for salvation].”

¹³Now when the men of the Sanhedrin (Jewish High Court) saw the confidence *and* boldness of Peter and John, and grasped the fact that they were uneducated and untrained [ordinary] men, they were astounded, and *began* to recognize that they had been with Jesus.

¹⁴And seeing the man who had been healed standing *there* with them, they had nothing to say in reply.

¹⁵But after ordering them to step out of the Council [chamber], they *began* to confer among themselves,

¹⁶saying, “What are we to do with these men? For the fact that an extraordinary miracle has taken place through them is public knowledge *and* clearly evident to all the residents of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

¹⁷“But to keep it from spreading further among the people *and* the nation, let us [sternly] warn them not to speak again to anyone in this name.”

¹⁸So they sent for them, and commanded them not to speak [as His representatives] or teach at all in the name of Jesus [using Him as their authority].

¹⁹But Peter and John replied to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you *and* obey you rather than God, you must judge [for yourselves]; ²⁰for we, on our part, cannot stop telling [people] about what we have seen and heard.”

²¹When the rulers and Council members had threatened them further, they let them go, finding no way to punish them because [of their fear] of the people, for they were all praising *and* glorifying *and* honoring God for what had happened; ²²for the man to whom this sign (attesting miracle) of healing had happened was more than forty years old.

²³After Peter and John were released, they returned to their own [people] and reported everything that the chief priests and elders had said to them.

²⁴And when they heard it, they raised their voices together to God and said, “O Sovereign Lord [having complete power and authority], it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND EVERYTHING THAT IS IN THEM, [Ex 20:11; Ps 146:6]

²⁵who by the Holy Spirit, *through* the mouth of our father

David, Your servant, said,

‘WHY DID THE NATIONS (Gentiles) BECOME ARROGANT *and* RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS [against the Lord]?’

26‘THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND [to attack],
AND THE RULERS WERE ASSEMBLED TOGETHER
AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS ANOINTED (the Christ,
the Messiah).’ [Ps 2:1, 2]

27“For in this city there were gathered together against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined [before the creation of the world] to occur [and so without knowing it, they served Your own purpose].

²⁹“And now, Lord, observe their threats [take them into account] and grant that Your bond-servants may declare Your message [of salvation] with great confidence, ³⁰while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders (attesting miracles) take place through the name [and the authority and power] of Your holy Servant *and* Son Jesus.”

³¹And when they had prayed, the place where they were meeting together was shaken [a sign of God’s presence]; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and *began* to speak the word of God with boldness *and* courage.

³²Now the company of believers was of one heart and soul, and not one [of them] claimed that anything belonging to him was [exclusively] his own, but everything was common property *and* for the use of all.

³³ And with great ability *and* power the apostles were *continuously* testifying to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace [God's remarkable lovingkindness and favor and goodwill] rested richly upon them all.

³⁴ There was not a needy person among them, because those who were owners of land or houses were selling them, and bringing the proceeds of the sales

³⁵ and placing *the money* down at the apostles' feet. Then it was distributed to each as anyone had need.

³⁶ Now Joseph, a Levite and native of Cyprus, who was surnamed Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement),

³⁷ sold a field belonging to him and brought the money and set it at the apostles' feet.

5 NOW A man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, ²and with his wife's full knowledge [and complicity] he kept back some of the proceeds, bringing only a portion of it, and set it at the apostles' feet.

³ But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and [secretly] keep back for yourself some of the proceeds [from the sale] of the land?

⁴ "As long as it remained [unsold], did it not remain your own [to do with as you pleased]? And after it was sold, was the money not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this act [of hypocrisy and deceit] in your heart? You have not [simply] lied to people, but to God."

⁵ And hearing these words, Ananias fell down suddenly

and died; and great fear *and* awe gripped those who heard of it.

⁶And the young men [in the congregation] got up and wrapped up the body, and carried it out and buried it.

⁷Now after an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

⁸Peter asked her, “Tell me whether you sold your land for so much?” And she said, “Yes, for so much.”

⁹Then Peter said to her, “How could you two have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Look! The feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.”

¹⁰And at once she fell down at his feet and died; and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

¹¹And great fear *and* awe gripped the whole church, and all who heard about these things.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The Importance of Discernment

Ananias and Sapphira brought a financial gift to the church from the sale of some land. In the process, they led Peter to believe that the gift represented all the proceeds from the sale. Peter immediately discerned that Satan had filled their hearts to lie to the Holy Spirit as well as to the church (see Acts 5:3–4). As troubling as the story is, it shows us clearly that the Holy Spirit knows our hearts. Through the gift of discernment, He can show the intent of our hearts to faithful, committed servants such as Peter.

God wants us to love and trust others, but we need discernment to guide us. Discernment is a wonderful gift that allows us to know in our spirit what we may not be aware of mentally, and it can help us not to be deceived by the lies that Satan drops into our minds. I am very grateful for discernment, and I pray regularly that God will give it to me.

We are told that in the last days deception will increase in the earth, but with spiritual discernment we may be assured of always walking in the truth. I encourage you to pray and ask the Lord for discernment. Let Him know that you want to be led by the Holy Spirit, and not merely by your own mind. If what you are thinking about a situation is right, He will confirm it to you. If it isn't, you can trust Him for the discernment to know that also.

¹²At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders (attesting miracles) were *continually* taking place among the people. And by common consent they all met together [at the temple] in [the covered porch called] Solomon's portico.

¹³But none of the rest [of the people, the non-believers] dared to associate with them; however, the people were holding them in high esteem *and* were speaking highly of them.

¹⁴More *and* more believers in the Lord, crowds of men and women, were constantly being added to *their number*;

¹⁵to such an extent that they even carried their sick out into the streets and put them on cots and sleeping pads, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on one of them [with healing power].

¹⁶And the people from the towns in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing the sick and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all being healed.

¹⁷But the high priest stood up, along with all his associates (that is, the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy *and* resentment.

¹⁸They arrested the apostles and put them in a public jail.

¹⁹But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors, and leading them out, he said,

²⁰“Go, stand and *continue* to tell the people in the temple [courtyards] the whole message of this Life [the eternal life revealed by Christ and found through faith in Him].”

²¹When they heard this, they went into the temple [courtyards] about daybreak and *began* teaching.

Now when the high priest and his associates arrived, they

called together the Council (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court), even all the council of elders of the sons of Israel, and sent word to the prison for the apostles to be brought [before them].

²²But when the officers arrived, they did not find them in the prison; and they came back and reported,

²³“We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened [the doors], we found no one inside.”

²⁴Now when the captain of the temple *guard* and the chief priests heard these things, they were greatly perplexed, wondering what would come of this.

²⁵But someone came and told them, “The men whom you put in prison are standing [right here] in the temple [area], teaching the people!”

²⁶Then the captain went with the officers and brought them back, without hurting them (because they were afraid of the people, worried that they might be stoned).

²⁷So they brought them and presented them before the Council (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court). The high priest questioned them,

Speak God's Word

*Because I am a Christian, I
will always seek to obey God
rather than men.*

| adapted from ACTS 5:29 |

²⁸saying, “We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you intend to bring this Man’s blood on us [by accusing us as His murderers].”

²⁹Then Peter and the apostles replied, “We must obey God rather than men [we have no other choice].

³⁰“The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross [and you are responsible]. [Deut 21:22, 23]

³¹“God exalted Him to His right hand as Prince and Savior and Deliverer, in order to grant repentance to Israel, and [to grant] forgiveness of sins.

³²“And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has bestowed on those who obey Him.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The Courage To Say No

It seems that the fear of saying no to people is one reason we make commitments we don't keep.

Many people don't have the courage to say no. They don't want to hurt people's feelings or make them angry, so they either say yes, not intending to follow through, or they agree to do something and then make excuses based on untruths to avoid doing it. Everyone who makes a request to someone wants to hear yes, but wouldn't you rather someone be unhappy because you said no than to have them unhappy because you said yes and then ended up making yourself miserable because you didn't follow the leading of the Holy Spirit?

I encourage you to follow your heart and say yes only when you truly know it is the right thing to do. You are responsible to be obedient only to God (see Acts 5:29), not to keep other people happy by doing everything they want you to do. It takes time to develop the courage to say no, but doing so will be very helpful to you in the long run.

³³Now when they heard this, they were infuriated and they intended to kill the apostles.

³⁴But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law [of Moses], highly esteemed by all the people, stood up in the

Council (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court) and ordered that the men be taken outside for a little while.

³⁵Then he said to the Council, “Men of Israel, be careful in regard to what you propose to do to these men.

³⁶“For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody [of importance], and a group of about four hundred men allied themselves with him. But he was killed, and all who followed him were scattered and came to nothing.

³⁷“After this man, Judas the Galilean rose up, [and led an uprising] during the time of the census, and drew people after him; he was also killed, and all his followers were scattered.

³⁸“So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men [merely human in origin], it will fail *and* be destroyed; ³⁹but if it is of God [and it appears that it is], you will not be able to stop them; or else you may even be found fighting against God!”

⁴⁰The Council (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court) took his advice; and after summoning the apostles, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and released them.

⁴¹So they left the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy [dignified by indignity] to suffer shame for [the sake of] His name.

⁴²And every single day, in the temple [area] and in homes, they did not stop teaching and telling the good news of Jesus as the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed).

6 NOW ABOUT this time, when the number of disciples was

increasing, a complaint was made by the Hellenists (Greek-speaking Jews) against the [native] Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving *offood*.

²So the Twelve called the disciples together and said, “It is not appropriate for us to neglect [teaching] the word of God in order to serve tables *and* manage the distribution of food.

³“Therefore, brothers, choose from among you seven men with good reputations [men of godly character and moral integrity], full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.

⁴“But we will [continue to] devote ourselves [steadfastly] to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

⁵The suggestion pleased the whole congregation; and they selected Stephen, a man full of faith [in Christ Jesus], and [filled with and led by] the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas (Nikolaos), a proselyte (Gentile convert) from Antioch.

⁶They brought these men before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them [to dedicate and commission them for this service].

⁷And the message of God kept on growing *and* spreading, and the number of disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem; and a large number of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith [accepting Jesus as Messiah and acknowledging Him as the Source of eternal salvation].

⁸Now Stephen, full of grace (divine blessing, favor) and power, was doing great wonders and signs (attesting miracles) among the people.

⁹However, some men from what was called the Synagogue

of the Freedmen (freed Jewish slaves), both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and [the province of] Asia, rose up and questioned *and* argued with Stephen.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Lord, as it was in the days of the early church, I pray that Your message will keep on growing and spreading, and that the number of disciples in the world will continue to increase greatly, with people becoming obedient to the faith, accepting Jesus as Messiah, and acknowledging Him as the Source of eternal salvation.

• *adapted from Acts 6:7*

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Do What You Are Called To Do

Ministering to others not only requires that we pray and know God's Word, but ministry also includes many other practical things that need to be done.

One of the responsibilities that Luke mentions as important for the apostles (ministers) of his day was making sure that the widows received their daily allotment of food. Acts 6:1-4 makes clear that we are gifted in different ways for different things, and that we should be wise enough to make sure our schedules allow the time needed to take care of what God has given us to do.

The twelve apostles said that they should not give up the preaching of the Word in order to serve food. They didn't think they were too good to do practical tasks, but the apostles knew those tasks were not the ones they should be doing. The apostles selected seven other men who were filled with the Holy Spirit and gave them the assignment and duty of caring for the widows' food distribution.

This is an important lesson! We should give ourselves to what we are called to do and let others do what they are called to do. No assignment is more important than another; because we are all needed to accomplish God's perfect and complete will. The important thing is not whether we preach the gospel or wait tables, but that we are obedient to God.

¹⁰But they were not able to successfully withstand *and* cope with the wisdom *and* the intelligence [and the power and inspiration] of the Spirit by whom he was speaking.

¹¹Then [to attack him another way] they secretly instructed men to say, “We have heard this man [Stephen] speak blasphemous (slandorous, sacrilegious, abusive) words against Moses and *against* God.”

¹²And they provoked *and* incited the people, as well as the elders and the scribes, and they came up to Stephen and seized him and brought him before the Council (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court).

¹³They presented false witnesses who said, “This man never stops speaking against this holy place and the Law [of Moses];

¹⁴for we have heard him say that this Jesus the Nazarene will tear down this place and will change the traditions *and* customs which Moses handed down to us.”

¹⁵Then all those who were sitting in the Council, stared [intently] at him, and they saw that Stephen’s face was like the face of an angel.

7 NOW THE high priest asked [Stephen], “Are these charges true?”

²And he answered, “Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory [the Shekinah, the radiance of God] appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, [Gen 11:31; 15:7; Ps 29:3]

³and He said to him, ‘LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR

RELATIVES, AND COME TO THE LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.’
[Gen 12:1]

⁴“Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. And from there, after his father died, *God* sent him to this country in which you now live. [Gen 11:31; 12:5; 15:7]

⁵“But He did not give him inheritable property, not even enough ground to take a step on, yet He promised that HE WOULD GIVE IT TO HIM AS A POSSESSION, AND TO HIS DESCENDANTS AFTER HIM. [Gen 12:7; 17:8; Deut 2:5]

⁶“And this is, in effect, what God spoke [to him]: That his DESCENDANTS WOULD BE ALIENS (strangers) IN A FOREIGN LAND, AND THAT THEY WOULD BE ENSLAVED AND MISTREATED FOR FOUR HUNDRED YEARS.

⁷““AND I WILL JUDGE ANY NATION TO WHOM THEY WILL BE IN BONDAGE,’ said God, ‘AND AFTER THAT THEY WILL COME OUT AND SERVE ME [in worship] IN THIS PLACE.’ [Gen 15:13, 14; Ex 3:12]

⁸“And God gave Abraham a covenant [a formal agreement to be strictly observed] of [which] circumcision [was the sign]; and so [under these circumstances] Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac [became the father] of Jacob, and Jacob [became the father] of the twelve patriarchs. [Gen 17:10–14; 21:2–4; 25:26; 29:31–35; 30:1–24; 35:16–26]

⁹“The [ten elder] patriarchs, *overwhelmed* with jealousy, sold [their younger brother] Joseph into [slavery in] Egypt; but God was with him, [Gen 37:11, 28; 45:4]

¹⁰and He rescued him from all his suffering, and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and

he made Joseph governor over Egypt and over his entire household. [Gen 39:2, 3, 21; 41:40–46; Ps 105:21]

¹¹“Now a famine came over all Egypt and Canaan, bringing great distress and our fathers could not find food [for their households and livestock]. [Gen 41:54, 55; 42:5]

¹²“But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our fathers *there* the first time. [Gen 42:2]

¹³“And on the second *visit* Joseph identified himself to his brothers, and Joseph’s family *and* background were revealed to Pharaoh. [Gen 45:1–4]

¹⁴“Then Joseph sent and invited Jacob his father and all his relatives to come to him, seventy-five persons in all. [Gen 45:9, 10]

¹⁵“And Jacob (Israel) went down into Egypt, and there he died, as did our fathers; [Gen 49:33]

¹⁶and [from Egypt] their bodies were taken back to Shechem and placed in the tomb which Abraham had purchased for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor in Shechem. [Gen 50:13; Josh 24:32]

¹⁷“But as the time [for the fulfillment] of the promise which God had made to Abraham was approaching, the [Hebrew] people increased and multiplied in Egypt, [Deut 10:22]

¹⁸until [the time when] THERE AROSE ANOTHER KING OVER EGYPT WHO DID NOT KNOW JOSEPH [nor his history and the merit of his service to Egypt]. [Ex 1:7, 8]

¹⁹“He shrewdly exploited our race and mistreated our fathers, forcing them to expose their [male] babies so that they would die. [Ex 1:7–11, 15–22]

²⁰“It was at this [critical] time that Moses was born; and he

was lovely in the sight of God, and for three months he was nourished in his father's house. [Ex 2:2]

21“Then when he was set outside [to die], Pharaoh's daughter rescued him *and* claimed him for herself, and cared for him as her own son. [Ex 2:5, 6, 10]

22“So Moses was educated in all the wisdom *and* culture of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds.

23“But when he reached the age of forty, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the sons of Israel.

24“And when he saw one [of them] being treated unfairly, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking *and* killing the Egyptian.

25“He expected his countrymen to understand that God was granting them freedom through him [assuming that they would accept him], but they did not understand.

26“Then on the next day he suddenly appeared to two of them as they were fighting, and he tried to reconcile them, saying, ‘Men, you are brothers; why do you wrong one another?’

27“But the man who was injuring his neighbor pushed Moses away, saying, ‘WHO APPOINTED YOU RULER AND JUDGE OVER US?’

28‘DO YOU INTEND TO KILL ME AS YOU KILLED THE EGYPTIAN YESTERDAY?’

29“**At this remark MOSES FLED AND BECAME AN EXILE IN THE LAND OF MIDIAN, where he fathered two sons. [Ex 2:11–15, 22; 18:3, 4]**

30“After forty years had passed, AN ANGEL APPEARED TO

HIM IN THE WILDERNESS OF MOUNT Sinai, IN THE FLAME OF A
BURNING THORN BUSH.

³¹“When Moses saw it, he was astonished at the sight; but
as he went near to look more closely, the voice of the Lord
came [to him, saying]:

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Face Your Fears

God sent Moses back to Egypt at the right time to help the Israelites (see Ex. 3:10). He had lived there previously, and Exodus 2:11–14 tells us that when he sensed a desire and a call from God to help His people, he stepped out and took action. But things didn't work the way he planned. He thought the Israelites would accept him and understand that he wanted to rescue them, but they did not. When they rejected him, he ran from Egypt and spent forty years in Midian before returning to Egypt.

I have learned from Acts 7:34 and similar verses that when we run from something, God always eventually takes us back to it. Why? Because anything we fear has power over us. We only conquer our fears by facing them and dealing with them as God leads us. Satan will try to fill our minds with fearful thoughts, but fear is not from God.

If you are facing anything right now that you are tempted to run away from, I urge you not to run, but to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord (see Ex. 14:13).

³²‘I AM THE GOD OF YOUR FATHERS, THE GOD OF ABRAHAM AND OF ISAAC AND OF JACOB.’ Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look.

³³“THEN THE LORD SAID TO HIM, ‘REMOVE THE SANDALS

FROM YOUR FEET, FOR THE PLACE WHERE YOU ARE STANDING IS HOLY GROUND [worthy of reverence and respect].

³⁴“I HAVE MOST CERTAINLY SEEN THE OPPRESSION OF MY PEOPLE IN EGYPT AND HAVE HEARD THEIR GROANING, AND I HAVE COME DOWN TO RESCUE THEM. NOW COME, AND I WILL SEND YOU TO EGYPT [as My messenger].” [Ex 3:1–10]

³⁵“This Moses whom they rejected, saying, ‘WHO MADE YOU A RULER AND A JUDGE?’ is the very one whom God sent to be both a ruler and a deliverer, with the [protecting and helping] hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the thorn bush. [Ex 2:14]

³⁶“This man led them out [of Egypt] after performing wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and at the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years. [Ex 7:3; 14:21; Num 14:33]

³⁷“This is the Moses who said to the children of Israel, ‘GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR COUNTRYMEN.’ [Deut 18:15, 18]

³⁸“This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness together with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and *who was* with our fathers; and he received living oracles [divine words that still live] to be handed down to you. [Ex 19]

³⁹“Our fathers were unwilling to be subject to him [and refused to listen to him]. They rejected him, and in their hearts turned back to Egypt. [Num 14:3, 4]

⁴⁰“THEY SAID TO AARON, ‘MAKE FOR US GODS WHO WILL GO BEFORE US; FOR THIS MOSES WHO LED US OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT, WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO HIM.’ [Ex 32:1, 23]

41“In those days they made a calf and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and rejoiced *and* celebrated over the works of their hands. [Ex 32:4, 6]

42“But God turned away [from them] and handed them over to serve the host of heaven. As it is written *and* forever remains written in the book of the prophets, ‘IT WAS NOT [really] TO ME THAT YOU OFFERED VICTIMS AND SACRIFICES FOR FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS, WAS IT, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL? [Jer 19:13]

43“YOU ALSO TOOK ALONG THE TABERNACLE (portable temple) OF MOLOCH AND THE STAR OF THE GOD ROMPHA, THE IMAGES WHICH YOU MADE TO WORSHIP; AND I WILL REMOVE YOU BEYOND BABYLON [carrying you away into exile].’ [Amos 5:25–27]

44“Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, just as God directed Moses to make it according to the pattern which he had seen. [Ex 25:9–40]

45“Our fathers also brought it in [with them into the land] with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations whom God drove out before our fathers, [and so it remained here] until the time of David, [Deut 32:49; Josh 3:14–17]

46who found favor (grace, spiritual blessing) in the sight of God and asked that he might [be allowed to] find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. [2 Sam 7:8–16; Ps 132:1–5]

47“But it was Solomon who built a house for Him. [1 Kin 6]

48“However, the Most High [the One infinitely exalted above humanity] does not dwell in *houses* made by human hands; as the prophet [Isaiah] says, [1 Kin 8:27]

49‘HEAVEN IS MY THRONE,
AND THE EARTH IS THE FOOTSTOOL FOR MY FEET;
WHAT KIND OF HOUSE WILL YOU BUILD FOR ME?’ says the
Lord,
‘OR WHAT PLACE IS THERE FOR MY REST?’
50‘WAS IT NOT MY HAND THAT MADE ALL THESE THINGS?’ [Is
66:1, 2]

51“*You stiff-necked and stubborn people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you are always actively resisting the Holy Spirit. You are doing just as your fathers did. [Ex 33:3, 5; Num 27:14; Is 63:10; Jer 6:10; 9:26]*

52“Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who proclaimed beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; ⁵³you who received the law as ordained *and* delivered to you by angels, and yet you did not obey it!”

54Now when they heard this [accusation and understood its implication], they were cut to the heart, and they *began* grinding their teeth [in rage] at him.

55But he, being full of the Holy Spirit *and* led by Him, gazed into heaven and saw the glory [the great splendor and majesty] of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; ⁵⁶and he said, “Look! I see the heavens opened up [in welcome] and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!”

57But they shouted with loud voices, and covered their ears and together rushed at him [considering him guilty of blasphemy].

⁵⁸Then they drove him out of the city and *began* stoning him; and the witnesses placed their outer robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. [Acts 22:20]

⁵⁹They continued stoning Stephen as he called on *the Lord* and said, “Lord Jesus, receive *and* accept *and* welcome my spirit!”

⁶⁰Then falling on his knees [in worship], he cried out loudly, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them [do not charge them]!” When he had said this, he fell asleep [in death].

8 SAUL WHOLEHEARTEDLY approved of Stephen’s death.

And on that day a great *and* relentless persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem; and the believers were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except for the apostles.

²Some devout men buried Stephen, and mourned greatly over him [expressing a personal sense of loss].

³But Saul *began* ravaging the church [and assaulting believers]; entering house after house and dragging off men and women, putting them in prison.

⁴Now those [believers] who had been scattered went from place to place preaching the word [the good news of salvation through Christ].

⁵Philip [the evangelist] went down to the city of Samaria and *began* proclaiming Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed) to them. [Acts 6:5]

⁶The crowds gathered and were paying close attention to everything Philip said, as they heard [the message] and saw

the [miraculous] signs which he was doing [validating his message].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Understanding Leads to Freedom

A stronghold is usually a fortress of negative thoughts that the enemy establishes in your mind. A stronghold isn't built overnight; it has likely been developing for most of your life, and it will have to be taken down brick by brick by brick. In Simon's case, the stronghold was the desire for authority and power, which Peter said was "provoked by bitterness" and bound him in sin (Acts 8:23).

Let me encourage you to examine yourself and learn what provokes you to think the thoughts you wish you did not think. Does stress or some other negative emotion cause you to turn to negative thoughts? Boredom? Loneliness? Being tired? Sometimes understanding why or when we do something is the doorway to freedom from it. Then, with God's help, we can overcome that stronghold. The Word of God becomes our battle weapon when we read it, speak it, pray it, and believe it.

⁷For unclean spirits (demons), shouting loudly, were coming out of many who were possessed; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed.

⁸So there was great rejoicing in that city.

⁹Now there was a man named Simon, who previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria,

claiming to be someone great.

¹⁰They all paid [a great deal of] attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, “This man is what is called the Great Power of God!”

¹¹They were paying attention to him because for a long time he had mystified *and* dazzled them with his magic.

¹²But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, both men and women.

¹³Even Simon believed [Philip’s message of salvation]; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he watched the *attesting* signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.

¹⁴When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that [the people of] Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them.

¹⁵They came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit;

¹⁶for He had not yet fallen on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus [as His possession].

¹⁷Then Peter and John laid their hands on them [one by one], and they received the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money,

¹⁹saying, “Give me this authority *and* power too, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.”

²⁰But Peter said to him, “May your money be destroyed along with you, because you thought you could buy the [free]

gift of God with money!

²¹“You have no part or share in this matter, because your heart (motive, purpose) is not right before God. [Ps 78:37]

²²“So repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, this thought of your heart may be forgiven you.

²³“For I see that you are provoked by bitterness and bound by sin.” [Deut 29:18; Is 58:6]

²⁴But Simon answered, “Pray to the Lord for me both of you, so that nothing of what you have said will come upon me.”

²⁵So, when Peter and John had given their testimony and preached the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, preaching the good news [about salvation] in many Samaritan villages [along the way].

²⁶But an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Get up and go south to the road that runs from Jerusalem down to Gaza.” (This is a desert road).

²⁷So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch [a man of great authority], a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸and he was returning, and sitting in his chariot he was reading [the scroll of] the prophet Isaiah.

²⁹Then the [Holy] Spirit said to Philip, “Go up and join this chariot.”

³⁰Philip ran up and heard the man reading the prophet Isaiah, and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

³¹And he said, “Well, how could I [understand] unless

someone guides me [correctly]?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

³²Now this was the passage of Scripture which he was reading:

“LIKE A SHEEP HE WAS LED TO THE SLAUGHTER;
AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT,
SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH.

³³“IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY [justice was denied Him].

WHO WILL DESCRIBE HIS GENERATION?

FOR HIS LIFE IS TAKEN FROM THE EARTH.” [Is 53:7, 8]

³⁴The eunuch replied to Philip, “Please *tell me*, about whom does the prophet say this? About himself or about someone else?”

³⁵Then Philip spoke and beginning with this Scripture he preached Jesus to him [explaining that He is the promised Messiah and the source of salvation].

³⁶As they continued along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch exclaimed, “Look! Water! What forbids me from being baptized?”

³⁷[Philip said to him, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he replied, “I do believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”]

³⁸And he ordered that the chariot be stopped; and both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

³⁹When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord [suddenly] took Philip [and carried him] away [to a

different place]; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but he went on his way rejoicing.

⁴⁰But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the good news [of salvation] to all the cities, until he came to Caesarea [Maritima].

9 NOW SAUL, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord [and relentless in his search for believers], went to the high priest, ²and he asked for letters [of authority] from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any men or women there belonging to the Way [believers, followers of Jesus the Messiah], men and women alike, he could arrest them *and* bring them bound [with chains] to Jerusalem.

³As he traveled he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him [displaying the glory and majesty of Christ];

⁴and he fell to the ground and heard a voice [from heaven] saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting *and* oppressing Me?”

⁵And Saul said, “Who are You, Lord?” And He *answered*, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,

⁶now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

⁷The men who were traveling with him [were terrified and] stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.

⁸Saul got up from the ground, but though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and

brought him into Damascus.

⁹And he was unable to see for three days, and he neither ate nor drank.

¹⁰Now in Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” And he answered, “Here I am, Lord.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Radically Changed

Saul (later called Paul) was a religious man with great zeal, but he lacked knowledge of the truth about Jesus. When Jesus confronted him on the Damascus road (see Acts 9:3–6), Saul was transformed and entirely changed into another man. He repented of his past sins and wanted to do what God wanted him to do, which means that he had a total, complete, and radical change of mind.

Paul had persecuted Christians and delighted in watching them being stoned, but God's grace came to him, forgiving him and accepting him as a chosen instrument that God would use mightily. When we repent, we are not merely saying we recognize that we are sinners and we are sorry for our sins. True repentance is a willingness to change our mind and go in a new and godly direction in our life, as Paul did after his conversion.

¹¹And the Lord said to him, “Get up and go to the street called Straight, and ask at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul; for he is praying [there], ¹²and in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come in and place his hands on him, so that he may regain his sight.”

¹³But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many people about this man, especially how much suffering *and* evil

he has brought on Your saints (God's people) at Jerusalem;
¹⁴and here [in Damascus] he has authority from the high priests to put in chains all who call on Your name [confessing You as Savior].”

¹⁵But the Lord said to him, “Go, for this man is a [deliberately] chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; ¹⁶for I will make clear to him how much he must suffer *and* endure for My name's sake.”

¹⁷So Ananias left and entered the house, and he laid his hands on Saul and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came [to Damascus], has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit [in order to proclaim Christ to both Jews and Gentiles].”

¹⁸Immediately something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized;

¹⁹and he took some food and was strengthened.

For several days [afterward] Saul remained with the disciples who were at Damascus.

²⁰And immediately he *began* proclaiming Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “This Man is the Son of God [the promised Messiah]!”

²¹All those who heard him continued to be amazed and said, “Is this not the man who in Jerusalem attacked those who called on this name [of Jesus], and had come here [to Damascus] for the express purpose of bringing them bound [with chains] before the chief priests?”

²²But Saul increased in strength more and more, and

continued to perplex the Jews who lived in Damascus by examining [theological evidence] *and* proving [with Scripture] that this *Jesus* is the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed).

²³ After considerable time had passed [about three years or so], the Jews plotted together to kill him,

²⁴ but their plot became known to Saul. They were also watching the city's gates day and night so they could kill him;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Forgiveness Is Not Impossible

After Paul's conversion, it is easy to understand that the disciples in Jerusalem "were all afraid of him" (Acts 9:26). Because of Paul's previous attacks against believers and against the church, we can imagine that a lot of forgiveness was needed before he was welcomed in the city. I encourage you to never hold anyone's past against them. If God can forgive and give people a new start, so can we.

We are commanded several times in God's Word to forgive those who abuse us or mistreat us, to pray for them and love them, and to wait for God's justice. These instructions are not always easy to follow; to forgive and to let go of anger requires effort and energy. I actually feel this is one of the most difficult things God asks of us. It is hard, but not impossible. The Lord never requires us to do anything without giving us the ability to do it. We may not want to forgive, but we are able to forgive with God's help. When we forgive, we do ourselves a favor and save ourselves a lot of misery.

²⁵but his disciples took him at night and let him down through *an opening in the wall*, lowering him in a large basket.

²⁶When he arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple.

²⁷However, Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles, and described to them how Saul had seen the Lord on the road [to Damascus], and how He had spoken to him, and how at Damascus Saul had preached openly *and* spoken confidently in the name of Jesus.

²⁸So he was with them, moving around freely [as one among them] in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord.

²⁹He was talking and arguing with the Hellenists (Greek-speaking Jews); but they were attempting to kill him.

³⁰When the brothers found out [about the plot], they brought him down to Caesarea [Maritima] and sent him off to Tarsus [his home town].

³¹So the church throughout Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace [without persecution], being built up [in wisdom, virtue, and faith]; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort *and* encouragement of the Holy Spirit, it continued to grow [in numbers].

³²Now as Peter was traveling throughout *the land*, he went down to [visit] the saints (God's people) who lived at Lydda.

³³There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden for eight years and was paralyzed.

³⁴Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and make your bed." Immediately Aeneas got up.

³⁵Then all who lived at Lydda and *the plain of Sharon* saw [what had happened to] him, and they turned to the Lord.

³⁶Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha, (which translated *into Greek* means Dorcas). She was rich in acts of kindness and charity which she continually did.

³⁷During that time it happened that she became sick and died; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upstairs room.

³⁸Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, “Come to us without delay.”

³⁹So Peter got up [at once] and went with them. When he arrived, they brought him into the upstairs room; and all the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing [him] all the ~~—~~tunics and robes that Dorcas used to make while she was with them.

⁴⁰But Peter sent them all out [of the room] and knelt down and prayed; then turning to the body he said, “Tabitha, arise!” And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

⁴¹And he gave her his hand and helped her up; and then he called in the saints (God’s people) and the widows, and he presented her [to them] alive.

⁴²This became known all over Joppa, and many came to believe in the Lord [that is, to adhere to and trust in and rely on Jesus as Christ and Savior].

⁴³And so it was that Peter stayed in Joppa for many days with Simon, a tanner.

10 NOW AT Caesarea [Maritima] *there was* a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Regiment, ²a devout man and one who, along with all his household, feared God. He made many charitable donations to the *Jewish* people, and prayed to God always.

³About the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.) of the day he clearly saw in a vision an angel of God who had come to him and said, “Cornelius!”

⁴Cornelius was frightened and stared intently at him and said, “What is it, lord (sir)?” And the angel said to him, “Your prayers and gifts of charity have ascended as a memorial offering before God [an offering made in remembrance of His past blessings].

⁵“Now send men to Joppa and have them call for a man *named* Simon, who is also called Peter [and invite him here];

⁶he is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea.”

⁷When the angel who was speaking to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among his own personal attendants;

⁸and after explaining everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

⁹The next day, as they were on their way and were approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof of the house about the sixth hour (noon) to pray, ¹⁰but he became hungry and wanted something to eat. While the meal was being prepared he fell into a trance;

¹¹and he saw the sky opened up, and an ^{*}object like a great sheet descending, lowered by its four corners to the earth,

¹²and it contained all *kinds of* four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air.

¹³A voice came to him, “Get up, Peter, kill and eat!”

¹⁴But Peter said, “Not at all, Lord, for I have never eaten

anything that is common (unholy) and [ceremonially] unclean.”

¹⁵And the voice came to him a second time, “What God has cleansed *and* pronounced clean, no longer consider common (unholy).”

¹⁶This happened three times, and then immediately the object was taken up into heaven.

¹⁷Now Peter was still perplexed *and* completely at a loss as to what his vision could mean when the men who had been sent by Cornelius, having asked directions to Simon’s house, arrived at the gate.

¹⁸And they called out to ask whether Simon, who was also called Peter, was staying there.

¹⁹While Peter was thoughtfully considering the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Now listen, three men are looking for you.

²⁰“Get up, go downstairs and go with them without hesitating *or* doubting, because I have sent them Myself.”

²¹Peter went down to the men and said, “I am the one you are looking for. For what reason have you come?”

²²They said, “Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man well spoken of by all the Jewish people, was *divinely* instructed by a holy angel to send for you *to come* to his house and hear what you have to say.”

²³So Peter invited them in and gave them lodging [for the night].

The next day Peter got up and left with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went with him.

²⁴On the following day he [and the others] entered Caesarea. Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Wants To Bless Us All

God does not show favoritism (see Acts 10:34). He desires to bless all people and to see our needs met abundantly. God loves everyone equally and wants the best for us all, not just some of us.

God has not assigned His children to an upper class, a middle class, and a lower class. The world may think according to those categories, but God does not, and we shouldn't either. The promises of God are for "whosoever will" (see John 3:16–17). Whoever will believe in God and serve Him wholeheartedly can be blessed in any way, just as much as anyone else can be blessed. With God, there are no distinctions, and He shows no partiality (see Gal. 2:6).

²⁵When Peter arrived, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet and worshiped *him*.

²⁶But Peter raised him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am only a man."

²⁷As Peter talked with him, he entered [the house] and found a large group of people assembled.

²⁸He said to them, "You know that it is unlawful for a Jewish man to associate with *or* befriend a Gentile, or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I am not to call anyone common or [ceremonially] unclean.

²⁹“Therefore when I was sent for, I came without raising an objection. So I ask for what reason have you sent for me?”

³⁰Cornelius said, “Four days ago to this hour, I was praying in my house during the ninth hour (3:00–4:00 p.m.); and a man [dressed] in bright, dazzling clothing suddenly stood before me, ³¹and he said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your acts of charity have been remembered before God [so that He is about to help you].

³²‘Therefore send *word* to Joppa and invite Simon, who is also called Peter, to come to you. He is staying at the house of Simon the tanner by the sea.’

³³“So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to listen to everything that you have been instructed by the Lord [to say].”

³⁴Opening his mouth, Peter said:

“Most certainly I understand now that God is not one to show partiality [to people as though Gentiles were excluded from God’s blessing],

³⁵but in every nation the person who fears God and does what is right [by seeking Him] is acceptable *and* welcomed by Him.

³⁶“You know the message which He sent to the sons of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all—

³⁷you know the things that have taken place throughout Judea, starting in Galilee after the baptism preached by John—

³⁸how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with great power; and He went around doing good and

healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with Him. [Is 61:1–3; Luke 4:18–21]

³⁹“We are [personally] eyewitnesses of everything that He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem [in particular]. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross; ⁴⁰God raised Him [to life] on the third day and caused Him to be plainly seen,

⁴¹not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen *and* designated beforehand by God, *that is*, to us who ate and drank together with Him after He rose from the dead. [Luke 24:42, 43; John 21:12–15]

⁴²“He commanded us to preach to the people [both Jew and Gentile], and to solemnly testify that He is the One who has been appointed *and* ordained by God as Judge of the living and the dead.

⁴³“All the prophets testify about Him, that through His name everyone who believes in Him [whoever trusts in and relies on Him, accepting Him as Savior and Messiah] receives forgiveness of sins.”

⁴⁴While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all those who were listening to the message [confirming God’s acceptance of Gentiles].

⁴⁵All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles.

⁴⁶For they heard them talking in [unknown] tongues (languages) and exalting *and* magnifying *and* praising God. Then Peter said,

⁴⁷“Can anyone refuse water for these people to be

baptized, since they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?”

⁴⁸And he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay there for a few days.

11 NOW THE apostles and the believers who were throughout Judea heard [with astonishment] that the Gentiles also had received *and* accepted the word of God [the message concerning salvation through Christ].

²So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision [certain Jewish believers who followed the Law] took issue with him [for violating Jewish customs], ³saying, “You went to uncircumcised men and [even] ate with them!”

⁴But Peter began [at the beginning] and explained [the events] to them step by step, saying,

⁵“I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision of an object coming down from heaven, like a huge sheet being lowered by the four corners; and [it descended until] it came right down to me, ⁶and looking closely at it, I saw *all kinds of* the four-footed animals of the earth and the wild beasts and the crawling creatures and the birds of the air [both clean and unclean according to the Law], ⁷and I also heard a voice saying to me, ‘Get up, Peter; kill and eat.’

⁸“But I said, ‘Not at all, Lord; for nothing common (unholy) or [ceremonially] unclean has ever entered my mouth.’

⁹“But the voice from heaven answered a second time, ‘What God has cleansed *and* pronounced clean, no longer consider common (unholy).’

¹⁰“This happened three times, and everything was drawn up again into heaven.

¹¹“And right then the three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea arrived at the house where we were *staying*.

¹²“The Spirit told me to go with them without the slightest hesitation. So these six brothers also went with me and we went to the man’s house.

¹³“And Cornelius told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house, saying, ‘Send *word* to Joppa and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here; ¹⁴he will bring a message to you by which you will be saved [and granted eternal life], you and all your household.’

¹⁵“When I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as *He did* on us at the beginning [at Pentecost]. [Acts 2:1–4]

¹⁶“Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’

¹⁷“So, if God gave Gentiles the same gift [equally] as He gave us after we accepted *and* believed *and* trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ [as Savior], who was I to interfere *or* stand in God’s way?”

¹⁸When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified *and* praised God, saying, “Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance *that leads to eternal life* [that is, real life after earthly death].”

¹⁹So then [since they were unaware of these developments] those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with [the stoning of] Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch,

without telling the message [of salvation through Christ] to anyone except Jews.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*I pray, Lord, that I will be like
the believers at Antioch—that
I will have an unwavering
heart to stay true and devoted
to You.*

• *adapted from Acts 11:23*

²⁰But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and *began* speaking to the Greeks as well, proclaiming [to them] the good news about the Lord Jesus.

²¹And the hand (the power and presence) of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord [for salvation, accepting and drawing near to Jesus as Messiah and Savior].

²²The news of this reached the ears of the church in

Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch.

²³When he arrived and saw the grace of God [that was bestowed on them], he rejoiced and *began* to encourage them all with an unwavering heart to stay true *and* devoted to the Lord.

²⁴For Barnabas was a good man [privately and publicly—his godly character benefited both himself and others] and *he was* full of the Holy Spirit and full of faith [in Jesus the Messiah, through whom believers have everlasting life]. And a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

²⁵And Barnabas left for Tarsus to search for Saul;

²⁶and when he found him, he brought him back to Antioch. For an entire year they met [with others] in the church and instructed large numbers; and it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians. [Acts 26:28; 1 Pet 4:16]

²⁷Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.

²⁸One of them named Agabus stood up and prophesied through the [Holy] Spirit that a severe famine would come on the entire world. And this did happen during the reign of Claudius.

²⁹So the disciples decided to send *a contribution*, each according to his individual ability, to the believers who lived in Judea.

³⁰And this they did, sending the contribution to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

12 NOW AT that time Herod [Agrippa I] the king [of the

Jews] arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to harm them.

²And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword;

³and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to have Peter arrested as well. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread [the Passover week].

⁴When he had seized Peter, he put him in prison, turning him over to four squads of soldiers of four each to guard him [in rotation throughout the night], planning after the Passover to bring him out before the people [for execution].

⁵So Peter was kept in prison, but fervent *and* persistent prayer for him was being made to God by the church.

⁶The very night before Herod was to bring him forward, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries were in front of the door guarding the prison.

⁷Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared [beside him] and a light shone in the cell. The angel struck Peter's side and awakened him, saying, "Get up quickly!" And the chains fell off his hands.

⁸The angel said to him, "Prepare yourself and strap on your sandals [to get ready for whatever may happen]." And he did so. Then the angel told him, "Put on your robe and follow me."

⁹And Peter went out following *the angel*. He did not realize that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.

¹⁰When they had passed the first guard and the second, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city. Of its own

accord it swung open for them; and they went out and went along one street, and at once the angel left him.

¹¹When Peter came to his senses, he said, “Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel and has rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting [to do to me].”

¹²When he realized what had happened, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, who was also called Mark, where many [believers] were gathered together and were praying *continually* [and had been praying all night].

¹³When he knocked at the door of the gateway, a servant-girl named Rhoda came to answer.

¹⁴Recognizing Peter’s voice, in her joy she failed to open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing in front of the gateway.

¹⁵They said to her, “You are out of your mind!” But she kept insisting that it was so. They kept saying, “It is his angel!” [Matt 18:10; Heb 1:14]

¹⁶But [meanwhile] Peter continued knocking; and when they opened *the door* and saw him, they were completely amazed.

¹⁷But motioning to them with his hand to be quiet *and* listen, he described how the Lord had led him out of the prison. And he said, “Report these things to James and the brothers and sisters.” Then he left and went to another place.

¹⁸Now when day came, there was no small disturbance among the soldiers over what had become of Peter.

¹⁹When Herod had searched for him and could not find him, he interrogated the guards and commanded that they be

led away *to execution*. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea [Maritima] and spent some time there.

²⁰Now Herod [Agrippa I] was extremely angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; and their delegates came to him in a united group, and after persuading Blastus, the king's chamberlain [to support their cause], they asked for peace, because their country was fed by [imports of grain and other goods from] the king's country.

²¹On an appointed day Herod dressed himself in his royal robes, sat on his throne (tribunal, rostrum) and *began* delivering a speech to the people.

²²The assembled people kept shouting, "It is the voice of a god and not of a man!"

²³And at once an angel of the Lord struck him down because he did not give God the glory [and instead permitted himself to be worshiped], and he was eaten by worms and died [five days later].

²⁴But the word of the Lord [the good news about salvation through Christ] continued to grow and spread [increasing in effectiveness].

²⁵Barnabas and Saul came back from Jerusalem when they had completed their mission, bringing with them John, who was also called Mark. [Acts 11:28–30]

13 NOW IN the church at Antioch there were prophets [who spoke a new message of God to the people] and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod [Antipas] the

tetrarch, and Saul.

²While they were serving the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul (Paul) for the work to which I have called them.”

³Then after fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them [in approval and dedication] and sent them away [on their first journey].

⁴So then, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

⁵When Barnabas and Saul arrived at Salamis, they *began* to preach the word of God [proclaiming the message of eternal salvation through faith in Christ] in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John [Mark] as their assistant.

⁶When they had traveled through the entire island [of Cyprus] as far as Paphos, they found a sorcerer, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus,

⁷who was [closely associated] with the proconsul [of the province], Sergius Paulus, an intelligent *and* sensible man. He called for Barnabas and Saul and wanted to hear the word of God [concerning eternal salvation through faith in Christ].

⁸But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is how his name is translated) opposed them, trying to turn the proconsul away from *accepting* the faith.

⁹But Saul, who was also *known as* Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit *and* led by Him, looked steadily at Elymas,

¹⁰and said, “You [Elymas] who are full of every [kind of] deceit, and every [kind of] fraud, you son of the devil, enemy of everything that is right *and* good, will you never stop perverting the straight paths of the Lord? [Hos 14:9]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The Holy Spirit Leads and Guides Us

The Bible says that the apostle Paul was “filled with the Holy Spirit and led by Him” in his missionary endeavors (Acts 13:9). If you pray first, asking God for a plan, His Holy Spirit will prompt, guide, and gently lead you to a place of liberty and joy (see 2 Cor. 3:17); He will never manipulate or control you. If you are too consumed with your own plan or too locked into the way you think things ought to be, you may not even hear God speak to you or recognize His promptings. If you are too determined to follow your own ritualistic rules, you can miss the gentle leading of the Holy Spirit and lose the joy that God intends for you to experience.

Having a plan is not wrong, but always offer your plan to God and tell Him that if He has something else in mind, you are willing to submit to Him.

¹¹“Now, watch! The hand of the Lord is on you, and you will be blind, [so blind that you will be] unable to see the sun for a time.” Immediately a mist and darkness fell upon him, and he groped around, seeking people to lead him by the hand.

¹²The proconsul believed [the message of salvation] when he saw what had happened, being astonished at the teaching concerning the Lord.

¹³Now Paul and his companions sailed from Paphos and

came to Perga in Pamphylia; but John [Mark] left them and went back to Jerusalem.

¹⁴Now they went on from Perga and arrived at Antioch in Pisidia, and on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.

¹⁵After the reading of the Law and the [writings of the] Prophets, the officials of the synagogue sent *word* to them, saying, “Brothers (kinsmen), if you have any word of encouragement for the people, say it.”

¹⁶So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand, he said, “Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen!

¹⁷“The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great *and* numerous during their stay [as foreigners] in the land of Egypt, and then with an uplifted arm He led them out of there. [Ex 6:1, 6]

¹⁸“For a period of about forty years He put up with their behavior in the wilderness. [Deut 1:31]

¹⁹“When He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He gave their land [to our ancestors] as an inheritance—this took about four hundred and fifty years. [Deut 7:1; Josh 14:1, 2]

²⁰“After this, He gave *them* judges until the prophet Samuel.

²¹“Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years.

²²“And when He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king: of him He testified and said, ‘I HAVE FOUND DAVID the son of Jesse, A MAN AFTER MY OWN HEART [conforming to My will and purposes], who will do all My will.’ [1 Sam 13:14;

Ps 89:20; Is 44:28]

²³“From this man’s descendants God has brought to Israel a Savior, [in the person of] Jesus, according to His promise.

²⁴“Before His coming John [the Baptist] had preached a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

²⁵“And as John was finishing his course [of ministry], he kept saying, ‘What *or* who do you think that I am? I am not He [the Christ]; but be aware, One is coming after me whose sandals I am not worthy to untie [even as His slave]!’

²⁶“Brothers, sons of Abraham’s family, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation [obtained through faith in Jesus Christ]. [Ps 107:20]

²⁷“For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, who failed to recognize *or* understand both Jesus and the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled these [very prophecies] by condemning Him.

²⁸“And though they found no cause *or* charge deserving death, they asked Pilate to have Him executed.

²⁹“And when they had finished carrying out everything that was written [in Scripture] about Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb.

³⁰“But God raised Him from the dead;

³¹and for many days (forty) He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people.

³²“And we are bringing you the good news of the promise made to our fathers (ancestors),

³³that God has *completely* fulfilled this *promise* to our children by raising up Jesus, as it is also written in the second

Psalm, ‘YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN (fathered) YOU.’ [Ps 2:7]

³⁴“And [as for the fact] that He raised Him from the dead, never again to return to decay [in the grave], He has spoken in this way: ‘I WILL GIVE YOU THE HOLY AND SURE *blessings* OF DAVID [those blessings and mercies that were promised to him].’ [Is 55:3]

³⁵“For this reason He also says in another *Psalm*, ‘YOU WILL NOT ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO SEE DECAY.’ [Ps 16:10]

³⁶“For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was buried among his fathers and experienced decay [in the grave]; ³⁷but He whom God raised [to life] did not experience decay [in the grave].

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Jesus, that
through You, everyone who
believes, acknowledges You
as Lord and Savior, and
follows You is justified and*

declared free of guilt from all things.

• *adapted from Acts 13:39*

³⁸“So let it be clearly known by you, brothers, that through Him forgiveness of sins is being proclaimed to you;

³⁹and through Him everyone who believes [who acknowledges Jesus as Lord and Savior and follows Him] is justified *and* declared free of guilt from all things, from which you could not be justified *and* freed of guilt through the Law of Moses.

⁴⁰“Therefore be careful, so that the thing spoken of in the [writings of the] Prophets does not come upon you:

⁴¹‘LOOK, YOU MOCKERS, AND MARVEL, AND PERISH *and* VANISH AWAY;
FOR I AM DOING A WORK IN YOUR DAYS,
A WORK WHICH YOU WILL NEVER BELIEVE, even IF SOMEONE DESCRIBES IT TO YOU [telling you about it in detail].’” [Hab 1:5]

⁴²As Paul and Barnabas were leaving [the synagogue], the people kept begging that these things might be spoken to them on the next Sabbath.

⁴³When the congregation of the synagogue had been dismissed, many of the Jews and the devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, talking to them were urging them to continue in the grace of God.

⁴⁴On the next Sabbath almost the entire city gathered

together to hear the word of the Lord [about salvation through faith in Christ].

⁴⁵But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and *began* contradicting the things said by Paul, and were slandering him.

⁴⁶And [at the same time] Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly *and* confidently, saying, “It was necessary that God’s message [of salvation through faith in Christ] be spoken to you [Jews] first. Since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, now we turn to the Gentiles.

Speak God's Word

*Because I am Jesus' disciple, I
can be continually filled
throughout my heart and soul
with joy and with the Holy
Spirit.*

| adapted from ACTS 13:52 |

⁴⁷“For that is what the Lord has commanded us, saying,
‘I HAVE PLACED YOU AS A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES,
SO THAT YOU MAY BRING [the message of eternal] SALVATION
TO THE END OF THE EARTH.’” [Is 49:6]

⁴⁸When the Gentiles heard this, they *began* rejoicing and glorifying [praising and giving thanks for] the word of the Lord; and all those who had been appointed (designated, ordained) to eternal life [by God] believed [in Jesus as the Christ and their Savior].

⁴⁹And so the word of the Lord [regarding salvation] was being spread through the entire region.

⁵⁰But the Jews incited the devout, prominent women and the leading men of the city, and instigated persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them forcibly out of their district.

⁵¹But they shook its dust from their feet *in protest* against

them and went to Iconium. [Matt 10:14; Mark 6:11]

⁵²And the disciples were continually filled [throughout their hearts and souls] with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

14 NOW IN Iconium Paul and Barnabas went into the Jewish synagogue together and spoke in such a way [with such power and boldness] that a large number of Jews as well as Greeks believed [and confidently accepted Jesus as Savior]; ²but the unbelieving Jews [who rejected Jesus as Messiah] stirred up and embittered the minds of the Gentiles against the believers.

³So Paul and Barnabas stayed for a long time, speaking boldly *and* confidently for the Lord, who continued to testify to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders (attesting miracles) be done by them.

⁴But the people of the city were divided; some were *siding* with the Jews, and some with the apostles.

⁵When there was an attempt by both the Gentiles and the Jews, together with their rulers, to shamefully mistreat and to stone them,

⁶they, aware of the situation, escaped to Lystra and Derbe, [taking refuge in the] cities of Lycaonia, and the neighboring region;

⁷and there they continued to preach the good news.

⁸Now at Lystra a man sat who was unable to use his feet, for he was crippled from birth and had never walked.

⁹This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, and Paul looked intently at him and saw that he had faith to be healed,

¹⁰and said with a loud voice, “Stand up on your feet.” And he jumped up and *began* to walk.

¹¹And the crowds, when they saw what Paul had done, raised their voices, shouting in the Lycaonian language, “The gods have come down to us in human form!”

¹²They began calling Barnabas, Zeus [chief of the Greek gods], and Paul, Hermes [messenger of the Greek gods], since he took the lead in speaking.

¹³The priest of Zeus, whose *temple* was at the entrance of the city, brought bulls and garlands to the city gates, and wanted to offer sacrifices with the crowds.

¹⁴But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard about it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting,

¹⁵“Men, why are you doing these things? We too are only men of the same nature as you, bringing the good news to you, so that you turn from these useless *and* meaningless things to the living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND EVERYTHING THAT IS IN THEM. [Ex 20:11; Ps 146:6]

¹⁶“In generations past He permitted all the nations to go their own ways;

¹⁷yet He did not leave Himself without some witness [as evidence of Himself], in that He kept constantly doing good things *and* showing you kindness, and giving you rains from heaven and productive seasons, filling your hearts with food and happiness.”

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Make Good Your Goal

The very thought of anything good increases my joy, and I hope the same is true for you. I love to do good things for people, and I enjoy it when people do good things for me.

We are to “always seek that which is good for one another and for all people” (1 Thess. 5:15). Doing good is possible only when we actively seek to do so. I encourage you to make doing good, being good, and speaking good words your goals in life. If you do, you can expect more joy than you have ever experienced.

Remember: The “Good Book” (the Bible) introduces us to the “Good Shepherd,” Who brings “Good News,” is “constantly doing good things and showing you kindness” (Acts 14:17), and introduces us to the “Good Life” that He preordained for us to live. He wants us to say good things and be good to everyone! This simple yet profound principle can and will change the world.

¹⁸Even saying these words, with difficulty they prevented the people from offering sacrifices to them.

¹⁹But Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, thinking he was dead. [2 Cor 11:25; 2 Tim 3:11]

²⁰But the disciples formed a circle around him, and he got

up and went back into the city; and the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe.

²¹They preached the good news to that city and made many disciples, then they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch,

²²strengthening *and* establishing the hearts of the disciples; encouraging them to remain firm in the faith, saying, “It is through many tribulations *and* hardships that we must enter the kingdom of God.”

²³When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they entrusted them to the Lord in whom they believed [and joyfully accepted as the Messiah].

²⁴Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia.

²⁵When they had spoken the word [of salvation through faith in Christ] in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

²⁶From there they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been entrusted to the grace of God for the work which they had now completed.

²⁷Arriving *there*, they gathered the church together and *began* to report [in great detail] everything that God had done with them and how He had opened to the Gentiles a door of faith [in Jesus as the Messiah and Savior].

²⁸And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

15 SOME MEN came down from Judea and *began* teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised in accordance with

the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” [Gen 17:9–14]

²Paul and Barnabas disagreed greatly and debated with them, so it was determined that Paul and Barnabas and some of the others from their group would go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders [and confer with them] concerning this issue.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, for knowing
and understanding my heart.*

• *adapted from Acts 15:8*

³So, after being supplied *and* sent on their way by the church, they went through both Phoenicia and Samaria telling in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and they brought great joy to all the believers.

⁴When they arrived in Jerusalem, they were received warmly by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported to them all the things that God had accomplished through them.

⁵But some from the sect of the Pharisees who had believed [in Jesus as the Messiah] stood up and said, “It is necessary to circumcise the Gentile converts and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.”

⁶The apostles and the elders came together to consider this matter.

⁷After a long debate, Peter got up and said to them, “Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the message of the gospel and believe.

⁸“And God, who knows *and* understands the heart, testified to them, giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us;

⁹and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith [in Jesus].

¹⁰“Now then, why are you testing God by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to endure?

¹¹“But we believe that we are saved through the [precious, undeserved] grace of the Lord Jesus [which makes us free of the guilt of sin and grants us eternal life], in just the same way as they are.”

¹²All the people remained silent, and they listened [attentively] to Barnabas and Paul as they described all the signs and wonders (attesting miracles) that God had done through them among the Gentiles.

¹³When they had finished speaking, James replied, “Brothers, listen to me.

¹⁴“Simeon (Simon Peter) has described how God first

concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name [to honor Him and be identified with Him].

¹⁵“The words of the Prophets agree with this, just as it is written [in Scripture],

¹⁶‘AFTER THESE THINGS I will return,
AND I WILL REBUILD THE TENT OF DAVID WHICH HAS FALLEN;
I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS,
AND I WILL RESTORE IT,

¹⁷SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD,
AND ALL THE GENTILES UPON WHOM MY NAME HAS BEEN
INVOKED,’

¹⁸SAYS THE LORD,
WHO HAS BEEN MAKING THESE THINGS KNOWN FROM LONG
AGO. [Is 45:21; Jer 12:15; Amos 9:11, 12]

¹⁹“Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble *and* make it difficult for those who are turning to God among the Gentiles [by putting obstacles in their way], ²⁰but that we write to them that they are to abstain from anything that has been contaminated by [being offered to] idols and from sexual impurity and from [eating the meat of] what has been strangled and from [the consumption of] blood.

²¹“For from ancient generations [the writing of] Moses has been preached in every city, since he is read *aloud* in the synagogues every Sabbath.”

²²Then the apostles and the elders, together with the whole church, decided to select some of their men to go to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas—Judas, who was called Barsabbas, and Silas [also called Silvanus, both], leading men among the

brothers.

²³With them they sent the following letter: “The apostles and the brothers who are the elders, to the brothers and sisters who are from the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, Greetings.

²⁴“Since we have heard that some of our men have troubled you with *their* teachings, causing distress *and* confusion—men to whom we gave no *such* orders *or* instructions—²⁵it has been decided by us, having met together, to select men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Avoiding Mental Overload

Paul refused to take Mark with him on his second missionary journey because Mark had “quit *and* deserted them” on their first journey. This caused a serious rift between Paul and Barnabas because Barnabas and Mark were relatives (see Acts 13:5; 15:36–41). Mark surely must have felt like a failure. Fortunately, many years later we see Paul regarding Mark very favorably (see Col. 4:10; Philem. 24; 2 Tim. 4:11).

While we don’t know why Mark abandoned the first journey, we wonder if he felt too stressed to continue. Here are some important ways you can prevent mental overload and stress and live the joyful, peaceful life that Jesus died to give you: *Stay Strong*: One way we stay strong is to spend regular, quality time studying God’s Word and talking with Him. We are not strong enough for any success in ourselves, but we are strong in the Lord and in the power of His might (see Eph. 6:10).

Know Yourself: It is wise to know your capabilities and limitations. Be satisfied to be yourself without comparing yourself with anyone else. We are responsible only to do what

God wants us to do. He never puts more on us than we can bear!

Examine Your Thoughts: Are your thoughts draining your energy? Most of what makes people feel overloaded is some sort of fear that manifests in worry, anxiety, and pressure. Change what you are thinking, and meditate on this: God has not given me a spirit of fear but of power, love, and a sound mind (see 2 Tim. 1:7).

Talk Yourself into a Change: Remind yourself that God is with you and that you can do whatever you need to do in life through Him.

Don't Get Discouraged: If victory doesn't come quickly, don't become discouraged and give up. Some problems are actually mental strongholds that Satan has occupied in your mind for a long time. Winning the battle of the mind often takes time and a willingness to keep doing the right thing until you get the right result.

Don't Feel Guilty: As believers in Christ, we are all growing in spiritual maturity and we still have our failures! Guilty thoughts and feelings can make us feel like giving up, so remember to live in the "guilt-free zone" with Jesus, Who has already paid for all our sins.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Thank You, God, that there are ways to avoid getting into mental overload and giving up. Help me to stay strong in the power of Your might, to be patient, and to be responsible to do only what You ask me to do. Amen.

²⁶men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁷“So we have sent Judas and Silas, who will report by word of mouth the same things [that we decided in our meeting].

²⁸“For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to place on you any greater burden than these essentials:

²⁹that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from [consuming] blood, and from [eating the meat of] things that have been strangled, and from sexual impurity. If you keep yourselves from these things, you will do well. Farewell.”

³⁰So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch; and after assembling the congregation, they delivered the letter.

³¹And when they had read it, the people rejoiced greatly at the encouragement *and* comfort [it brought them].

³²Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets (divinely inspired spokesmen), encouraged and strengthened the believers with many words.

³³After spending some time there, they were sent back by the brothers with [the greeting of] peace to those who had sent them.

³⁴[However, Silas decided to stay there.]

³⁵But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, and with many others also continued teaching and proclaiming the good

news, the word of the Lord [concerning eternal salvation through faith in Christ].

³⁶After some time Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us go back and visit the brothers and sisters (believers) in every city where we preached the message of the Lord, and see how they are doing.”

³⁷Now Barnabas wanted to take [his cousin] John, who was called Mark, along with them.

³⁸But Paul kept insisting that they should not take along with them the one who had quit *and* deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone on with them to the work.

³⁹And it became such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took [John] Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus.

⁴⁰But Paul chose Silas [who was again in Antioch] and set out [on his second journey], commended by the brothers to the grace *and* favor of the Lord.

⁴¹And he traveled through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

16 NOW PAUL traveled to Derbe and also to Lystra. A disciple named Timothy was there, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer [in Christ], however, his father was a Greek.

²Timothy was well spoken of by the brothers and sisters who were in Lystra and Iconium.

³Paul wanted Timothy to go with him [as a missionary]; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, since they all knew that his father was a Greek.

⁴As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decrees decided on by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for the churches to observe.

⁵So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they *continually* increased in number day after day.

⁶Now they passed through the territory of Phrygia and Galatia, after being forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in [the west coast province of] Asia [Minor]; ⁷and after they came to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them;

⁸so passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas.

⁹Then a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man from [the Roman province of] Macedonia was standing and pleading with him, saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us!”

¹⁰And when he had seen the vision, we (including Luke) tried to go on into Macedonia at once, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

¹¹So setting sail from Troas, we ran a direct course to Samothrace, and the next day [went on] to Neapolis;

¹²and from there [we came] to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a *Roman* colony. We stayed on in this city for several days; ¹³and on the Sabbath day we went outside the city gate to the bank of the [Gangites] river, where we thought there would be a place of prayer, and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had come there.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

An Open Heart

As “a worshiper of God” (Acts 16:14), Lydia was accustomed to living under Jewish law in Thyatira. Paul and Timothy came to the city of Philippi, where she heard them deliver a message of grace, “and the Lord opened her heart.” The reason her open heart was so important is that it allowed her to pay attention and to respond to Paul’s teaching, to this new and different message (see Acts 16:14). I am sometimes amazed that people refuse to believe certain truths in the Bible because those truths are not part of what they have been taught in the past. We need God to open our hearts at just the right time.

God wants us to be single-minded, not narrow-minded. We may choose to close our mind to certain things, but we can also choose to open our mind to God and allow Him to do new things in our life. No matter how much we learn or how much we experience with God, we should always remain open to the truth.

How often do we approach a teaching or a person with a bias or an opinion, perhaps without even realizing we are doing so? We have developed prejudices because of comments others have made, and we have believed them. That’s why we have to carefully examine our hearts to see if they are open to the truth of God’s Word.

Wise people are always willing and eager to learn something new, to “grow [spiritually mature] in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18).

¹⁴A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a dealer in purple fabrics who was [already] a worshiper of God, listened to us; and the Lord opened her heart to pay attention *and* to respond to the things said by Paul.

¹⁵And when she was baptized, along with her household, she pleaded with us, saying, “If you have judged me *and* decided that I am faithful to the Lord [a true believer], come to my house and stay.” And she persuaded us.

¹⁶It happened that as we were on our way to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave-girl who had ^{*}a spirit of divination [that is, a demonic spirit claiming to foretell the future and discover hidden knowledge], and she brought her owners a good profit by fortune-telling.

¹⁷She followed after Paul and us and kept screaming *and* shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God! They are proclaiming to you the way of salvation!”

¹⁸She continued doing this for several days. Then Paul, being greatly annoyed *and* worn out, turned and said to the spirit [inside her], “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ [as His representative] to come out of her!” And it came out at that very moment.

¹⁹But when her owners saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities in the market place [where trials were held],

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The Authority in Jesus' Name

As believers we need to recognize that we have been given the right to command in Jesus' name. We pray and ask the Father for things in Jesus' name, but we can also command the enemy in that name. We speak to circumstances and principalities and powers, using the authority that has been given to us by virtue of the power of attorney invested in us by Jesus Himself. In exercising our ministry, when we cast out a demon, we don't lay hands on a person and pray for God to cast it out. We command it to come out in the name of Jesus (see Acts 16:18).

Before we exercise this authority, we have already prayed to the Father in Jesus' name. Then we go and use the power He has granted to us, and we exercise the authority inherent in the name of His Son Jesus.

The same applies to prayer for healing of the sick. There are times to pray the prayer of faith in the name of Jesus; there are times to anoint with oil (see James 5:14–15); and there are also times to simply command or speak healing in the name of Jesus.

Spend time daily with the Lord in fellowship, asking, interceding, and seeking, and come out of that time equipped for the job at hand. When doing the work of the Kingdom, exercise your authority in Jesus' name.

²⁰and when they had brought them before the chief

magistrates, they said, “These men, who are Jews, are throwing our city into confusion *and* causing trouble.

²¹“They are publicly teaching customs which are unlawful for us, as Romans, to accept or observe.”

²²The crowd also joined in the attack against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and ordered that Paul and Silas be beaten with rods. [2 Cor 11:25]

²³After striking them many times [with the rods], they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely.

²⁴He, having received such a [strict] command, threw them into the inner prison (dungeon) and fastened their feet in the stocks [in an agonizing position].

²⁵But about midnight when Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;

²⁶suddenly there was a great earthquake, so [powerful] that the very foundations of the prison were shaken and at once all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were unfastened.

²⁷When the jailer, shaken out of sleep, saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, thinking that the prisoners had escaped.

²⁸But Paul shouted, saying, “Do not hurt yourself, we are all here!”

²⁹Then the jailer called for torches and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas,

³⁰and after he brought them out [of the inner prison], he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

³¹And they answered, “Believe in the Lord Jesus [as your personal Savior and entrust yourself to Him] and you will be saved, you and your household [if they also believe].”

³²And they spoke the word of the Lord [concerning eternal salvation through faith in Christ] to him and to all who were in his house.

³³And he took them that *very* hour of the night and washed their *bloody* wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his *household*.

³⁴Then he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, since he had believed in God with his entire family [accepting with joy what had been made known to them about the Christ].

³⁵Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their officers, saying, “Release those men.”

³⁶And the jailer repeated the words to Paul, *saying*, “The chief magistrates have sent *word* to release you; so come out now and go in peace.”

³⁷But Paul said to them, “They have beaten us in public without a trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now they are sending us out secretly? No! Let them come here themselves and bring us out!”

³⁸The officers reported this message to the chief magistrates, and when they heard that the prisoners were Romans, they were frightened;

³⁹so they came [to the prison] and appealed to them [with apologies], and when they brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city.

⁴⁰So they left the prison and went to Lydia’s *house*; and

when they had seen the brothers and sisters, they encouraged *and* comforted them, and left.

17 NOW AFTER Paul and Silas had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

²And Paul entered the synagogue, as was his custom, and for three Sabbaths he engaged in discussion *and* friendly debate with them from the Scriptures,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Live with Joy

Throughout the Bible, God instructs His people to be filled with joy and to rejoice. The apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, instructed the Philippians twice to rejoice (see Phil. 4:4). Any time the Lord tells us twice to do something, we need to pay careful attention to what He is saying.

Many times people see or hear the word rejoice and say, “That sounds nice, but how do I do that?” They would like to rejoice, but they don’t know how!

Paul and Silas, who had been beaten, thrown into prison, and had their feet put in stocks, rejoiced by simply singing praises to God—at midnight. They chose to rejoice, despite their circumstances (see Acts 16:25–26).

The same power that opened the doors and broke the shackles off Paul and Silas and those imprisoned with them is available to people today who are imprisoned and shackled with fear, worry, frustration, despair, or any other negative emotion.

To live as God intends for us to live, we first need to truly believe that it is God’s will for us to experience continual joy. Joy can be anything from calm delight to extreme hilarity. Joy improves our countenance, our health, and the quality of our lives. It strengthens our witness to others and makes some of the less desirable circumstances in life more bearable.

³explaining and pointing out [scriptural evidence] that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and rise from the dead, and *saying*, “This Jesus, whom I am proclaiming to you, is the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed).”

⁴And some of them were persuaded *to believe* and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and many of the leading women.

⁵But the [unbelieving] Jews became jealous, and taking along some thugs from [the lowlifes in] the market place, they formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and then attacking Jason’s house tried to bring Paul and Silas out to the people.

⁶But when they failed to find them, they dragged Jason and some brothers before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here too; ⁷and Jason has welcomed them [into his house and protected them]! And they all are saying things contrary to the decrees of Caesar, [actually] claiming that there is another king, Jesus.”

POWERPOINT

Acts 17:11 urges us to always have a mind ready to receive the message of God. We should be eager and enthusiastic to learn God's will for us through studying and hearing His Word. People with a habit of thinking negatively might not be willing to listen, especially to anything new, but those with a positive mind will always be open to learning new things.

The apostles' message was new to those who heard it. For them to believe and act on it probably meant letting go of old ways. When God wants to change something, always have a mind ready to do what He guides you to do.



⁸They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who

heard these things.

⁹And when they had taken security (bail) from Jason and the others, they let them go.

¹⁰The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea; and when they arrived, they entered the Jewish synagogue.

¹¹Now these people were more noble *and* open-minded than those in Thessalonica, so they received the message [of salvation through faith in the Christ] with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

¹²As a result many of them became believers, together with a number of prominent Greek women and men.

¹³But when the Jews of Thessalonica learned that the word of God [concerning eternal salvation through faith in Christ] had also been preached by Paul at Berea, they came there too, agitating and disturbing the crowds.

¹⁴So at that time the brothers immediately sent Paul away to go as far as the sea; but Silas and Timothy remained there [at Berea].

¹⁵Those who escorted Paul brought him to Athens; and [after] receiving instructions [from Paul] for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible, they left.

¹⁶Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was greatly angered when he saw that the city was full of idols.

¹⁷So he had discussions in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing *Gentiles*, and in the market place day after day with any who happened to be there.

¹⁸And some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to engage in conversation with him. And some said,

“What could this idle babbler [with his eclectic, scrap-heap learning] have in mind to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities”—because he was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.

¹⁹They took him and brought him to the Areopagus (Hill of Ares, the Greek god of war), saying, “May we know what this [strange] new teaching is which you are proclaiming?”

²⁰“For you are bringing some startling *and* strange things to our ears; so we want to know what they mean.”

²¹(Now all the Athenians and the foreigners visiting there used to spend their [leisure] time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Are You Ready-Minded?

When Paul and Silas preached in Thessalonica, the people tried to kill them, so believers helped them flee. From there, they went to the city of Berea, where the people were “more noble *and* open-minded than those in Thessalonica” and “received the message... with great eagerness” (Acts 17:11).

The people in Berea had ready minds. That means they were open to God, willing to hear what He said, whether it was good news or bad. They were humble enough to continue learning and improving.

Would you say that, as a Christian, you are ready-minded? Are you ready, open, willing to hear God, and to be obedient to what He says?

For many people, being ready-minded means that they are ready and open if the message is what they want to hear. If it's not what they want to hear, they don't try to “kill the messengers,” as the Thessalonians did. They simply say, “Oh, we don't want to hear that,” and they stop listening.

To be ready-minded means being willing to turn away from

every lie and deception that Satan offers. It also means being willing to say, “I was wrong.” It means that instead of listening only for what we *want* to hear, we listen for what we *need* to hear.

To be ready-minded also means we discern the source of the voice we are listening to. We love to hear words that make us feel good and encourage us, but we don’t like words that make us aware of our shortcomings. One of Satan’s tricks in his battle for our minds is to convince us that a message isn’t important or that we already know it when it is a word that convicts us of a need to change. He may even say that the message is not correct, and by doing so, he prevents us from hearing what we really need in order to gain our own freedom. He might even suggest that we don’t like the speaker. In that way he prevents us from receiving the message.

Having a ready mind is not always easy. In fact, the more seriously the Holy Spirit wants to deal with us, the more Satan tries to convince us that we do not need or want to listen to what God is saying.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord Jesus, please give me a ready mind. Enable me to hear Your voice clearly and easily. Enable me to say, “Yes, Lord,” no matter what Your Spirit says to me. I want to have a ready mind that pleases You in everything. I ask this in Your name. Amen.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

You Can Break the Addiction to Reasoning

Rather than going to the Greeks with reasoning and logic, Paul's successful approach in Corinth was: "I made the decision to know nothing [that is, to forego philosophical or theological discussions regarding inconsequential things and opinions while] among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). That's amazing. Paul was highly educated, and he had the ability to reason with the Greeks and show them the fallacies of their logic. But, led by the Holy Spirit, he chose a defenseless presentation—to let God speak through him and touch the people's hearts.

I appreciate his approach now, but for a long time I wanted to explain and reason out everything. I wanted to be in control of every situation. When I didn't understand or was unable to figure things out, I felt out of control. That was frightening to me, and I ended up feeling miserable.

Then God began to show me that my constant drive to

figure out everything caused me confusion and prevented me from receiving many of the things He wanted me to have. He impressed upon my mind the need to lay aside carnal reasoning if I wanted to have discernment. It required a long battle before I finally admitted something to myself: I was *addicted* to reasoning. It was more than a desire to figure out things. I had to have answers—and had to have them right now. Convinced of my addiction, I was finally able to give it up.

It wasn't easy. I felt frightened, because I had always depended on my ability to figure things out. Now, like Paul, I had decided to depend on God.

Too many people assume that relying only on God is something we do easily and naturally. It didn't work that way with me, but God was gracious and patient with me. If you have a tendency, as I did, to make yourself miserable while you try to reason in your mind all of life's answers, I encourage you: God wants to set you free. Trade all your questions for total trust in God and soon you will have answers that have been given to you by the Spirit.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Heavenly Father, thank You for being so patient with me when I felt I needed all the answers before I could act or trust. In Jesus' name, help me to simply trust in You, knowing that You will do what is best for my life. Amen.

Speak God's Word

*I belong to God. In Him I live,
move, exist, and actually
have my being—because I am
His child.*

| adapted from ACTS 17:28 |

²²So Paul, standing in the center of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I observe [with every turn I make throughout the city] that you are very religious *and* devout in all respects.

²³“Now as I was going along and carefully looking at your objects of worship, I came to an altar with this inscription: ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ Therefore what you already worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

²⁴“The God who created the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;

²⁵nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, because it is He who gives to all [people] life and breath and all things. [Is 42:5]

²⁶“And He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their lands *and* territories.

²⁷“This was so that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grasp for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.

²⁸“For in Him we live and move and exist [that is, in Him we actually have our being], as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’

²⁹“So then, being God’s children, we should not think that the Divine Nature (deity) is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination *or* skill of man.

³⁰“Therefore God overlooked *and* disregarded the *former* ages of ignorance; *but* now He commands all *people* everywhere to repent [that is, to change their old way of thinking, to regret their past sins, and to seek God’s purpose for their lives], ³¹because He has set a day when He will judge the *inhabited* world in righteousness by a Man whom He has appointed *and* destined for that task, and He has provided credible proof to everyone by raising Him from the dead.” [Ps 9:8; 96:13; 98:9]

³²Now when they heard [the term] resurrection from the dead, some mocked *and* sneered; but others said, “We will hear from you again about this matter.”

³³So Paul left them.

³⁴But some men joined him and believed; among them were Dionysius, [a judge] of the *Council of Areopagus*, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

18 AFTER THIS Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.

²There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who

had recently come from Italy with his wife, Priscilla, because [the Roman Emperor] Claudius had issued an edict that all the Jews were to leave Rome. Paul went to see them,³ and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them; and they worked *together* for they were tent-makers.

⁴And he reasoned *and* debated in the synagogue every Sabbath, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks;

⁵but when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia (northern Greece), Paul *began* devoting himself completely to [preaching] the word, and solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed).

⁶But since the Jews kept resisting *and* opposing him, and blaspheming [God], he shook out his robe and said to them, “Your blood (damnation) be on your own heads! I am innocent of it. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.” [Acts 13:46]

⁷Then he moved on from there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, who worshiped God and whose house was next door to the synagogue.

⁸Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord together with his entire household [joyfully acknowledging Him as Messiah and Savior]; and many of the Corinthians who heard [Paul’s message] were believing and being baptized.

⁹One night the Lord said to Paul in a vision, “Do not be afraid anymore, but go on speaking and do not be silent;

¹⁰for I am with you, and no one will attack you in order to hurt you, because I have many people in this city.” [Is 43:5; Jer 1:8]

¹¹So he settled *there* for a year and six months, teaching them the word of God [concerning eternal salvation through

faith in Christ].

¹²But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia (southern Greece), the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the judgment seat, ¹³declaring, “This man is persuading people to worship God in violation of the law [of Moses].”

¹⁴But when Paul was about to reply, Gallio said to the Jews, “If it were a matter of some misdemeanor or serious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to put up with you; ¹⁵but since it is merely a question [of doctrine within your religion] about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves; I am unwilling to judge these matters.”

¹⁶And he drove them away from the judgment seat.

¹⁷Then the Greeks all seized Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and *began* beating him right in front of the judgment seat; but Gallio paid no attention to any of this. [1 Cor 1:1]

¹⁸Paul stayed for a while longer, and then told the brothers and sisters goodbye and sailed for Syria; and he was accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchrea [the southeastern port of Corinth] he had his hair cut, because he was keeping a [Nazirite] vow [of abstention].

¹⁹Then they arrived in Ephesus, and he left the others there; but he entered the synagogue and reasoned *and* debated with the Jews.

²⁰When they asked him to stay for a longer time, he refused;

²¹but after telling them goodbye and saying, “I will return again if God is willing,” he set sail from Ephesus.

²²When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church [at Jerusalem], and then went down to Antioch.

²³After spending some time *there*, he left and traveled through the territory of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening *and* encouraging all the disciples.

²⁴Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent *and* cultured man, and well versed in the [Hebrew] Scriptures.

²⁵This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and being spiritually impassioned, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things about Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John; ²⁶and he began to speak boldly *and* fearlessly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained more accurately to him the way of God [and the full story of the life of Christ].

²⁷And when Apollos wanted to go across to Achaia (southern Greece), the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples, [urging them] to welcome him gladly. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who, through grace, had believed *and* had followed Jesus as Lord and Savior, ²⁸for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public *discussions*, proving by the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed).

19 IT HAPPENED that while Apollos was in Corinth, Paul went through the upper [inland] districts and came down to Ephesus, and found some disciples.

²He asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you

believed [in Jesus as the Christ]?” And they said, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

³And he asked, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John’s baptism.”

⁴Paul said, “John performed a baptism of repentance, *continually* telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, [to confidently accept and joyfully believe] in Jesus [the Messiah and Savior].”

⁵After hearing this, they were baptized [again, this time] in the name of the Lord Jesus.

⁶And when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they *began* speaking in [unknown] tongues (languages) and prophesying.

⁷There were about twelve men in all.

⁸And he went into the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning *and* arguing and persuading *them* about the kingdom of God.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Honors His Will and Jesus' Name

In the book of Acts, we read of the mighty miracles that God did through the life of Paul. God honored Paul's faith when he spoke the name of Jesus. Certain Jewish exorcists, however, attempted to use the name of Jesus as if it were a simple incantation. The Bible says "the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they ran out of that house [in terror; stripped] naked and wounded" (Acts 19:16). The evil spirit replied to the exorcists that it recognized and acknowledged Jesus and knew about Paul, but it did not know who they were (see Acts 19:15).

The name of Jesus is not a "magic word" or a ritualistic incantation to be added to the end of a prayer to ensure its effectiveness. The ability to pray effectively and use Jesus' powerful name comes from being in a living, obedient relationship with Him. In the context of that relationship, the power of the Holy Spirit will flow out of our lives and deliver us and others from the devil's bondages.

All Spirit-led prayer involves praying the will of God, not the will of man. It is impossible to pray the will of God without knowing the Word of God. God certainly pays attention to the prayers that come to Him in Jesus' name and are prayed according to His will. To use the name of Jesus with power, it's necessary to know Him as Lord and Savior.

⁹But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient [to the word of God], discrediting *and* speaking evil of the Way (Jesus, Christianity) before the congregation, Paul left them, taking the disciples with him, and went on holding daily discussions in the lecture hall of Tyrannus [instead of in the synagogue].

¹⁰This continued for two years, so that all the inhabitants of [the west coast province of] Asia [Minor], Jews as well as Greeks, heard the word of the Lord [concerning eternal salvation through faith in Christ].

¹¹God was doing extraordinary *and* unusual miracles by the hands of Paul,

¹²so that even handkerchiefs *or* face-towels or aprons that had touched his skin were brought to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out [of them].

¹³Then some of the traveling Jewish exorcists also attempted to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “I implore you *and* solemnly command you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches!”

¹⁴Seven sons of one [named] Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.

¹⁵But the evil spirit retorted, “I know *and* recognize *and* acknowledge Jesus, and I know about Paul, but as for you, who are you?”

¹⁶Then the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they ran out of that house [in terror, stripped] naked and wounded.

¹⁷This became known to all who lived in Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified *and* exalted.

¹⁸Many of those who had become believers were coming, confessing and disclosing their [former sinful] practices.

¹⁹And many of those who had practiced magical arts collected their books and [throwing book after book on the pile] began burning them in front of everyone. They calculated their value and found it to be 50,000 pieces of silver.

²⁰So the word of the Lord [concerning eternal salvation through faith in Christ] was growing greatly and prevailing.

²¹Now after these events, Paul determined in the Spirit that he would travel through Macedonia and Achaia (most of the Greek mainland), and go to Jerusalem, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome [and preach the good news of salvation].”

²²And after sending two of his assistants, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia [ahead of him], he stayed on in [the west coast province of] Asia [Minor] for a while.

²³About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way (Jesus, Christianity).

²⁴Now a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of [the goddess] Artemis (Diana), was bringing no small profit to the craftsmen.

²⁵These [craftsmen] he called together, along with the workmen of similar *trades*, and said, “Men, you are well aware that we make a good living from this business.

²⁶“You see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but almost all over [the province of] Asia, this Paul has persuaded [people

to believe his teaching] and has misled a large number of people, claiming that gods made by [human] hands are not *really* gods *at all*.

²⁷“Not only is there danger that this trade of ours will be discredited, but also that the [magnificent] temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited, and that she whom all Asia and the world worship will even be dethroned *and* lose her glorious magnificence.”

²⁸When they heard this, they were filled with rage, and they *began* shouting, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

²⁹Then the city was filled with confusion; and people rushed together [as a group] into the amphitheater, dragging along with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul’s traveling companions.

³⁰Paul wanted to go into the [pagan] assembly, but the disciples would not let him.

³¹Even some of the Asiarchs (officials) who were his friends sent *word* to him and repeatedly warned him not to venture into the amphitheater.

³²Now some shouted one thing and some another, for the gathering was in confusion and most of the people did not know why they had come together.

³³Some of the crowd advised Alexander [to speak], since the Jews had pushed him forward; and Alexander motioned with his hand [for attention] and intended to make a defense to the people.

³⁴But when they realized that he was a Jew, a single outcry went up from the crowd as they shouted for about two hours, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

³⁵After the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, “Men of Ephesus, what person is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of that [sacred stone image of her] which fell from the sky?

³⁶“So, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet *and* stay calm and not do anything rash.

³⁷“For you have brought these men here who are neither temple robbers nor blasphemers of our goddess.

³⁸“So then, if Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are in session and proconsuls are *available*; let them bring charges against one another there.

³⁹“But if you want anything beyond this, it will be settled in the lawful assembly.

⁴⁰“For we are running the risk of being accused of rioting in regard to today’s events, and since there is no reason for it, we will be unable to give an account *and* justify this disorderly gathering.”

⁴¹And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.

20 AFTER THE uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples, and when he had encouraged them he told them goodbye, and set off to go to Macedonia.

²After he had gone through those districts and had encouraged the believers, he came to Greece.

³And he stayed three months, and when a plot was formed

against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia (northern Greece).

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Embrace the Changes God Brings

After three years of building the church at Ephesus, Paul left, feeling “compelled by the Spirit” to go to Jerusalem, not knowing what would happen to him there (Acts 20:22). I have found that when I am doing something that doesn’t give me joy anymore, that’s a strong indication God is finished with that thing and I need to be ready for something new.

When you can sense that the grace of God is no longer with you to do something or that the joy you once felt in it is gone, don’t just complain and continue until you end up burned-out. Have the courage to say, “I did things this way for a long time, but I believe God is leading me to do something else.”

Jesus said, “My yoke is easy [to bear] and My burden is light” (Matt. 11:30). Life is easy and full of joy when you depend on God and His leading. Pray for God to lead you to where He wants you to be—even if that means embracing change.

⁴He was accompanied by Sopater of Berea, *the son of Pyrrhus*, and by Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and by Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.

⁵These men went on ahead and were waiting for us (including Luke) at Troas.

⁶We sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread (Passover week), and within five days we reached them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days.

⁷Now on the first day of the week (Sunday), when we were gathered together to break bread (share communion), Paul *began* talking with them, intending to leave the next day; and he kept on with his message until midnight.

⁸Now there were many lamps in the upper room where we were assembled,

⁹and there was a young man named Eutychus (“Lucky”) sitting on the window sill. He was sinking into a deep sleep, and as Paul kept on talking longer and longer, he was completely overcome by sleep and fell down from the third story; and he was picked up dead.

¹⁰But Paul went down and threw himself on him and embraced him, and said [to those standing around him], “Do not be troubled, because he is alive.”

¹¹When Paul had gone back upstairs and had broken the bread and eaten, he talked [informally and confidentially] with them for a long time—until daybreak [in fact]—and then he left.

¹²They took the boy [Eutychus] home alive, and were greatly comforted *and* encouraged.

¹³But we went on ahead to the ship and set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul on board there; for that was what he had arranged, intending himself to go [a shorter route] by land.

¹⁴So when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and sailed on to Mitylene.

¹⁵Sailing from there, we arrived the next day [at a point] opposite Chios; the following day we crossed over to Samos,

and the next day we arrived at Miletus [about 30 miles south of Ephesus].

¹⁶Paul had decided to sail on past Ephesus so that he would not end up spending time [unnecessarily] in [the province of] Asia (modern Turkey); for he was in a hurry to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

¹⁷However, from Miletus he sent *word* to Ephesus and summoned the elders of the church [to meet him there].

¹⁸And when they arrived he said to them:

“You know well how I [lived when I] was with you, from the first day that I set foot in Asia [until now],

¹⁹serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and trials which came on me because of the plots of the Jews [against me];

²⁰[you know] how I did not shrink back in fear from telling you anything that was for your benefit, or from teaching you in public meetings, and from house to house, ²¹solemnly [and wholeheartedly] testifying to both Jews and Greeks, urging them to turn in repentance to God and [to have] faith in our Lord Jesus Christ [for salvation].

²²“And now, compelled by the Spirit *and* obligated by my convictions, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there,

²³except that the Holy Spirit solemnly [and emphatically] affirms to me in city after city that imprisonment and suffering await me.

²⁴“But I do not consider my life as something of value *or* dear to me, so that I may [with joy] finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify

faithfully of the good news of God's [precious, undeserved] grace [which makes us free of the guilt of sin and grants us eternal life].

²⁵“And now, listen carefully: I know that none of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will see me again.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



I commend those I love to You, God, placing them in Your protective, loving care. And I commend them to the word of Your grace—the counsel and promises of Your unmerited favor. Your grace is able to build them up and to give them the rightful inheritance among all those who are sanctified, who are set apart for Your purpose.

• adapted from Acts 20:32

Speak God's Word

I believe that it is more blessed and brings greater joy to give than to receive.

| adapted from ACTS 20:35 |

²⁶“For that reason I testify to you on this [our parting] day that I am innocent of the blood of all people.

²⁷“For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose *and* plan of God.

²⁸“Take care *and* be on guard for yourselves and for the whole flock over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as overseers, to shepherd (tend, feed, guide) the church of God which He bought with His own blood.

²⁹“I know that after I am gone, [false teachers like] ferocious wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

³⁰even from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse *and* distorted things, to draw away the disciples after themselves [as their followers].

³¹“Therefore be *continually* alert, remembering that for three years, night or day, I did not stop admonishing *and* advising each one [of you] with tears.

³²“And now I commend you to God [placing you in His protective, loving care] and [I commend you] to the word of His grace [the counsel and promises of His unmerited favor]. His grace is able to build you up and to give you the [rightful] inheritance among all those who are sanctified [that is, among those who are set apart for God’s purpose—all believers].

³³“I had no desire for anyone’s silver or gold or [expensive] clothes.

³⁴“You know personally that these hands ministered to my own needs [working in manual labor] and to [those of] the people who were with me.

³⁵“In everything I showed you [by example] that by working hard in this way you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed [and brings greater joy] to give than to receive.’”

³⁶When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

³⁷And they *began* to weep openly and threw their arms around Paul’s neck, and repeatedly kissed him,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Find Out What “Happy” Is

For many years, I could quote “it is more blessed [and brings greater joy] to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35), but I obviously didn’t really believe those words because I spent my time trying to be blessed rather than to be a blessing. But God has taught me that we do not even know what “happy” is until we forget about ourselves, start focusing on others, and become generous givers in every way.

Many people learn about giving in church, and that’s good practice for the way we are to live our everyday lives. Don’t merely give offerings; be a giver. Every day, pray for God to show you how you can give of yourself and be a blessing to others. As you become a generous giver, you will be amazed at how happy you will be and how much you will enjoy life.

³⁸grieving *and* distressed especially over the word which he had spoken, that they would not see him again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

21 WHEN WE had torn ourselves away from them and set sail, we ran a straight course and came to Cos, and on the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara; ²and after finding a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, we went on board and set sail.

³After we came in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on our left (port side), we sailed on to Syria and put in at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload her cargo.

⁴After looking up the disciples [in Tyre], we stayed there [with them] seven days; and they kept telling Paul through the [Holy] Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem.

⁵When our days there came to an end, we left and proceeded on our journey, while all of the disciples, with their wives and children, escorted us on our way until *we were* outside the city. After kneeling down on the beach and praying, we told one another goodbye.

⁶Then we boarded the ship, and they returned to their homes.

⁷When we had completed the voyage from Tyre, we landed [twenty miles to the south] at Ptolemais, and after greeting the believers, we stayed with them for one day.

⁸On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and we went to the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven [deacons], and stayed with him. [Acts 6:3–6]

⁹He had four virgin daughters who had the gift of prophecy.

¹⁰As we were staying there for some time, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.

¹¹And coming to [see] us, he took Paul's [wide] band (belt, sash) and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this same way the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this band, and they will hand him over to the Gentiles (pagans).'"

¹²Now when we had heard this, both we and the local

residents *began* pleading with Paul trying to persuade him not to go up to Jerusalem.

¹³Then Paul replied, “What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart [like this]? For I am ready not only to be bound *and* imprisoned, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”

¹⁴And since he would not be dissuaded, we stopped pleading *and* fell silent, saying, “The Lord’s will be done!”

¹⁵After this we got ready and started on our way up to Jerusalem.

¹⁶Some of the disciples from Caesarea also came with us, taking us to [the house of] Mnason, a man from Cyprus, a disciple of long standing with whom we were to lodge.

¹⁷When we arrived in Jerusalem, the brothers and sisters welcomed us gladly.

¹⁸On the next day Paul went with us to [see] James, and all the elders *of the church* were present.

¹⁹After greeting them, Paul *began* to give a detailed account of the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

²⁰And when they heard it, they *began* glorifying *and* praising God; and they said to him, “You see, brother, how many thousands of believers there are among the Jews, and they are all enthusiastic supporters of the Law [of Moses].

²¹“Now they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are *living* among the Gentiles to turn away from [the Law of] Moses, advising them not to circumcise their children or to live according to the [Mosaic] customs.

²²“What then should be done? They will certainly hear that

you have arrived.

²³“Therefore do just what we tell you. We have four men who have taken a vow;

²⁴take these men and purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses [for the temple offerings] so that they may shave their heads. Then everyone will know that there is nothing to the things they have been told about you, but that you yourself also follow and keep the Law.

²⁵“But with regard to the Gentiles who have believed [in Christ], we have sent them a letter with our decision that they should abstain from meat sacrificed to idols and from [consuming] blood and from [the meat of] what has been strangled and from sexual immorality.”

²⁶Then Paul took the [four] men, and the next day he purified himself along with them [by submitting to the ritual]. He went into the temple to give notice of [the time] when the days of purification [ending each vow] would be fulfilled and the usual offering could be presented on behalf of each one.

²⁷When the seven days [required to complete the ritual] were almost over, [some] Jews from [the province of] Asia [Minor], caught sight of him in the temple, and *began* to stir up the crowd, and they seized him, ²⁸shouting, “Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against our people and the Law and this place. And besides, he has brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.”

²⁹For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with Paul, and they assumed that he had brought the man into the temple [beyond the court of the Gentiles].

³⁰Then the whole city was provoked *and* confused, and the people rushed together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the gates were closed.

³¹Now while they were trying to kill him, word came to the commander of the [Roman] garrison that all Jerusalem was in a state of upheaval.

³²So he immediately took soldiers and centurions and ran down among them. When the people saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

³³Then the commander came up and arrested Paul, and ordered that he be bound with two chains. Then he asked who he was and what he had done.

³⁴But some in the crowd were shouting one thing and others something else; and since he could not determine the facts because of the uproar, he ordered that Paul be taken to the barracks [in the tower of Antonia].

³⁵When Paul got to the steps, he was carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob;

³⁶for the majority of the people kept following them, shouting, "Away with him! [Kill him!]"

³⁷Just as Paul was about to be taken into the barracks, he asked the commander, "May I say something to you?" And the man replied, "Do you know Greek?"

³⁸"Then you are not [as I assumed] the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led those 4,000 men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?"

³⁹Paul said, "I am a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia (Mersin Province, Turkey), a citizen of no insignificant city; and I beg you, allow me to speak to the people."

⁴⁰When the commander had given him permission, Paul, standing on the steps, gestured with his hand to the people; and when there was a great hush, he spoke to them in the

Hebrew dialect (Jewish Aramaic), saying, 22 “BRETHREN AND fathers (kinsmen), hear my defense which I now offer to you.”

²When they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew dialect, they became even more quiet. And he continued,

³“I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strictness of the law of our fathers, being ardent *and* passionate for God just as all of you are today.

⁴“I persecuted *and* pursued the followers of this Way to the death, binding them with chains and putting [followers of Jesus] both men and women into prisons, ⁵as the high priest and all the Council of the elders (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court) can testify; because from them I received letters to the brothers, and I was on my way to Damascus in order to bring those [believers] who were there to Jerusalem in chains to be punished.

⁶“But as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime, a great blaze of light suddenly flashed from heaven *and* shone around me.

⁷“And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’

⁸“And I replied, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said to me, ‘I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.’

⁹“Now those who were with me saw the light, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me.

¹⁰“And I asked, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord answered me, ‘Get up and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that is appointed *and* destined for you to do.’

¹¹“But since I could not see because of the [glorious intensity and dazzling] brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me and came into Damascus.

¹²“And one Ananias, a devout man according to the standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there,

¹³came to [see] me, and standing near, he said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very moment I [recovered my sight and] looked up at him.

¹⁴“And he said, ‘The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will, [and to progressively understand His plan with clarity and power] and to see the Righteous One [Jesus Christ, the Messiah] and to hear a message from His [own] mouth.

¹⁵‘For you will be His witness to all men *testifying* of what you have seen and heard.

¹⁶‘Now, why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins by calling on His name [for salvation].’

¹⁷“Then it happened when I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple [enclosure], that I fell into a trance (vision);

¹⁸and I saw Him saying to me, ‘Hurry and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.’

¹⁹“And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves know [without any doubt] that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in You [and Your message of salvation].

²⁰‘And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing nearby approving *and* consenting [to his death], and guarding the coats of those who were killing him.’

²¹“And the Lord said to me, ‘Go, I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’”

²²They listened to Paul until [he made] this [last] statement, but now they raised their voices and shouted, “Away with such a man from the earth! He is not fit to live!”

²³And as they were shouting and throwing off their coats [getting ready to stone Paul] and tossing dust into the air [expressing their anger],

²⁴the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, stating that he was to be interrogated with a whip in order to learn why the people were shouting against him that way.

²⁵But when they had stretched him out with the *leather* straps [in preparation for the whip], Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, “Is it legal for you to whip a man who is a Roman *citizen* and uncondemned [without a trial]?”

²⁶When the centurion heard *this*, he went to the commander and said to him, “What are you about to do? This man is a Roman!”

²⁷So the commander came and asked Paul, “Tell me, are you a Roman?” And he said, “Yes.”

²⁸The commander replied, “I purchased this citizenship [of mine] for a large sum of money [so how did you acquire yours?].” Paul said, “But I was actually born a *citizen*.”

²⁹So those who were about to interrogate him *by torture* immediately let him go; and the commander was also afraid when he realized that Paul was a Roman and he had put him in chains.

³⁰But on the next day, wanting to know the real reason why Paul was being accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and the whole Council (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court) to assemble; and brought Paul down and presented him before them.

23 THEN PAUL, looking intently at the Council (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court), said, “Kinsmen, I have lived my life before God with a perfectly good conscience until this very day.”

²[At this] the high priest Ananias ordered those who stood beside him to strike Paul on the mouth.

³Then Paul said to him, “God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you actually sit to judge me according to the Law, and yet in violation of the Law order me to be struck?”

⁴But those who stood near Paul said, “Are you insulting the high priest of God?”

⁵Paul said, “I was not aware, brothers, that he was high priest; for it is written, ‘YOU SHALL NOT SPEAK EVIL OF A RULER OF YOUR PEOPLE.’” [Ex 22:28]

⁶But recognizing that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul *began* affirming loudly in the Council

chamber; “Kinsmen, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!”

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*I pray, Lord, that like Paul, I
may live my life with a
perfectly good conscience.*

• *adapted from Acts 23:1*

⁷When he said this, an angry dispute erupted between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the [whole crowded] assembly was divided [into two factions].

⁸For the Sadducees say that there is no [such thing as a] resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees [speak out freely and] acknowledge [their belief in] them all.

⁹Then a great uproar occurred, and some of the scribes of the Pharisees' party stood up and *began* to argue heatedly [in Paul's favor], saying, “We find nothing wrong with this man; suppose a spirit or an angel has [really] spoken to him?”

¹⁰And as the dissension became even greater, the

commander, fearing that Paul would be torn to pieces by them, ordered the troops to go down and forcibly take him from them, and bring him to the barracks.

¹¹On the following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, “Be brave; for as you have solemnly *and* faithfully witnessed about Me at Jerusalem, so you must also testify at Rome.”

¹²Now when day came, the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves under an oath (curse), saying that they would not eat or drink until they had killed Paul.

¹³There were more than forty [men] who formed this plot [and swore this oath].

¹⁴They went to the chief priests and elders and said, “We have bound ourselves under a solemn oath not to taste anything [neither food nor drink] until we have killed Paul.

¹⁵“So now you, along with the Council (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court), notify the commander to bring Paul down to you, as if you were going to investigate his case more thoroughly. But we are ready to kill him before he comes near [the place].”

¹⁶But the son of Paul’s sister heard of their [planned] ambush, and he went to the barracks and told Paul.

¹⁷Then Paul, calling in one of the centurions, said, “Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to tell him.”

¹⁸So he took him and led him to the commander and said, “Paul the prisoner called for me and asked me to bring this young man to you, because he has something to tell you.”

¹⁹The commander took him by the hand and stepping aside, *began* to ask him privately, “What is it that you have to tell me?”

²⁰And he said, “The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the Council (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court) tomorrow, as if they were going to interrogate him more thoroughly.

²¹“But do not listen to them, for more than forty of them are lying in wait for him, and they have bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him. Even now they are ready, just waiting for your promise.”

²²So the commander let the young man leave, instructing him, “Do not tell anyone that you have given me this information.”

²³Then summoning two of the centurions, he said, “Have two hundred soldiers ready by the third hour of the night (9:00 p.m.) to go as far as Caesarea, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen; ²⁴also provide mounts for Paul to ride, and bring him safely to Felix the governor.”

²⁵And [after instructing the centurions] he wrote a letter to this effect:

²⁶“Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent governor Felix, greetings.

²⁷“This man was seized [as a prisoner] by the Jews and was about to be killed by them, when I came upon him with the troops and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman citizen.

²⁸“And wanting to know the *exact* charge which they were making against him, I brought him down to their Council (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court); ²⁹and I discovered that he was accused in regard to questions *and* issues in their

Law, but [he was] under no accusation that would call for the penalty of death or [even] for imprisonment.

³⁰“When I was told that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you immediately, also directing his accusers to bring their charges against him before you.”

³¹So the soldiers, in compliance with their orders, took Paul and brought him to Antipatris during the night.

³²And the next day, leaving the horsemen to go on with him, they returned to the barracks.

³³When these [horsemen] reached Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor, and also presented Paul to him.

³⁴After reading the letter, he asked which province Paul was from, and when he learned that he was from Cilicia [an imperial province],

³⁵he said, “I will hear your case when your accusers have arrived,” giving orders that Paul be kept under guard in Herod’s Praetorium (the governor’s official residence).

24 FIVE DAYS later, the high priest Ananias came down [from Jerusalem to Caesarea] with some elders and an attorney *named* Tertullus [acting as spokesman and counsel]. They presented to the governor their [formal] charges against Paul.

²After Paul had been summoned, Tertullus began the complaint [against him], saying *to the governor*:

“Since through you we have attained great peace, and since by your foresight reforms are being carried out for this nation,

³in every way and in every place, most excellent Felix, we acknowledge this with all gratitude.

⁴“But so that I do not weary you further, I beg you to grant us, by your kindness, a brief hearing.

⁵“For we have found this man to be a public menace and one who instigates dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the [heretical] sect of the Nazarenes.

⁶“He even tried to desecrate the temple, but we took him into custody [and we intended to judge him by our Law,

⁷but Lysias the commander came, and with great force took him out of our hands,

⁸and ordered his accusers to come before you.] By interrogating him yourself concerning all these matters you will be able to determine [the truth about] these things with which we charge him.”

⁹The Jews also joined in the attack, declaring *and* insisting that these things were so.

¹⁰When the governor nodded for him to speak, Paul answered,

“Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I make my defense cheerfully *and* with good courage.

¹¹As you can easily verify, it has been no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship.

¹²“Neither in the temple, nor in the synagogues, nor *elsewhere* in the city did they find me carrying on a discussion or disputing with anybody or causing a crowd to gather.

¹³“Nor can they present evidence to you to prove what

they now bring against me.

¹⁴“But I confess this to you, that according to the Way, which they call a [divisive and heretical] sect, I do worship *and* serve the God of our fathers, [confidently] believing everything that is in accordance with the Law [of Moses] and that is written in the Prophets; ¹⁵having [the same] hope in God which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of [the dead], both of the righteous and of the wicked.

¹⁶“In view of this, I also do my best *and* strive always to have a clear conscience before God and before men.

¹⁷“Now after several years I came [to Jerusalem] to bring to my people charitable contributions and offerings.

¹⁸“They found me in the temple presenting these *offerings*, after I had undergone [the rites of] purification, without any crowd or uproar. But *there were* some Jews from [the west coast province of] Asia [Minor], ¹⁹who ought to have been here before you to present their charges, if they have anything against me.

²⁰“Or else let these men tell what crime they found [me guilty of] when I stood before the Council (Sanhedrin, Jewish High Court),

²¹other than for this one statement which I had shouted out as I stood among them, ‘For the resurrection of the dead I am on trial before you today.’”

²²But Felix, having a rather accurate understanding about the Way, put them off, saying, “When Lysias the commander comes down, I will decide your case.”

²³Then he ordered the centurion to keep Paul in custody,

but to let him have some freedom, and [he told the centurion] not to stop any of his friends from providing for his needs.

24 Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess. He sent for Paul and listened to him talk about faith in Christ Jesus.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Believe You Are Disciplined

The Roman poet Horace said that we should rule our minds or our minds will rule us. The enemy wants your mind; he wants to control or influence as much of your thinking as possible, but you do not have to let him. The key to overcoming him is learning to discipline your thinking, and that may mean disciplining yourself to believe you are a disciplined person. Thousands upon thousands of people say daily, "I'm just not a disciplined person. I wish I were, but I'm just not!" However, if the person saying that is a Christian, his or her confession is incorrect, because God's Word says that God has given us the spirit of a sound, calm, and disciplined mind (see 2 Tim. 1:7).

The apostle Paul wrote: "Herein I also exercise (or discipline) myself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men always" (Acts 24:16, AMPC). Most people don't get excited when the subject of discipline comes up. However, if you learn to understand the power, the liberty, the joy, and the victory discipline brings to your life, you will embrace it eagerly.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

No Excuses

Moses made excuses when God called him to service. He said he was “not a man of words (eloquent, fluent) ... slow of speech and tongue” (Ex. 4:10). Felix made excuses when Paul was speaking to him about righteousness and self-control. He essentially said, “Right now is an inconvenient time. Can you come back later?” (see Acts 24:25).

When God invites people into a relationship with Him, many people come up with excuses when the truth is they simply don't want to make the sacrifices required to follow Him. Even among those who are believers in Jesus, we still hear ample excuses for not serving Him fully. It is time to deal with excuses and start speaking truth. There is one truth none of us will be able to avoid: The day will come when every person will stand before God and give an account of his or her life (see Rom. 14:12). On that day, there will be no excuses!

²⁵But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control [honorable behavior, personal integrity], and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, “Go away for now, and when I find [a convenient] time I will send for you.”

²⁶At the same time he was also hoping to get money from Paul [as a bribe]; so he continued to send for him quite often and talked with him.

²⁷But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded [in office] by Porcius Festus; and wishing to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned.

25 NOW FESTUS arrived in the province, and three days later he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea [Maritima].

²And [there in Jerusalem] the chief priests and the leading men of the Jews brought charges against Paul [before Festus], and they repeatedly pleaded with him, ³asking as a concession against Paul, that he would have him brought to Jerusalem; (*meanwhile* planning an ambush to kill him on the way).

⁴Festus answered that Paul was being held in custody in Caesarea [Maritima] and that he himself was about to leave shortly.

⁵“So,” he said, “let those who are in a position of authority among you go there with me, and if there is anything criminal about the man, let them bring charges against him.”

⁶Now after Festus had spent no more than eight or ten days among them, he went down to Caesarea, and on the next day he took his seat on the tribunal (the judicial bench), and ordered Paul to be brought [before him].

⁷After Paul arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many serious charges against him which they were not able to prove, ⁸while Paul declared in his own defense, “I have done no wrong *and* committed no offense either against the Law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar.”

⁹But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul,

“Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial there in my presence [before the Jewish Sanhedrin] on these *charges*?”

¹⁰Paul said, “I am standing before Caesar’s tribunal, where I ought to be tried. I have done nothing wrong to the Jews, as you also very well know.

¹¹“Therefore, if I am guilty and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not try to escape death; but if there is nothing to the accusations which these men are bringing against me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar (Emperor Nero).”

¹²Then Festus, after conferring with [the men who formed] his council, answered, “You have appealed to Caesar; to Caesar you shall go.”

¹³Now several days later, Agrippa [II] the king and Bernice [his sister] arrived at Caesarea and paid their respects to Festus [the new governor].

¹⁴While they were spending many days there, Festus laid Paul’s case before the king, saying, “There is a man here who was left as a prisoner by Felix.

¹⁵“When I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews [told me about him and] brought charges against him, petitioning for a sentence of condemnation against him.

¹⁶“I told them that it was not the custom of the Romans to hand over any man [for punishment] before the accused meets his accusers face to face and has the opportunity to defend himself against the charges.

¹⁷“So after they arrived together here, I did not delay, but on the next day took my place on the tribunal and ordered that

the man be brought before me.

¹⁸“When his accusers stood up, they brought no charges against him of crimes that I was expecting [neither civil nor criminal actions],

¹⁹instead they had some points of disagreement with him about their own religion and about one Jesus, a man who had died, but whom Paul kept asserting *and* insisting [over and over] to be alive.

²⁰“And I, being at a loss as to how to investigate these things, asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and be tried there regarding these matters.

²¹“But when Paul appealed to be held in custody for a decision by the Emperor [Nero], I ordered him to be kept in custody until I *could* send him to Caesar.”

²²Then Agrippa said to Festus, “I would like to hear the man myself.” “Tomorrow,” Festus replied, “you will hear him.”

²³So the next day Agrippa and [his sister] Bernice came with great pageantry, and they went into the auditorium accompanied by the military commanders and the prominent men of the city. At the command of Festus, Paul was brought in.

²⁴Then Festus said, “King Agrippa and all you gentlemen present with us, you see this man [Paul] about whom all the Jewish people appealed to me, both at Jerusalem and here, loudly insisting that he ought not to live any longer.

²⁵“But I found that he had done nothing worthy of death; however, since he appealed to the Emperor [Nero], I decided to send him [to Rome].

²⁶“But I have nothing specific about him to write to my

lord. So I have brought him before *all of you*, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the investigation has taken place, I will have something to put in writing.

²⁷“For it seems absurd *and* unreasonable to me to send a prisoner [to Rome] without indicating the charges against him.”

26 THEN AGRIPPA said to Paul, “You are [now] permitted to speak on your own behalf.” At that, Paul stretched out his hand [as an orator] and made his defense [as follows]: ²“I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, since it is before you that I am to make my defense today regarding all the charges brought against me by the Jews, ³especially because you are an expert [fully knowledgeable, experienced and unusually conversant] in all the Jewish customs and controversial issues; therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently.

⁴“So then, all the Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which from the beginning was spent among my own nation [the Jewish people], and in Jerusalem.

⁵“They have known me for a long time, if they are willing to testify to it, that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I have lived as a Pharisee.

⁶“And now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers. [Acts 13:32, 33]

⁷“Which hope [of the Messiah and the resurrection] our twelve tribes [confidently] expect to realize as they serve *and* worship *God* in earnest night and day. And for this hope, O King, I am being accused by Jews!

⁸“Why is it thought incredible by [any of] you that God

raises the dead?

⁹“So then, I [once] thought to myself that it was my duty to do many things in opposition to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

¹⁰“And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; I not only locked up many of the saints (God’s people) in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being condemned to death, I cast my vote against them.

¹¹“And I often punished them [making them suffer] in all the synagogues and tried to force them to blaspheme; and in my extreme rage at them, I kept hunting them even to foreign cities [harassing and persecuting them].

¹²“While so engaged, as I was traveling to Damascus with the authority and commission *and* full power of the chief priests,

¹³at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven surpassing the brightness of the sun, shining all around me and those who were traveling with me.

¹⁴“And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice in the Hebrew dialect (Jewish Aramaic) saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick [repeatedly] against the goads [offering pointless resistance].’

¹⁵“And I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.

¹⁶“Get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you [to serve] as a minister and as a witness [to testify, with authority,] not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you, ¹⁷[choosing you for Myself and] rescuing you

from the *Jewish* people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, [Ezek 2:1, 3]

¹⁸to open their [spiritual] eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness *and* release from their sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified (set apart, made holy) by faith in Me.' [Is 42:7, 16]

¹⁹“So, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,

²⁰but I openly proclaimed first to those at Damascus, then at Jerusalem and throughout the region of Judea, and *even* to the Gentiles, that they should repent [change their inner self—their old way of thinking] and turn to God, doing deeds *and* living lives which are consistent with repentance.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*I am so grateful, Lord, that
You have opened my spiritual
eyes so that I could turn from
darkness to light and from the
power of Satan to You, that I*

could receive forgiveness and release from my sins, and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in You.

• *adapted from Acts 26:18*

²¹“Because of this *some* Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me.

²²“But I have had help from God to this day, and I stand [before people] testifying to small and great alike, stating nothing except what the Prophets and Moses said would come to pass—²³that the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed) was to suffer, and that He by being the first to rise from the dead [with an incorruptible body] would proclaim light (salvation) both to the *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles.”

²⁴While Paul was making this defense, Festus said loudly, “Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great education is turning you toward madness.”

²⁵But Paul replied, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent *and* noble Festus, but [with a sound mind] I am uttering rational words of truth *and* reason.

²⁶“For [your majesty] the king understands these things, and [therefore] I am also speaking to him with confidence *and* boldness, since I am convinced that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner [hidden from view, in secret].

²⁷“King Agrippa, do you believe the [writings of the]

Prophets [their messages and words]? I know that you do.”

²⁸Then Agrippa said to Paul, “In a short time [and with so little effort] you [almost] persuade me to become a Christian.”

²⁹And Paul replied, “Whether in a short time or long, I wish to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become such as I am, except for these chains.”

³⁰Then the king stood up, and [with him] the governor and Bernice, and those who were sitting with them;

³¹and after they had gone out, they *began* saying to one another, “This man is not doing anything worthy of death or [even] of imprisonment.”

³²And Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar (Emperor Nero).”

27 NOW WHEN it was determined that we (including Luke) would sail for Italy, they turned Paul and some other prisoners over to a centurion of the Augustan Regiment named Julius.

²And going aboard a ship from Adramyttian which was about to sail for the ports along the [west] coast [province] of Asia [Minor], we put out to sea; and Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, accompanied us.

³The next day we landed at Sidon; and Julius, treating Paul with [thoughtful] consideration, allowed him to go to his friends *there* and be cared for *and* refreshed.

⁴From there we put out to sea and sailed to the leeward (sheltered) side of Cyprus [for protection from weather] because the winds were against us.

⁵When we had sailed across the sea along the coasts of

Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia [on the south coast of Asia Minor].

⁶There the centurion [Julius] found an Alexandrian ship [a grain ship of the Roman fleet] sailing for Italy, and he put us aboard it.

⁷For a number of days we sailed slowly and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus; then, because the wind did not allow us to go farther, we sailed under the leeward (sheltered) side of Crete, off Salmone; ⁸and hugging the shore with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea [on the south side of Crete].

⁹Now much time had been lost, and navigation was dangerous, because even [the time for] the fast (Day of Atonement) was already over, so Paul *began* to strongly warn them, ¹⁰saying, “Men, I sense [after careful thought and observation] that this voyage will certainly be a disaster and with great loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives.”

¹¹However, the centurion [Julius, ranking officer on board] was persuaded by the pilot and the owner of the ship rather than by what Paul said.

¹²Because the harbor was not well situated for wintering, the majority [of the sailors] decided to put to sea from there, hoping somehow to reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete facing southwest and northwest, and spend the winter *there*.

¹³So when the south wind blew softly, thinking that they had obtained their goal, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, hugging the coast.

¹⁴But soon afterward a violent wind, called Euraquilo [a

northeaster, a tempestuous windstorm like a typhoon], came rushing down from the island;

¹⁵and when the ship was caught in it and could not head against the wind [to gain stability], we gave up and [letting her drift] were driven along.

¹⁶We ran under the shelter of a small island [twenty-five miles south of Crete] called Clauda, and with great difficulty we were able to get the *ship's* skiff on the deck *and* secure it.

¹⁷After hoisting the skiff [on board], they used support lines [for frapping] to undergird *and* brace the ship's hull; and fearing that they might run aground on *the shallows of* Syrtis [off the north coast of Africa], they let down the sea anchor *and* lowered the sails and were driven along [backwards with the bow into the wind].

¹⁸On the next day, as we were being violently tossed about by the storm [and taking on water], they began to jettison the cargo;

¹⁹and on the third day they threw the ship's tackle (spare lines, blocks, miscellaneous equipment) overboard with their own hands [to further reduce the weight].

²⁰Since neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm kept raging about us, from then on all hope of our being saved was [growing worse and worse and] gradually abandoned.

²¹After they had gone a long time without food [because of seasickness and stress], Paul stood up before them and said, "Men, you should have followed my advice and should not have set sail from Crete, and brought on this damage and loss.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Trust God To Work Things Out for Good

Romans 8:28 tells us “that God [who is deeply concerned about us] causes all things to work together [as a plan] for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to His plan and purpose.” It doesn’t say all things are good; it does say that all things work together for good.

You can be the kind of person who plans things, but who also remains calm if that plan doesn’t work out because something unexpected or upsetting happens. Take a look at the apostle Paul when all hope was gone that their ship would be saved—a scenario he had warned them would happen (see Acts 27:21–26). Even people who are really positive don’t have everything work out the way they want all the time. But positive people decide to enjoy themselves no matter what happens, and they trust that God will work all things for good.

²²“But even now I urge you to keep up your courage and be in good spirits, because there will be no loss of life among you, but *only* loss of the ship.

²³“For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me,

²⁴and said, ‘Stop being afraid, Paul. You must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has given you [the lives of] all those

who are sailing with you.’

²⁵“So keep up your courage, men, for I believe God *and* have complete confidence in Him that it will turn out exactly as I have been told;

²⁶but we must run [the ship] aground on some island.”

²⁷The fourteenth night had come and we were drifting *and* being driven about in the Adriatic Sea, when about midnight the sailors *began* to suspect that they were approaching some land.

²⁸So they took soundings [using a weighted line] and found [the depth to be] twenty fathoms (120 feet); and a little farther on they sounded again and found [the depth to be] fifteen fathoms (90 feet).

²⁹Then fearing that we might run aground somewhere on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern [to slow the ship] and kept wishing for daybreak to come.

³⁰But as the sailors were trying to escape [secretly] from the ship and had let down the skiff into the sea, pretending that they were going to lay out anchors from the bow, ³¹Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, “Unless these men remain on the ship, you cannot be saved.”

³²Then the soldiers cut away the ropes that held the skiff and let it fall *and* drift away.

³³While they waited for the day to dawn, Paul encouraged them all [and told them] to have some food, saying, “This is the fourteenth day that you have been constantly on watch and going without food, having eaten nothing.

³⁴“So I urge you to eat some food, for this is for your survival; for not a hair from the head of any of you will perish.”

³⁵ Having said this, he took bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all, and he broke it and began to eat.

³⁶ Then all of them were encouraged *and* their spirits improved, and they also ate some food.

³⁷ All told there were two hundred and seventy-six of us aboard the ship.

³⁸ After they had eaten enough, they *began* to lighten the ship by throwing the wheat [from Egypt] overboard into the sea.

³⁹ When day came, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, and they decided to run the ship ashore there if they could.

⁴⁰ So they cut the cables *and* severed the anchors and left them in the sea while at the same time unlash the ropes of the rudders; and after hoisting the foresail to the wind, they headed steadily for the beach.

⁴¹ But striking a reef with waves breaking in on either side, they ran the ship aground. The prow (forward point) stuck fast and remained immovable, while the stern *began* to break up under the [violent] force *of the waves*.

⁴² The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, so that none of them would dive overboard *and* swim [to land] and escape;

⁴³ but the centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept them from [carrying out] their plan. He commanded those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to the shore; ⁴⁴ and [he commanded] the rest *to follow*, some on [floating] planks, and others on various things from the ship. And so it was that all of them were brought safely to land.

28 AFTER WE were safe [on land], we found out that the island was called Malta.

²And the natives showed us extraordinary kindness *and* hospitality; for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, since it had begun to rain and was cold.

³But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper crawled out because of the heat and fastened itself on his hand.

⁴When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they *began* saying to one another, “Undoubtedly this man is a murderer, and though he has been saved from the sea, Justice [the avenging goddess] has not permitted him to live.”

⁵Then Paul [simply] shook the creature off into the fire and suffered no ill effects.

⁶But they stood watching *and* expecting him to swell up or suddenly drop dead. But after they had waited a long time and had seen nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and *began* saying that he was a god.

POWERPOINT

When Paul arrived at Malta and was warming himself by the fire, a viper bit and attached itself to his hand. According to Acts 28:5, he simply shook it off! I love that statement and have learned a lot from it.

When Satan (the serpent) bites us with offense, anger, negative thinking, or temptation of any kind, we can simply shake it off.

This is a way of saying, “No, devil, I am not going to let you poison me with any of your lies and ungodly ways.” Don’t accept the poisonous bite and spend a long time being miserable because of it.

Immediately shake it off and continue on with God’s plan for your life.



⁷In the vicinity of that place there were estates belonging to the leading man of the island, named Publius, who welcomed and entertained us hospitably for three days.

⁸And it happened that the father of Publius was sick [in bed] with recurring attacks of fever and dysentery; and Paul went to him, and after he had prayed, he laid his hands on him and healed him.

⁹After this occurred, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases were coming to him and being healed.

¹⁰They also gave us many honors [gifts and courtesies expressing respect]; and when we were setting sail, they supplied us with all the things we needed.

¹¹At the end of three months we set sail on a ship which had wintered at the island, an Alexandrian ship with the Twin Brothers [Castor and Pollux] as its figurehead.

¹²We landed at Syracuse [on Sicily] and stayed there three days.

¹³From there we sailed around and arrived at Rhegium [on Italy's southern tip]; and a day later a south wind came up, and on the second day we arrived at Puteoli.

¹⁴There we found some believers and were invited to stay with them for seven days. And so we came to Rome.

¹⁵And the brothers and sisters, having heard news about us, came from as far away as the Forum of Appius and Three Inns to meet us. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and was encouraged.

¹⁶When we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself [in rented quarters] with the soldier who was guarding him.

¹⁷Three days later he called together the leaders of the Jews; and when they had gathered, he said to them, “Kinsmen, though I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our fathers, yet I was turned over as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.

¹⁸“After they had interrogated me, they were ready to release me because I was not guilty of any offense deserving death.

¹⁹“But when the Jews objected [to my release], I was forced to appeal to Caesar (Emperor Nero), not because I had any charge to make against my nation.

²⁰“For this reason I have asked to see you and talk with you, since it is for the sake of the hope of Israel (the Messiah, the resurrection) that I am bound with this chain.”

²¹They said to him, “We have not received [any] letters about you from Judea, nor have any of the [Jewish] brothers come here and reported or said anything bad about you.

²²“But we would like to hear from you what your views are [that is, exactly what you believe]; for in regard to this sect (Christianity), we are fully aware that it is denounced everywhere.”

²³When they had set a day for Paul, they came to his lodging in large numbers. And he carefully explained [Christianity] to them from morning until evening, solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, both from the Law of Moses and from the [writings of the] Prophets.

²⁴Some were persuaded by what he said, but others would not believe.

²⁵They disagreed among themselves and they *began* to leave after Paul had made one *last* statement: “The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers, saying, ²⁶‘GO TO THIS PEOPLE AND SAY,

“YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND,
YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE;

²⁷“FOR THE HEART (the understanding, the soul) OF THIS
PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL (calloused), AND WITH THEIR
EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR,
AND THEY HAVE SHUT THEIR EYES [to the truth];
OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT SEE WITH THEIR EYES,
AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS,
AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN [to Me],
AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.” ’ [Is 6:9, 10]

²⁸“Therefore let it be known to you that [this message of] the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they indeed will listen!” [Ps 67:2]

²⁹[And when he had said these things, the Jews left, arguing among themselves.]

³⁰And Paul lived there for two full years [at his own expense] in his own rented lodging and welcomed all who came to him,

³¹preaching *and* proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness *and* boldness, unhindered *and* unrestrained.

Romans

Author: | Paul
Date: | About AD
57

I believe that understanding Paul's teachings in the book of Romans is necessary for anyone who wants to live in the fullness of what Jesus has provided for us. This book helps us understand many issues that are vital to our lives as believers, such as: faith, righteousness, the power of God's love, the unconditional love of God, and the renewing and transformation of the mind. It also helps us develop a proper perspective on sin and forgiveness.

If we read Romans properly, it will fill our minds with biblical truth concerning various areas of our lives—truth we can apply in practical ways every day. I encourage you to spend time studying this book, asking the Holy Spirit to give you revelation of all the powerful principles and insights it contains.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM ROMANS:

Choose to be alive in God and do not let negative thought patterns or sinful habits have power over you (see Romans 6:10–12).

Set your mind on the things of the Spirit and you will experience life and peace (see Romans 8:5–6).

God's love for you is unlimited and nothing can separate you from it (see Romans 8:38–39).

Allow your mind to be renewed to God's way of thinking; you will be transformed through this process and experience God's good and perfect will (see Romans 12:2).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM ROMANS:

There is now no condemnation [no guilty verdict, no punishment] for those who are in Christ Jesus [who believe in Him as personal Lord and Savior]. | Romans 8:1

The Spirit [comes to us and] helps us in our weakness. | Romans 8:26

In all these things we are more than conquerors and gain an overwhelming victory through Him who loved us [so much that He died for us]. | Romans 8:37

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

1 PAUL, A bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle (special messenger, personally chosen representative), set apart for [preaching] the gospel of God [the good news of salvation],

²which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the sacred Scriptures—

³[the good news] regarding His Son, who, as to the flesh [His human nature], was born a descendant of David [to fulfill the covenant promises],

⁴and [as to His divine nature] according to the Spirit of holiness was openly designated to be the Son of God with power [in a triumphant and miraculous way] by *His* resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

⁵It is through Him that we have received grace and [our] apostleship to promote obedience to the faith *and* make disciples for His name's sake among all the Gentiles,

⁶and you also are among those who are called of Jesus Christ to belong to Him;

⁷[I am writing] to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called to be saints (God's people) *and* set apart for a sanctified life,

[that is, set apart for God and His purpose]: Grace to you and peace [inner calm and spiritual well-being] from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁸First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith [your trust and confidence in His power, wisdom, and goodness] is being proclaimed in all the world.

⁹For God, whom I serve with my spirit by *preaching* the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how continuously I mention you

¹⁰in my prayers; always pleading that somehow, by God's will, I may now at last come to you.

¹¹For I long to see you so that I may share with you some spiritual gift, to strengthen *and* establish you;

¹²that is, that we may be mutually encouraged *and* comforted by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

¹³I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that many times I have planned to come to you, (and have been prevented so far) so that I may have some fruit [of my labors] among you, even as *I have* among the rest of the Gentiles.

¹⁴I have a duty to perform *and* a debt to pay both to Greeks and to barbarians [the cultured and the uncultured], both to the wise and to the foolish.

¹⁵So, for my part, I am ready *and* eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.

¹⁶I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation [from His wrath and punishment] to everyone who believes [in Christ as Savior], to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

¹⁷For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed,

both springing from faith *and leading* to faith [disclosed in a way that awakens more faith]. As it is written *and* forever remains written, “THE JUST *and* UPRIGHT SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.” [Hab 2:4]

¹⁸For [God does not overlook sin and] the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who in their wickedness suppress *and* stifle the truth,

POWERPOINT

Romans 1:17 reminds us that we need to learn how to live from faith to faith. It means that we should be in faith at all times and approach everything we face, every challenge we meet, every decision we make, and everything we do with faith. Faith should be the posture of our hearts and the attitude of our minds toward every situation. Faith is not a feeling we have; it is a conscious decision that we make to trust God in all things.



WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

We Live by Faith

In Romans 1:17, Paul quoted from Habakkuk 2:4, saying, “THE JUST *and* UPRIGHT SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.” While the word *faith* means belief or absolute trust that something is true, it also implies loyalty and commitment. Faith begins when we agree that the message of Jesus’ death and resurrection is true (see 1 Cor. 15:20), and true faith happens when we say, “Not only do I agree that it is true, but I’m willing to stake my life on it.”

The “just” are those who were “justified,” or made right with God, by Jesus’ death on the cross. To be justified means that God treats us as though we are not and never have been sinners. He treats us as His beloved children. We enter into a relationship of love, confidence, and friendship. We need not fear or worry, because there is no punishment for us. We *live* by our faith that Jesus took our punishment and we enjoy the victory He won for us.

In this context, many people fail to fight the wiles of Satan. Instead of focusing on all that God has done for them, they listen to the devil’s whisperings about their past failures. “Do

you remember when you...? How could you have...?”

I once went through an especially difficult time when there was absolutely no joy or peace in my life. Then I read Romans 15:13: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing [through the experience of your faith] that by the power of the Holy Spirit you will abound in hope *and* overflow with confidence in His promises.” That was it!

I had plunged into doubt and unbelief, allowing the enemy to torment me with his lies. This verse changed that thinking! Jesus loved me so much that He not only forgave my past sins; He also looked ahead and forgave me for those moments of weakness when I’d fail in the future, those times when I would not live up to all the truth I knew.

Then I pondered Paul’s words in Romans 1:17: “For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed, *both springing from faith and leading to faith.*” I learned that I don’t have to allow Satan to sneak in with questions or unbelief. I can live every moment moving from faith to more faith to more faith, and so can you.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord Jesus Christ, I am in awe of Your love for me—love so great and so powerful that You not only died for all my sins before I was born, but You’ve provided for all my weak moments in the future. I am so thankful for Your love. Amen.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The Weight of Negative Words

Negative talk is very unattractive to God, and it is not His will. Thankfully, He loves us unconditionally, but it really saddens Him when we use the power of words in negative, destructive, or hurtful ways. He understands how much damage negative words can do, and He wants us to understand this too.

Describing unbelievers, the apostle Paul said, “They were filled (permeated, saturated) with every kind of unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice and mean-spiritedness. They are gossips [spreading rumors], slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors [of new forms] of evil, disobedient and disrespectful to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful [without pity]” (Rom. 1:29–31). If these are traits of unbelievers, those of us who consider ourselves believers in God should certainly avoid these behaviors completely.

If we look carefully at Paul’s description of those who do not know God, we will see that he speaks of gossip and boasting in the same sentence where he also speaks of murder. This should help us realize how powerful words are and how careful we should be when we speak.

¹⁹because that which is known about God is evident within them [in their inner consciousness], for God made it evident to them.

²⁰For ever since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through His workmanship [all His creation, the wonderful things that He has made], so that they [who fail to believe and trust in Him] are without excuse *and* without defense. [Ps 19:1–4; Eph 2:10]

²¹For even though they knew God [as the Creator], they did not ^{*}honor Him as God or give thanks [for His wondrous creation]. On the contrary, they became worthless in their thinking [godless, with pointless reasonings, and silly speculations], and their foolish heart was darkened.

²²Claiming to be wise, they became fools,

²³and exchanged the glory *and* majesty *and* excellence of the immortal God for an image [worthless idols] in the shape of mortal man and birds and four-footed animals and reptiles.

²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their own hearts to [sexual] impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them [abandoning them to the degrading power of sin],

²⁵because [by choice] they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. [Jer 2:11]

²⁶For this reason God gave them over to degrading *and* vile passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural [a function contrary to nature],

²⁷and in the same way also the men turned away from the

natural function of the woman and were consumed with their desire toward one another, men with men committing shameful acts and in return receiving in their own bodies the inevitable *and* appropriate penalty for their wrongdoing.

²⁸And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God *or* consider Him worth knowing [as their Creator], God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do things which are improper *and* repulsive,

²⁹until they were filled (permeated, saturated) with every kind of unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice *and* mean-spiritedness. They are gossips [spreading rumors],

³⁰slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors [of new forms] of evil, disobedient *and* disrespectful to parents,

³¹without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful [without pity].

³²Although they know God's righteous decree *and* His judgment, that those who do such things deserve death, yet they not only do them, but they even [enthusiastically] approve *and* tolerate others who practice them.

2 THEREFORE YOU have no excuse *or* justification, everyone of you who [hypocritically] judges *and* condemns others; for in passing judgment on another person, you condemn yourself, because you who judge [from a position of arrogance or self-righteousness] are *habitually* practicing the very same things [which you denounce].

²And we know that the judgment of God falls justly *and* in accordance with truth on those who practice such things.

³But do you think this, O man, when you judge *and* condemn those who practice such things, and yet do the same yourself, that you will escape God's judgment *and* elude His verdict?

⁴Or do you have no regard for the wealth of His kindness and tolerance and patience [in withholding His wrath]? Are you [actually] unaware *or* ignorant [of the fact] that God's kindness leads you to repentance [that is, to change your inner self, your old way of thinking—seek His purpose for your life]?

Speak God's Word

*God's kindness leads me to
repentance—to change my
inner self and my old way of
thinking, and to seek His
purpose for my life.*

| *adapted from* ROMANS 2:4 |

POWERPOINT

When we try to “earn” or “buy” from God with our good works what He wants to give us freely, He sometimes withholds these things until we learn to receive them by faith.

We have to learn how to receive, and receive *freely*, from God and to understand that we cannot deserve what He wants to give us. Romans 2:4 says that God’s kindness is what leads us into a relationship with Him. He does not have to have any other reason to bless us. From His perspective, His love for us is reason enough.



⁵But because of your callous stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are [deliberately] storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed.

⁶He WILL PAY BACK TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS [justly, as his deeds deserve]: [Ps 62:12; Prov 24:12]

⁷to those who by persistence in doing good seek [unseen but certain heavenly] glory, honor, and immortality, [He will give the gift of] eternal life.

⁸But for those who are selfishly ambitious *and* self-seeking and disobedient to the truth but responsive to wickedness, [there will be] wrath and indignation.

⁹*There will be* tribulation and anguish [torturing confinement] for every human soul who does [or permits] evil, to the Jew first and also to the Greek,

¹⁰but glory and honor and *inner* peace [will be given] to everyone who *habitually* does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

¹¹For God shows no partiality [no arbitrary favoritism; with Him one person is not more important than another]. [Deut 10:17; 2 Chr 19:7]

¹²For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without [regard to] the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged *and* condemned by the Law.

¹³For it is not those who merely hear the Law [as it is read aloud] who are just *or* righteous before God, but it is those who [actually] obey the Law who will be justified [pronounced free of the guilt of sin and declared acceptable to Him].

¹⁴When Gentiles, who do not have the Law [since it was given only to Jews], do instinctively the things the Law requires [guided only by their conscience], they are a law to themselves, though they do not have the Law.

¹⁵They show that the essential requirements of the Law are

written in their hearts; and their conscience [their sense of right and wrong, their moral choices] bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or perhaps defending them

¹⁶on that day when, as my gospel proclaims, God will judge the secrets [all the hidden thoughts and concealed sins] of men through Christ Jesus. [Eccl 12:14]

¹⁷But if you bear the name “Jew” and rely on the Law [for your salvation] and boast in [your special relationship to] God,

¹⁸and [if you claim to] know His will and approve the things that are essential *or* have a sense of what is excellent, based on your instruction from the Law,

¹⁹and [if you] are confident that you are a [qualified] guide to the blind [those untaught in theology], a light to those who are in darkness,

²⁰and [that you are] a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the [spiritually] childish, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth—

²¹well then, you who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal [in ways that are discrete, but just as sinful]?

²²You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who detest idols, do you rob [pagan] temples [of valuable idols and offerings]? [Deut 7:25; Acts 19:37]

²³You who boast in the Law, do you [repeatedly] dishonor God by breaking the Law?

²⁴For, “THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU,” just as it is written [in Scripture]. [Is 52:5; Ezek 36:20]

²⁵Circumcision [the sign of the covenant of Abraham] is indeed of value if you practice the Law; but if you *habitually* break the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision [it is meaningless in God's sight].

²⁶So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded [by God] as circumcision?

²⁷Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps [the spirit of] the Law will judge you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, break the Law.

²⁸For he is not a [real] Jew who is only one outwardly, nor is [true] circumcision something external and physical.

²⁹But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and [true] circumcision is *circumcision* of the heart, by the Spirit, not by [the fulfillment of] the letter [of the Law]. His praise is not from men, but from God.

3 THEN WHAT is the advantage of the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?

²Great in every respect. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God [His very words]. [Ps 147:19]

³What then? If some did not believe *or* were unfaithful [to God], their lack of belief will not nullify *and* make invalid the faithfulness of God *and* His word, will it?

⁴Certainly not! Let God be found true [as He will be], though every person *be found* a liar, just as it is written [in Scripture],

“THAT YOU MAY BE JUSTIFIED IN YOUR WORDS,
AND PREVAIL WHEN YOU ARE JUDGED [by sinful men].” [Ps
51:4]

⁵But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? God is not wrong to inflict His wrath [on us], is He? (I am speaking in purely human terms.)

⁶Certainly not! For *otherwise*, how will God judge the world?

⁷But [as you might say] if through my lie God’s truth was magnified *and* abounded to His glory, why am I still being judged as a sinner?

⁸And why not say, (as some slanderously report and claim that we teach) “Let us do evil so that good may come of it”? Their condemnation [by God] is just.

⁹Well then, are we [Jews] better off than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks (Gentiles) are under the control of sin *and* subject to its power.

¹⁰As it is written *and* forever remains written,

“THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS [none that meets God’s standard], NOT EVEN ONE. [Ps 14:3]

¹¹“THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS,
THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD. [Ps 14:2]

¹²“ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME
USELESS;

THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, NO, NOT ONE.” [Ps 53:1–3]

¹³“THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE;
THEY [habitually] DECEIVE WITH THEIR TONGUES.”

“THE VENOM OF ASPS IS BENEATH THEIR LIPS.” [Ps 5:9; 140:3]

¹⁴“THEIR MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS.” [Ps 10:7]

¹⁵“THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,

¹⁶DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,

POWERPOINT

We can see from Romans 3:23–24 and from Romans 6:23 that sin is a problem for everyone. The good news is that Jesus is the answer for everyone. No problem is really a problem as long as there is an answer for it. Not only have we fallen short of the glory of God, but we are currently falling short. This indicates that it is a continual problem, yet Jesus is continually at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for us. This ongoing problem of sin has an ongoing and uninterrupted answer!



Speak God's Word

*I am being justified—
declared free of the guilt of
sin, made acceptable to God,
and granted eternal life—as
a gift by His undeserved
grace and through the
redemption provided in
Christ Jesus.*

| adapted from ROMANS 3:24 |

¹⁷AND THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN THE PATH OF PEACE.” [Is 59:7, 8]

¹⁸“THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD [and His awesome power]
BEFORE THEIR EYES.” [Ps 36:1]

¹⁹Now we know that whatever the Law [of Moses] says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that [the excuses of] every mouth may be silenced [from protesting] and that all the world may be held accountable to God [and subject to His judgment].

²⁰For no person will be justified [freed of guilt and declared righteous] in His sight by [trying to do] the works of the Law. For through the Law we become conscious of sin [and the recognition of sin directs us toward repentance, but provides

no remedy for sin].

²¹But now the righteousness of God has been clearly revealed [independently and completely] apart from the Law, though it is [actually] confirmed by the Law and the [words and writings of the] Prophets.

²²This righteousness of God comes through faith in Jesus Christ for all those [Jew or Gentile] who believe [and trust in Him and acknowledge Him as God's Son]. There is no distinction, [1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:28]

²³since all have sinned and *continually* fall short of the glory of God,

²⁴and are being justified [declared free of the guilt of sin, made acceptable to God, and granted eternal life] as a gift by His [precious, undeserved] grace, through the redemption [the payment for our sin] which is [provided] in Christ Jesus,

²⁵whom God displayed publicly [before the eyes of the world] as a [life-giving] sacrifice of atonement *and* reconciliation (propitiation) by His blood [to be received] through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness [which demands punishment for sin], because in His forbearance [His deliberate restraint] He passed over the sins previously committed [before Jesus' crucifixion].

²⁶*It was* to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the One who justifies those who have faith in Jesus [and rely confidently on Him as Savior].

²⁷Then what becomes of [our] boasting? It is excluded [entirely ruled out, banished]. On what principle? On [the principle of good] works? No, but on the principle of faith.

²⁸For we maintain that an individual is justified by faith distinctly apart from works of the Law [the observance of which has nothing to do with justification, that is, being declared free of the guilt of sin and made acceptable to God].

²⁹Or is God *the God* of Jews only? Is He not also *the God* of Gentiles [who were not given the Law]? Yes, of Gentiles also,

³⁰since indeed it is one [and the same] God who will justify the circumcised by faith [which began with Abraham] and the uncircumcised through [their newly acquired] faith.

³¹Do we then nullify the Law by this faith [making the Law of no effect, overthrowing it]? Certainly not! On the contrary, we confirm *and* establish *and* uphold the Law [since it convicts us all of sin, pointing to the need for salvation].

4 WHAT THEN shall we say that Abraham, our forefather humanly speaking, has found? [Has he obtained a favored standing?]

²For if Abraham was justified [that is, acquitted from the guilt of his sins] by works [those things he did that were good], he has something to boast about, but not before God.

³For what does the Scripture say? “ABRAHAM BELIEVED IN (trusted, relied on) GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIS ACCOUNT AS RIGHTEOUSNESS (right living, right standing with God).” [Gen 15:6]

⁴Now to a laborer, his wages are not credited as a favor *or* a gift, but as an obligation [something owed to him].

⁵But to the one who does not work [that is, the one who does not try to earn his salvation by doing good], but believes

and completely trusts in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited to him as righteousness (right standing with God).

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Believe It and Speak It

Romans 4:17 speaks of one of the great privileges we have as believers, but one we often fail to take advantage of—speaking of things that have not yet manifested as though they already exist. We can reach with our faith into the spiritual realm, where God is, and speak of things that exist there as if they are current realities in our lives. For instance, Joel 3:10 encourages us to say we are strong even if we are weak. We believe God's strength is available to us, so why say we are weak? Let's begin to speak in faith as God does.

We need to say what God says and do what God does if we want to be what He wants us to be and to have what He wants us to have. We should be confessing God's promises as though they already exist in our lives. We are called to walk by faith and not by sight. In other words, we believe what God says in His Word even more than we believe what we can see with our natural eyes. What we can see are facts, but God's Word is truth. And truth is more powerful than facts.

Speak God's Word

*I am blessed, happy, and
favored because my lawless
deeds are forgiven and my
sins have been covered up
and completely buried. The
Lord will take no account
nor charge my sin against me.*

| adapted from ROMANS 4:7-8 |

⁶And in this same way David speaks of the blessing on the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

⁷“BLESSED *and* HAPPY *and* FAVORED ARE THOSE WHOSE
LAWLESS ACTS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN,
AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED UP *and* COMPLETELY
BURIED.

⁸“BLESSED *and* HAPPY *and* FAVORED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE
LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT *nor* CHARGE AGAINST
HIM.” [Ps 32:1, 2]

⁹Is this blessing only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say, “FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

¹⁰How then was it credited [to him]? Was it after he had been circumcised, or before? Not after, but while [he was] uncircumcised.

¹¹He received the sign of circumcision, a seal *or* confirmation of the righteousness which he had by faith while [he was still] uncircumcised—this was so that he would be the [spiritual] father of all who believe without being circumcised—so that righteousness would be credited to them,

¹²and [that he would be] the [spiritual] father of those circumcised who are not only circumcised, but who also walk in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had before he was circumcised.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The Reality of Righteousness

One of the first revelations that God gave to me out of His Word was on righteousness. By “revelation,” I mean that one day I suddenly understood something to the point that it became a part of me. The knowledge wasn’t only in my mind—it became part of my being. It was not something I merely thought; it became something I knew.

Righteousness is God’s gift to us. It is granted and credited to us by virtue of our believing in what God did for us through His Son, Jesus Christ (see Rom. 4:24). Jesus Christ who knew no sin became sin on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (see 2 Cor. 5:21).

Above all else, the devil does not want us to walk in the reality that we are in right standing with God. He wants us to feel insecure—always vaguely contemplating what we could have done wrong, where we might have slipped up, or if we are truly walking in the light of God’s Word.

Jesus wants us to know that we are right with God because of our faith in what He has done for us. He wants us to live in His Kingdom and have peace and joy in the midst of every situation, no matter how troublesome.

When we keep our eyes on the truth of the Kingdom of God—on Him, His righteousness, His peace, and His joy—the rest will be added to us in abundance.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Choose Faith and Trust

It is easy to say, “Don’t worry,” but to actually resist worrying requires experience with God. I don’t think there is any way a person can fully overcome the habit of worry, anxiety, or fear and develop the habit of peace, rest, and hope without practice and experience.

That’s why it is so important to continue to have faith and trust in God in the very midst of trials and tribulations. We can choose to steadfastly resist the temptation to give up when the going gets rough and keeps on getting rougher over a long period of time, because it is in those hard, trying times that the Lord is building in us the patience, endurance, and character that will eventually produce the habit of joyful “hope and the confident assurance” (Rom. 5:2).

When you and I are in the midst of battle against our spiritual enemy, every round we go through produces valuable experience and strength. We gain strength and become stronger each time we endure an attack. If we hang in there and refuse to give up, sooner or later we will be more than the devil can handle.

We serve a God so marvelous that He can work all things together for our good (see Rom. 8:28) even though Satan intends them for our harm.

¹³For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through [observing the requirements of] the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. [Gen 17:4–6; 22:16–18]

¹⁴If those who are [followers] of the Law are [the true] heirs [of Abraham], then faith [leading to salvation] is of no effect *and* void, and the promise [of God] is nullified.

¹⁵For the Law results in [God's] wrath [against sin], but where there is no law, there is no violation [of it either].

¹⁶Therefore, [inheriting] the promise depends entirely on faith [that is, confident trust in the unseen God], in order that *it may be given* as an act of grace [His unmerited favor and mercy], so that the promise will be [legally] guaranteed to all the descendants [of Abraham]—not only for those [Jewish believers] who keep the Law, but also for those [Gentile believers] who share the faith of Abraham, who is the [spiritual] father of us all—

¹⁷(as it is written [in Scripture], “I HAVE MADE YOU A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS”) in the sight of Him in whom he believed, that is, God who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist. [Gen 17:5]

¹⁸In hope against hope Abraham believed that he would become a father of many nations, as he had been promised [by God]: “SO [numberless] SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE.” [Gen 15:5]

¹⁹Without becoming weak in faith he considered his own body, now as good as dead [for producing children] since he was about a hundred years old, and [he considered] the deadness of Sarah's womb. [Gen 17:17; 18:11]

²⁰But he did not doubt *or* waver in unbelief concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong *and* empowered by faith, giving glory to God,

²¹being fully convinced that God had the power to do what He had promised.

²²Therefore his faith WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS (right standing with God). [Gen 15:6]

²³Now not for his sake alone was it written that it was credited to him,

²⁴but for our sake also—to whom righteousness will be credited, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead—

²⁵who was betrayed *and* crucified because of our sins, and was raised [from the dead] because of our justification [our acquittal—absolving us of all sin before God].

5 THEREFORE, SINCE we have been justified [that is, acquitted of sin, declared blameless before God] by faith, [let us grasp the fact that] we have peace with God [and the joy of reconciliation with Him] through our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed).

²Through Him we also have access by faith into this [remarkable state of] grace in which we [firmly and safely and securely] stand. Let us rejoice in our hope *and* the confident assurance of [experiencing and enjoying] the glory of [our great] God [the manifestation of His excellence and power].

³And not only *this*, but [with joy] let us exult in our sufferings *and* rejoice in our hardships, knowing that hardship

(distress, pressure, trouble) produces patient endurance;

⁴and endurance, proven character (spiritual maturity); and proven character, hope *and* confident assurance [of eternal salvation].

⁵Such hope [in God's promises] never disappoints *us*, because God's love has been abundantly poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

⁶While we were still helpless [powerless to provide for our salvation], at the right time Christ died [as a substitute] for the ungodly.

⁷Now it is an extraordinary thing for one to willingly give his life even for an upright man, though perhaps for a good man [one who is noble and selfless and worthy] someone might even dare to die.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, hope in Your promises
never disappoints me,
because Your love has been
abundantly poured out within
my heart through the Holy*

Spirit who was given to me.

- *adapted from Romans 5:5*

POWERPOINT

The Bible teaches that God knows our faults and loves us anyway. The beauty of grace is that “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).



⁸But God clearly shows *and* proves His own love for us, by the fact that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹Therefore, since we have now been justified [declared free of the guilt of sin] by His blood, [how much more certain is it that] we will be saved from the wrath of *God* through Him.

¹⁰For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, *it is* much more *certain*, having been reconciled, that we will be saved [from the consequences of sin] by His life [that is, we will be saved because Christ lives today].

¹¹Not only that, but we also rejoice in God [rejoicing in His love and perfection] through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received *and* enjoy our reconciliation [with God]. [Jer 9:24]

¹²Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, so death spread to all people [no one being able to stop it or escape its power], because they all sinned.

¹³Sin was [committed] in the world before the Law [was given], but sin is not charged [against anyone] when there is no law [against it].

¹⁴Yet death ruled [over mankind] from Adam to Moses [the Lawgiver], even over those who had not sinned as Adam did. Adam is a type of Him (Christ) who was to come [but in reverse—Adam brought destruction, Christ brought salvation]. [Gen 5:5; 7:22; Deut 34:5]

¹⁵But the free gift [of God] is not like the trespass [because the gift of grace overwhelms the fall of man]. For if many died by one man's trespass [Adam's sin], much more [abundantly] did God's grace and the gift [that comes] by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, overflow to [benefit] the many.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Right Thinking Leads to Right Behavior

God wants us to think, speak, and behave rightly, and He gives us what we need in order to do so. God will never require us to do something without giving us what we need to do it. God gives us the gift of righteousness so we can become righteous in what we think, say, and do.

Although we have sinned, our sins cannot be compared to the righteousness of God's free gift (see Rom. 5:17). Our sin is great, but His free gift of righteousness is greater.

The fruit of your life cannot be any greater than who and what you believe you are, so it's vital to learn to think about and believe in your righteousness in Christ. If you constantly think something is wrong with you, you will keep producing wrong words and actions, but believing that you are right with God will help you produce right behavior.

¹⁶Nor is the gift [of grace] like *that which came* through the one who sinned. For on the one hand the judgment [following the sin] *resulted* from one trespass and brought condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift *resulted* from many trespasses and brought justification [the release from sin's penalty for those who believe].

¹⁷For if by the trespass of the one (Adam), death reigned through the one (Adam), much more *surely* will those who

receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in [eternal] life through the One, Jesus Christ.

¹⁸So then as through one trespass [Adam's sin] there resulted condemnation for all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.

¹⁹For just as through one man's disobedience [his failure to hear, his carelessness] the many were made sinners, so through the obedience of the one Man the many will be made righteous *and* acceptable to God *and* brought into right standing with Him.

²⁰But the Law came to increase *and* expand [the awareness of] the trespass [by defining and unmasking sin]. But where sin increased, [God's remarkable, gracious gift of] grace [His unmerited favor] has surpassed it *and* increased all the more,

²¹so that, as sin reigned in death, so also grace would reign through righteousness which brings eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

6 WHAT SHALL we say [to all this]? Should we continue in sin *and* practice sin as a habit so that [God's gift of] grace may increase *and* overflow?

²Certainly not! How can we, the very ones who died to sin, *continue to* live in it any longer?

³Or are you ignorant of the fact that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

⁴We have therefore been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead

through the glory *and* power of the Father, we too might walk *habitually* in newness of life [abandoning our old ways].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Apply the Work of the Cross

If you are a true believer in Jesus Christ, there is no way you can ever sin and not care (see Rom. 6:1–2). You know that sin offends God, and you love God, so of course you will care. But there is a difference between caring about your sin and feeling condemned because of it (see Rom. 8:1).

We cannot fulfill our God-ordained purpose in life while we're trapped in guilt and condemned by our feelings. God doesn't want us to beat ourselves up for every mistake we make. We need to learn how to apply the work of the cross in our lives, accepting by faith that Jesus shed His blood to forgive our sins, receiving His forgiveness, and going on to do the things God has called us to do without a trace of guilt. This may be a new way of thinking for you, but it is biblical, and it is your privilege as a believer in Jesus Christ.

⁵For if we have become one with Him [permanently united] in the likeness of His death, we will also certainly be [one with Him and share fully] *in the likeness* of His resurrection.

⁶We know that our old self [our human nature without the Holy Spirit] was nailed to the cross with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.

⁷For the person who has died [with Christ] has been freed

from [the power of] sin.

⁸Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live [together] with Him,

⁹because we know [the self-evident truth] that Christ, having been raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has power over Him.

¹⁰For the death that He died, He died to sin [ending its power and paying the sinner's debt] once and for all; and the life that He lives, He lives to [glorify] God [in unbroken fellowship with Him].

¹¹Even so, consider yourselves to be dead to sin [and your relationship to it broken], but alive to God [in unbroken fellowship with Him] in Christ Jesus.

¹²Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts *and* passions.

¹³Do not go on offering members of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness. But offer yourselves to God [in a decisive act] as those alive [raised] from the dead [to a new life], and your members [all of your abilities—sanctified, set apart] as instruments of righteousness [yielded] to God.

¹⁴For sin will no longer be a master over you, since you are not under Law [as slaves], but under [unmerited] grace [as recipients of God's favor and mercy].

¹⁵What then [are we to conclude]? Shall we sin because we are not under Law, but under [God's] grace? Certainly not!

¹⁶Do you not know that when you *continually* offer yourselves to someone to do his will, you are the slaves of the one whom you obey, either [slaves] of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness (right

standing with God)?

¹⁷But thank God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient with all your heart to the standard of teaching in which you were instructed *and* to which you were committed.

¹⁸And having been set free from sin, you have become the slaves of righteousness [of conformity to God's will and purpose].

POWERPOINT

We need to believe God's Word more than we believe how we feel, and we need to say what God says about us and about our lives. God's Word says that we are dead to sin and that our relationship with sin is broken (see Rom. 6:2). It also says that we are alive to God, living in unbroken fellowship with Him (see Rom. 6:11). Spiritually speaking, this means that we are already free from negative thought patterns and sinful habits. We simply need to keep believing this truth and in time we will see good fruit manifesting in our lives.



¹⁹I am speaking in [familiar] human terms because of your natural limitations [your spiritual immaturity]. For just as you presented your bodily members as slaves to impurity and to

[moral] lawlessness, leading to further lawlessness, so now offer your members [your abilities, your talents] as slaves to righteousness, leading to sanctification [that is, being set apart for God's purpose].

²⁰When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness [you had no desire to conform to God's will].

²¹So what benefit did you get at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? [None!] For the outcome of those things is death!

²²But now since you have been set free from sin and have become [willing] slaves to God, you have your benefit, resulting in sanctification [being made holy and set apart for God's purpose], and the outcome [of this] is eternal life.

²³For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God [that is, His remarkable, overwhelming gift of grace to believers] is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

7 OR DO you not know, brothers and sisters (for I am speaking to those who know the Law), that the Law has jurisdiction [to rule] over a person as long as he lives?

²For the married woman [as an example] is bound *and* remains bound by law to her husband while he lives; but if her husband dies, she is released *and* exempt from the law concerning her husband.

³Accordingly, she will be designated as an adulteress if she unites herself to another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from the law [regarding marriage], so that she is not an adulteress if she marries another man.

⁴Therefore, my fellow believers, you too died to the Law through the [crucified] body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.

⁵When we were *living* in the flesh [trapped by sin], the sinful passions, which were awakened by [that which] the Law [identifies as sin], were at work in our body to bear fruit for death [since the willingness to sin led to death and separation from God].

⁶But now we have been released from the Law *and* its penalty, having died [through Christ] to that by which we were held captive, so that we serve [God] in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter [of the Law].

⁷What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, if it had not been for the Law, I would not have recognized sin. For I would not have known [for example] about coveting [what belongs to another, and would have had no sense of guilt] if the Law had not [repeatedly] said, “YOU SHALL NOT COVET.” [Ex 20:17; Deut 5:21]

POWERPOINT

Romans 7:6 gives us great encouragement to not make laws out of things, but rather to be led by the Holy Spirit. I think we often make laws because we are afraid to trust ourselves to be led by the Spirit; we would rather have a rule to follow. I urge you to refuse to live a legalistic life and to trust God to teach you how to allow Him to guide you in all things.



WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Rely on God's Grace

As we continue to learn from God's Word, we find in ourselves a desire to be obedient to what He asks us to do and to stop doing what He doesn't want us to do (see Rom. 7:25). However, we quickly discover that no matter how hard we try, we cannot do it simply by willpower. We fail and feel frustrated because of our inability to perform the good that we desire to do. God has given us a new set of desires, but sometimes it seems as though He has left us without the ability to perform them. Actually, He wants us to learn that *He* is our ability. He wants us to lean on Him for absolutely everything, including the ability to do what He asks us to do.

Before I learned about the "more grace" God offers us, there were times when I felt so frustrated trying to change myself that I did not know what to do. I tried everything I could possibly try, but nothing worked. If anything, I behaved worse instead of better. I was focusing on the things that were wrong with me, not realizing that my efforts were complicating the problem. I cried with the apostle Paul, "Wretched *and* miserable

man that I am! Who will [rescue me and] set me free from this body of death [this corrupt, mortal existence]?” (Rom. 7:24). My heart was right before God, and I wanted to do the right thing, but my soul was giving me trouble. After much struggle, I finally came to see what the apostle Paul saw when he wrote of his own deliverance, “Thanks be to God [for my deliverance] through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Rom. 7:25). When I saw that only Jesus could deliver me, and that I did not have to strive to deliver myself, I felt as though a ton of weight had been lifted from my shoulders.

Over time I began to notice a number of scriptures teaching that only grace can change my behavior. When we try to save ourselves, it is unacceptable to God and does not work; when we try to change ourselves, it is the same way. We do need to change, but we need to ask God to change us, then lean and rely on Him to do the work.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord God, I don't want to do the things I do, and I do the things I don't want to do. Please help me understand that I cannot change myself. Only Your grace can change me, and I believe that You love me completely while I am changing. In Jesus' name. Amen.

⁸But sin, finding an opportunity through the commandment [to express itself] produced in me every kind of coveting *and* selfish desire. For without the Law sin is dead [the recognition of sin is inactive].

⁹I was once alive without [knowledge of] the Law; but when the commandment came [and I understood its meaning], sin became alive and I died [since the Law sentenced me to death]. [Ps 73:22]

¹⁰And the *very* commandment which was intended to bring life, actually proved to bring death for me. [Lev 18:5]

¹¹For sin, seizing its opportunity through the commandment, beguiled *and* completely deceived me, and using it as a weapon killed me [separating me from God].

¹²So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

¹³Did that which is good [the Law], then become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, in order that it might be revealed as sin, was producing death in me by [using] this good thing [as a weapon], so that through the commandment sin would become exceedingly sinful.

¹⁴We know that the Law is spiritual, but I am *a creature* of the flesh [worldly, self-reliant—carnal and unspiritual], sold into slavery to sin [and serving under its control].

¹⁵For I do not understand my own actions [I am baffled and bewildered by them]. I do not practice what I want *to do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate [and yielding to my human nature, my worldliness—my sinful capacity].

¹⁶Now if I *habitually* do what I do not want to do, [that means] I agree with the Law, *confessing* that it is good (morally excellent).

¹⁷So now [if that is the case, then] it is no longer I who do it [the disobedient thing which I despise], but the sin [nature] which lives in me.

¹⁸For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh [my human nature, my worldliness—my sinful capacity]. For the willingness [to do good] is present in me, but the doing of good is not.

¹⁹For the good that I want to do, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.

²⁰But if I am doing the very thing I do not want to do, I am no longer the one doing it [that is, it is not me that acts], but the sin [nature] which lives in me.

²¹So I find *it to be* the law [of my inner self], that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.

²²For I joyfully delight in the law of God in my inner self [with my new nature], [Ps 1:2]

²³but I see a different law *and* rule of action in the members of my body [in its appetites and desires], waging war against the law of my mind *and* subduing me and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is within my members.

²⁴Wretched *and* miserable man that I am! Who will [rescue me and] set me free from this body of death [this corrupt, mortal existence]?

²⁵Thanks be to God [for my deliverance] through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind serve the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh [my

human nature, my worldliness, my sinful capacity—I serve] the law of sin.

8 THEREFORE THERE is now no condemnation [no guilty verdict, no punishment] for those who are in Christ Jesus [who believe in Him as personal Lord and Savior]. [John 3:18]

²For the law of the Spirit of life [which is] in Christ Jesus [the law of our new being] has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

³For what the Law could not do [that is, overcome sin and remove its penalty, its power] being weakened by the flesh [man's nature without the Holy Spirit], God did: He sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful man as an offering for sin. And He condemned sin in the flesh [subdued it and overcame it in the person of His own Son], [Lev 7:37]

Speak God's Word

*There is now no
condemnation or punishment
for those who are in Christ
Jesus, who believe in Him as
personal Lord and Savior.
The law of the Spirit of life
which is in Christ Jesus, the
law of my new being, has set
me free from the law of sin
and of death.*

| *adapted from* ROMANS 8:1–2 |

KEYS to a Victorious Life

No Condemnation

The devil tries to stop us every chance he gets, and sometimes he uses the tactic of condemnation. When I teach about this, I often use the analogy of a baby learning to walk. We don't expect a baby to walk the first time he tries. He will fall often and sometimes cry, but he will get back up because his parents are there saying, "You can do it! Come on, try again." They do not condemn him because he failed.

The scene is much the same in the spiritual world. We all fall, but our Father in heaven encourages us to get back up and try again.

Never underestimate Satan's relentlessness. He will do whatever he can to trip you and then to make you feel so condemned that you won't want to get up again. He knows that his control is finished once you choose right thoughts and reject wrong ones. He wants to hinder you from clear thinking. He will attempt to thwart your progress with God through discouragement and condemnation.

We are free in Jesus Christ, and we don't have to listen to Satan's condemnation (see Rom. 8:1). When we fail—and we will—that doesn't mean we are failures. It only means we failed one time in one thing and that although we didn't do everything right, we can try again.

⁴so that the [righteous and just] requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us who do not live our lives in the ways of the flesh [guided by worldliness and our sinful nature], but [live our lives] in the ways of the Spirit [guided by His power].

⁵For those who are *living* according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh [which gratify the body], but those who are *living* according to the Spirit, [set their minds on] the things of the Spirit [His will and purpose].

⁶Now the mind of the flesh is death [both now and forever—because it pursues sin]; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace [the spiritual well-being that comes from walking with God—both now and forever];

⁷the mind of the flesh [with its sinful pursuits] is actively hostile to God. It does not submit itself to God's law, since it cannot,

⁸and those who are in the flesh [living a life that caters to sinful appetites and impulses] cannot please God.

⁹However, you are not [living] in the flesh [controlled by the sinful nature] but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God lives in you [directing and guiding you]. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him [and is not a child of God]. [Rom 8:14]

¹⁰If Christ lives in you, though your [natural] body is dead because of sin, your spirit is alive because of righteousness [which He provides].

¹¹And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you.

¹²So then, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation, but not to our flesh [our human nature, our worldliness, our sinful capacity], to live according to the [impulses of the] flesh [our nature without the Holy Spirit]—

¹³for if you are living according to the [impulses of the] flesh, you are going to die. But if [you are living] by the [power of the Holy] Spirit you are *habitually* putting to death the *sinful* deeds of the body, you will [really] live *forever*.

¹⁴For all who are *allowing themselves* to be led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

¹⁵For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading again to fear [of God's judgment], but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons [the Spirit producing sonship] by which we [joyfully] cry, "Abba! Father!"

¹⁶The Spirit Himself testifies *and* confirms together with our spirit [assuring us] that we [believers] are children of God.

¹⁷And if [we are His] children, [then we are His] heirs also: heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ [sharing His spiritual blessing and inheritance], if indeed we share in His suffering so that we may also share in His glory. [John 17:24; Gal 3:29; 4:7; Eph 1:3, 11; 3:6; Heb 6:12]

¹⁸For I consider [from the standpoint of faith] that the sufferings of the present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is about to be revealed to us *and* in us!

¹⁹For [even the whole] creation [all nature] waits eagerly for the children of God to be revealed.

²⁰For the creation was subjected to frustration *and* futility, not willingly [because of some intentional fault on its part], but by the will of Him who subjected it, in hope [Eccl 1:2]

²¹that the creation itself will also be freed from its bondage to decay [and gain entrance] into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

²²For we know that the whole creation has been moaning together as in the pains of childbirth until now. [Jer 12:4, 11]

²³And not only this, but we too, who have the first fruits of the Spirit [a joyful indication of the blessings to come], even we groan inwardly, as we wait eagerly for [the sign of] our adoption as sons—the redemption *and* transformation of our body [at the resurrection]. [2 Cor 5:2, 4; Eph 4:30]

²⁴For in this hope we were saved [by faith]. But hope [the object of] which is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he already sees?

²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait eagerly for it with patience *and* composure.

²⁶In the same way the Spirit [comes to us and] helps us in our weakness. We do not know what prayer to offer *or* how to offer it as we should, but the Spirit Himself [knows our need and at the right time] intercedes on our behalf with sighs *and* groanings too deep for words.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Set Your Mind on the Spirit

When people walk in the flesh, it's because they set their mind on fleshly things. If they live according to the Spirit, it's because they set their mind on the things of the Spirit (see Rom. 8:5).

Imagine a truck filled with concrete. The concrete will eventually take the shape of whatever mold it's poured into—a driveway, a patio, a retaining wall, a road, or a foundation. Concrete cannot take any form unless a mold is first created for it.

Your thoughts are like the mold. They create a shape for God to pour His power into, to do something with your life. If you want a powerful life, choose to keep your mind on things that agree with God's will so He can help you move toward your goals.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

All Things Work Together for Good

In the midst of our difficulties and hardships, the apostle Paul says, “And we know [with great confidence] that God [who is deeply concerned about us] causes all things to work together [as a plan] for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to His plan *and* purpose” (Rom. 8:28). His words bring comfort and peace that no matter what hurts and disappointments come into our lives, everything will eventually work out for our good.

The two verses preceding Romans 8:28 focus on prayer and say that when we don’t know how to pray as we ought, the Holy Spirit prays through us. It is through these Holy Spirit-filled prayers that all things work together for good. Not all things that happen to us are good in and of themselves, but God is good, and He can cause them to work toward our good if we trust Him.

God makes this promise to those who love Him and are

called according to His purpose. We need to set our mind to submit to His plan at all times. Continuing to trust Him is the key to victory in painful and seemingly unjust situations. Faith and prayer move the hand of God. If we continue believing, He promises to continue moving on our behalf to work everything out for good.

God's purpose in everything that happens to us is to make us more like Jesus Christ. We are to be molded into His image. That may sound spiritual, but in reality, it usually hurts. We sometimes go through things that are difficult, and when we do, we can learn to respond to them the same way Jesus would. We should not give way to fearful thoughts and feelings that attack us, but learn to remain steadfast, knowing that no matter how things appear, God will work them out for our good and use them to make us better people.

We learn from God's Word and life's experiences and through what we suffer. Consider Jesus: "Although He was a Son [who had never been disobedient to the Father], He learned [active, special] obedience through what He suffered" (Heb. 5:8).

Satan cannot defeat us if we keep on believing that God is working for our good, and that we are being continually transformed into His image.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

All-wise and loving God, make me more like Jesus. I don't like to suffer or to fail, but through Jesus Christ, I ask You to enable me to understand that because of You, everything truly works together for my good. Amen.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

More Than a Conqueror

As Christians, we often hear people quote Romans 8:37: “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors and gain an overwhelming victory through Him who loved us.” For years, I pondered what being “more than conquerors” actually means.

I’m sure other people have different interpretations, but I have come to the conclusion that “more than conquerors” means you have such confidence in Christ that no matter what comes up in your life, you know that through Him you can handle it; it means that you choose to believe that with God’s help you can overcome anything that stands in your way. You know before you are ever faced with a problem that you’re going to have victory over it. You believe you can do whatever you need to do in life. Therefore, you don’t dread things, you don’t fear the unknown, and you don’t live in anxiety about what’s going to happen. The specifics of each situation don’t really matter: you know you will be victorious through Christ.

It is amazingly freeing and good to trust that you can overcome problems before you even encounter them. Are you dreading things that have not even taken place yet? You don’t have to, because you can adopt the attitude of a victor. You can replace that dread with a confident attitude that says, “No matter what comes my way in life, I can face it and overcome it with God’s help.” Will you decide today to think

²⁷And He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because the Spirit intercedes [before God] on behalf of God's people in accordance with God's will. [Ps 139:1, 2]

²⁸And we know [with great confidence] that God [who is deeply concerned about us] causes all things to work together [as a plan] for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to His plan *and* purpose.

²⁹For those whom He foreknew [and loved and chose beforehand], He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son [and ultimately share in His complete sanctification], so that He would be the firstborn [the most beloved and honored] among many believers.

³⁰And those whom He predestined, He also called; and those whom He called, He also justified [declared free of the guilt of sin]; and those whom He justified, He also glorified [raising them to a heavenly dignity].

³¹What then shall we say to all these things? If God is for us, who can be [successful] against us? [Ps 118:6]

³²He who did not spare [even] His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?

Speak God's Word

*If God is for me, who can be
successful against me?*

| *adapted from* ROMANS 8:31 |

Speak God's Word

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present and threatening, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate me from the unlimited love of God, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord.

| *adapted from* ROMANS 8:38–39

|

³³Who will bring any charge against God's elect (His chosen ones)? It is God who justifies us [declaring us blameless and putting us in a right relationship with Himself].

³⁴Who is the one who condemns us? Christ Jesus is the One who died [to pay our penalty], and more *than that*, who was raised [from the dead], and who is at the right hand of God interceding [with the Father] for us.

³⁵Who shall ever separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness,

or danger, or sword?

³⁶Just as it is written *and* forever remains written,

“FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG;
WE ARE REGARDED AS SHEEP FOR THE SLAUGHTER.” [Ps 44:22]

³⁷Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors *and* gain an overwhelming victory through Him who loved us [so much that He died for us].

³⁸For I am convinced [and continue to be convinced—beyond any doubt] that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present *and* threatening, nor things to come, nor powers,

³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the [unlimited] love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

9 I AM telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me [enlightened and prompted] by the Holy Spirit,

²that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

³For [if it were possible] I would wish that I myself were accursed, [separated, banished] from Christ for the sake [of the salvation] of my brothers, my natural kinsmen, [Ex 32:32]

⁴who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, the glory (Shekinah), the [special] covenants [with Abraham, Moses, and David], the giving of the Law, the [system of temple] worship, and the [original] promises. [Ex 4:22; Hos 11:1]

⁵To them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to His natural descent, *came* the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed), He who is exalted *and* supreme over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

⁶However, it is not as though God's word has failed [coming to nothing]. For not all who are descended from Israel (Jacob) are [the true] Israel;

⁷and they are not all the children of Abraham because they are his descendants [by blood], but [the promise was]: "YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED THROUGH ISAAC" [though Abraham had other sons]. [Gen 21:9–12]

⁸That is, it is not the children of the body [Abraham's natural descendants] who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are counted as [Abraham's true] descendants.

⁹For this is what the promise said: "ABOUT THIS TIME [next year] I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON." [Gen 18:10]

¹⁰And not only that, but this too: Rebekah conceived *twin sons* by one man [under the same circumstances], by our father Isaac;

¹¹and though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything *either* good or bad, so that God's purpose [His choice, His election] would stand, not because of works [done by either child], but because of [the plan of] Him who calls them,

¹²it was said to her, "THE OLDER (Esau) WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER (Jacob)." [Gen 25:21–23]

¹³As it is written *and* forever remains written, "JACOB I

LOVED (chose, protected, blessed), BUT ESAU I HATED (held in disregard compared to Jacob).” [Mal 1:2, 3]

¹⁴What shall we say then? Is there injustice with God? Certainly not!

¹⁵For He says to Moses, “I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOMEVER I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOMEVER I HAVE COMPASSION.” [Ex 33:19]

¹⁶So then God’s choice is not dependent on human will, nor on human effort [the totality of human striving], but on God who shows mercy [to whomever He chooses—it is His sovereign gift].

¹⁷For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “I RAISED YOU UP FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE, TO DISPLAY MY POWER IN [dealing with] YOU, AND SO THAT MY NAME WOULD BE PROCLAIMED IN ALL THE EARTH.” [Ex 9:16]

¹⁸So then, He has mercy on whom He wills (chooses), and He hardens [the heart of] whom He wills.

¹⁹You will say to me then, “Why does He still blame me [for sinning]? For who [including myself] has [ever] resisted His will *and* purpose?”

²⁰On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers [arrogantly] back to God *and* dares to defy Him? Will the thing which is formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?” [Is 29:16; 45:9]

²¹Does the potter not have the right over the clay, to make from the same lump [of clay] one object for honorable use [something beautiful or distinctive] and another for common use [something ordinary or menial]?

²²What if God, although willing to show His [terrible] wrath and to make His power known, has tolerated with great patience the objects of His wrath [which are] prepared for destruction? [Prov 16:4]

²³And what if He has done so to make known the riches of His glory to the objects of His mercy, which He has prepared beforehand for glory,

²⁴*including* us, whom He also called, not only from among the Jews, but also from among the Gentiles?

²⁵Just as He says in [the writings of the prophet] Hosea:

“I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, ‘MY PEOPLE,’

AND [I will call] HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, ‘BELOVED.’”
[Hos 2:23]

²⁶“AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, ‘YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,’

THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD.”
[Hos 1:10]

²⁷And Isaiah calls out concerning Israel: “THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS ONLY THE REMNANT [a small believing minority] THAT WILL BE SAVED [from God’s judgment];

²⁸FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD UPON THE EARTH [He will conclude His dealings with mankind] COMPLETELY AND WITHOUT DELAY.” [Is 10:22, 23]

²⁹It is as Isaiah foretold,

“IF THE LORD OF HOSTS HAD NOT LEFT US SEED [future

generations from which a believing remnant of Israelites came],

WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE RESEMBLED GOMORRAH [totally rejected and destroyed]!” [Is 1:9]

³⁰What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness [who did not seek salvation and a right relationship with God, nevertheless] obtained righteousness, that is, the righteousness which is produced by faith;

³¹whereas Israel, [though always] pursuing the law of righteousness, did not succeed in fulfilling the law. [Is 51:1]

³²And why not? Because it was not by faith [that they pursued it], but as though it were by works [relying on the merit of their works instead of their faith]. They stumbled over the stumbling Stone [Jesus Christ]. [Is 8:14; 28:16]

³³As it is written *and* forever remains written,

“BEHOLD I AM LAYING IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE;

AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM [whoever adheres to, trusts in, and relies on Him] WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED [in his expectations].” [Is 28:16]

10 BROTHERS AND sisters, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for Israel is for their salvation.

²For I testify about them that they have a certain enthusiasm for God, but not in accordance with [correct and vital] knowledge [about Him and His purposes].

³For not knowing about God's righteousness [which is based on faith], and seeking to establish their own [righteousness based on works], they did not submit to God's righteousness.

⁴For Christ is the end of the law [it leads to Him and its purpose is fulfilled in Him], for [granting] righteousness to everyone who believes [in Him as Savior].

⁵For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law [with all its intricate demands] shall live by it. [Lev 18:5]

⁶But the righteousness based on faith [which produces a right relationship with Him] says the following: "DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, 'WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?' that is, to bring Christ down;

⁷or, 'WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?' that is, to bring Christ up from the dead [as if we had to be saved by our own efforts, doing the impossible]." [Deut 30:12, 13]

⁸But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART"—that is, the word [the message, the basis] of faith which we preach—[Deut 30:14]

⁹because if you acknowledge *and* confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord [recognizing His power, authority, and majesty as God], and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

¹⁰For with the heart a person believes [in Christ as Savior] resulting in his justification [that is, being made righteous—being freed of the guilt of sin and made acceptable to God]; and with the mouth he acknowledges *and* confesses [his faith openly], resulting in *and* confirming [his] salvation.

¹¹For the Scripture says, “WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM [whoever adheres to, trusts in, and relies on Him] WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED [in his expectations].” [Is 28:16]

¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile; for the same *Lord* is Lord over all [of us], and [He is] abounding in riches (blessings) for all who call on Him [in faith and prayer].

¹³For “WHOEVER CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD [in prayer] WILL BE SAVED.” [Joel 2:32]

¹⁴But how will people call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how will they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher (messenger)?

¹⁵And how will they preach unless they are commissioned *and* sent [for that purpose]? Just as it is written *and* forever remains written, “HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!” [Is 52:7]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Believe and Speak

The book of Romans teaches the powerful truth that to be saved, we believe in our hearts and confess with our mouths. “If you acknowledge and confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord... and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart a person believes [in Christ as Savior] resulting in his justification [that is, being made righteous...]; and with the mouth he acknowledges and confesses [his faith openly], resulting in and confirming [his] salvation” (Rom. 10:9–10).

I say we should believe and speak, speak and believe—the two work together for our salvation, as well as in every other area of our lives. If we need to believe and speak in order to receive the salvation that Jesus has provided, we should live according to the same principle in order to receive all God’s promises.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Learn To Press Past Feelings

We have feelings, and sometimes they are strong, but we're wrong if we think we have to be led by our feelings. We don't have to allow our feelings to determine our decisions and ultimately our destiny. With that type of mind-set, we believe that if we *feel* discouraged, we *are* discouraged; if we *feel* victorious, we *are* victorious; if we *feel* depressed, we *must be* depressed.

Someone once said, "My feelings are emotions; they are not reality." In other words, just because we feel a certain way doesn't make that feeling a fact. I know many people who don't feel loved by God—that's how they feel, but it isn't the truth. The devil gains a stronghold in this area if he can convince people that their feelings are reality.

Years ago, while I was still new in the ministry, after I spoke in a church, many people told me how my message had encouraged them, and I was thrilled. Then one man said, "I didn't agree with anything you said. You need to get your theology straight." Discouragement immediately overwhelmed

me, and I felt that I had failed.

Afterward, I thought about what had happened. Fifty people told me how my words blessed them, but I allowed one negative message to convince me I had failed. But I hadn't failed. I had allowed the wrong voice to control my feelings.

I reminded myself that what I experienced had given me a negative feeling, but it had not represented truth. I thought of Romans 10:9–10. Paul says that we need to *believe in our hearts and confess with our lips*. We often quote these two verses when we speak to people about their salvation; however, the principle is there no matter what the subject. I stopped and said aloud, “God, I believe I did my best for You. I believe You used my words to bless many people. I do not have to listen to that one negative voice.”

Within minutes, I felt better. (See how quickly our feelings can change?) Reality hadn't changed, but I had. I refused to allow negative, wrong thinking to turn me from reality.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Loving God, forgive me for thinking wrong thoughts and for allowing wrong feelings to determine my attitude. I ask You, in the name of Jesus, to help me believe Your Word and to entertain positive thoughts. Amen.

¹⁶But they did not all pay attention to the good news [of salvation]; for Isaiah says, “LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?” [Is 53:1]

¹⁷So faith *comes* from hearing [what is told], and what is heard *comes* by the [preaching of the] message concerning Christ.

¹⁸But I say, did they not hear? Indeed they have;

“THEIR VOICE [that of creation bearing God’s message] HAS
GONE OUT TO ALL THE EARTH,
AND THEIR WORDS TO THE [farthest] ENDS OF THE WORLD.”
[Ps 19:4, 7–11]

¹⁹But I say, did Israel fail to understand [that the gospel was to go also to the Gentiles]? First Moses says,

“I WILL MAKE YOU JEALOUS OF THOSE WHO ARE NOT A NATION
(Gentiles);
WITH A NATION THAT LACKS UNDERSTANDING I WILL MAKE
YOU ANGRY.” [Deut 32:21]

²⁰Then Isaiah is very bold and says,

“I HAVE BEEN FOUND BY THOSE WHO DID NOT SEEK ME;
I HAVE SHOWN MYSELF TO THOSE WHO DID NOT [consciously]
ASK FOR ME.” [Is 65:1]

²¹But of Israel he says, “ALL DAY LONG I HAVE STRETCHED OUT
MY HANDS [in compassion] TO A DISOBEDIENT AND OBSTINATE
PEOPLE.” [Is 65:2]

11 I SAY then, has God rejected *and* disowned His people? Certainly not! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. [1 Sam 12:22; Jer 31:37; 33:24-26; Phil 3:5]

²God has not rejected His [chosen] people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? [Ps 94:14; 1 Kin 19]

³“Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT [of the prophets], AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE.”

⁴But what is God’s response to him? “I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL.” [1 Kin 19:18]

⁵So too then, at the present time there has come to be a remnant [a small believing minority] according to *God’s* gracious choice.

⁶But if it is by grace [God’s unmerited favor], it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace [it would not be a gift but a reward for works].

⁷What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking [that is, God’s favor by obedience to the Law], but the elect [those chosen few] obtained it, while the rest of them became hardened *and* callously indifferent;

⁸just as it is written [in Scripture],

“GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR,
EYES THAT DO NOT SEE AND EARS THAT DO NOT HEAR,

[a spiritual apathy that has continued] TO THIS VERY DAY.”
[Deut 29:4; Is 29:10]

⁹And David says,

“LET THEIR TABLE (abundance) BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP,
A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM. [Ps 69:22]

¹⁰“LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED SO THAT THEY DO NOT SEE,
AND MAKE THEIR BACKS BEND [under their burden]
FOREVER.” [Ps 69:23]

¹¹So I say, have they stumbled so as to fall [to spiritual ruin]? Certainly not! But by their transgression [their rejection of the Messiah] salvation *has come* to the Gentiles, to make Israel jealous [when they realize what they have forfeited].

¹²Now if Israel's transgression means riches for the world [at large] and their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment *and* reinstatement be!

¹³But *now* I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry,

¹⁴in the hope of somehow making my fellow countrymen jealous [by stirring them up so that they will seek the truth] and *perhaps* save some of them.

¹⁵For if their [present] rejection [of salvation] is for the reconciliation of the world [to God], what will their acceptance [of salvation] be but [nothing less than] life from the dead?

¹⁶If the first portion [of dough offered as the first fruits] is holy, so is the *whole* batch; and if the root (Abraham, the patriarchs) is holy, so are the branches (the Israelites). [Num

15:19–21]

¹⁷But if some of the branches were broken off, and you [Gentiles], being like a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among them to share with them the rich root of the olive tree,

¹⁸do not boast over the [broken] branches *and* exalt yourself at their expense. If you do boast *and* feel superior, *remember that* it is not you who supports the root, but the root that *supports* you.

¹⁹You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.”

²⁰That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand by your faith [as believers understanding the truth of Christ’s deity]. Do not be conceited, but [rather stand in great awe of God and] fear [Him];

²¹for if God did not spare the natural branches [because of unbelief], He will not spare you either.

²²Then appreciate the gracious kindness and the severity of God: to those who fell [into spiritual ruin], severity, but to you, God’s *gracious* kindness—if you continue in His kindness [by faith and obedience to Him]; otherwise you too will be cut off.

²³And even they [the unbelieving Jews], if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for God has the power to graft them in again.

²⁴For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and against nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much easier will it be to graft these who are the natural *branches* back into [the original parent stock of] their own olive tree?

²⁵I do not want you, believers, to be unaware of this mystery [God's previously hidden plan]—so that you will not be wise in your own opinion—that a partial hardening has [temporarily] happened to Israel [to last] until the full number of the Gentiles has come in;

²⁶and so [at that time] all Israel [that is, all Jews who have a personal faith in Jesus as Messiah] will be saved; just as it is written [in Scripture],

“THE DELIVERER (Messiah) WILL COME FROM ZION,
HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.” [Is 59:20, 21]

²⁷“THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM,
WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.” [Is 27:9; Jer 31:33]

²⁸From the standpoint of the gospel, the Jews [at present] are enemies [of God] for your sake [which is for your benefit], but from the standpoint of God's choice [of the Jews as His people], they are still loved by Him for the sake of the fathers.

²⁹For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable [for He does not withdraw what He has given, nor does He change His mind about those to whom He gives His grace or to whom He sends His call].

³⁰Just as you once were disobedient *and* failed to listen to God, but have now obtained mercy because of their disobedience,

³¹so they too have now become disobedient so that they too may one day receive mercy because of the mercy shown to you.

³²For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all [Jew and Gentile alike].

POWERPOINT

At first glance, Romans 11:32 seems rather unfair. No matter how hard we try, we will always have some flaws. Why? So God can display His amazing mercy in our lives. Experiencing the mercy of God draws us closer to Him. God makes sure that we will always need Him. He leaves weaknesses in even Christians who seem strongest to remind them that they still have need of Him. For as long as we live, we will need God's grace and mercy. Thankfully, He has made sure they will always be there for us.



³³Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments *and* decisions and how unfathomable *and* untraceable are His ways!

³⁴FOR WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO HAS BEEN HIS COUNSELOR? [Is 40:13, 14]

³⁵OR WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT WOULD BE PAID BACK TO HIM?

³⁶FOR FROM HIM [all things originate] and through Him [all things live and exist] and to Him are all things [directed]. To Him be glory *and* honor forever! Amen.

12 THEREFORE I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies [dedicating all of yourselves, set apart] as a living sacrifice, holy and well-pleasing to God, *which is* your rational (logical, intelligent) act of worship.

²And do not be conformed to this world [any longer with its superficial values and customs], but be transformed *and* progressively changed [as you mature spiritually] by the renewing of your mind [focusing on godly values and ethical attitudes], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His plan and purpose for you].

POWERPOINT

Another way to communicate the idea of “a living sacrifice” (Rom. 12:1) is to say we are to *consecrate* ourselves to God.

Consecration to God is the most important aspect of succeeding at being ourselves, and it is an “act of worship.”

We don’t even know what we are supposed to be, let alone know how to become whatever it is we are to be. But as we regularly keep our lives on the altar in consecration to God as a living sacrifice, He will do what needs to be done *in* us so that He may do the work He desires to do *through* us.



Speak God's Word

I will not be conformed to this world any longer; but I will be transformed and progressively changed as I mature spiritually by the renewing of my mind, focusing on godly values and ethical attitudes. In this way, I may prove what the will of God is—that which is good and acceptable and perfect in His plan and purpose for me.

| *adapted from* ROMANS 12:2 |

³For by the grace [of God] given to me I say to everyone of you not to think more highly of himself [and of his importance and ability] than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has apportioned to each a degree of faith [and a purpose designed for service].

⁴For just as in one [physical] body we have many parts, and these parts do not all have the same function *or* special use,

⁵so we, who are many, are [nevertheless just] one body in Christ, and individually [we are] parts one of another [mutually dependent on each other].

⁶Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to use them accordingly*: if [someone has the gift of] prophecy, [let him speak a new message from God to His people] in proportion to the faith *possessed*;

⁷if service, in the act of serving; or he who teaches, in the act of teaching;

⁸or he who encourages, in the act of encouragement; he who gives, with generosity; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy [in caring for others], with cheerfulness.

⁹Love is to be sincere *and* active [the real thing—without guile and hypocrisy]. Hate what is evil [detest all ungodliness, do not tolerate wickedness]; hold on tightly to what is good.

¹⁰Be devoted to one another with [authentic] brotherly affection [as members of one family], give preference to one another in honor;

¹¹never lagging behind in diligence; aglow in the Spirit, *enthusiastically* serving the Lord;

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Be Transformed, Not Conformed

Romans 12:2 is invaluable in our battle for the mind: “And do not be conformed to this world [any longer with its superficial values and customs], but be transformed *and* progressively changed [as you mature spiritually] by the renewing of your mind [focusing on godly values and ethical attitudes], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His plan and purpose for you].”

The Greek word translated *conform* carries the idea of the constant changes we make according to the fashion of the times. The word Paul used for being *transformed* refers to our souls being changed. When we are born again, our spirit becomes new, but our souls need to be transformed (changed entirely).

As Christians, we are to present ourselves to God as a living sacrifice (see Rom. 12:1). These words refer to *living as* believers. This scripture challenges us to present everything about us to God for His use—our minds, mouths, wills,

emotions, eyes, ears, hands, feet, et cetera.

For many years after I accepted Jesus as my Savior, I wasn't doing that at all. I went to church on Sunday, and I believed in Jesus as my Savior, but I had not presented all of myself to Him for His use. Thankfully, I saw the error of my ways, and over time He taught me the importance of being fully committed to Him. At times we may feel that we are sacrificing, but eventually we understand that Jesus actually replaces what we sacrifice in order to be fully committed to Him with greater and more enjoyable things.

If we want to follow God's will, our minds need to be transformed. We need disciplined minds to think in agreement with God's Word, not the devil's lies. If our minds are transformed by the Holy Spirit, we will act differently. I know I act differently, and by God's grace I will continue to change.

Does your life need to be transformed? Start by being willing to think right thoughts, and you'll see changes in yourself—and others will see them too.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Father, please help me live a life that's transformed by the renewing of my mind. Help me to live a life that shows Your will, not only to me but also to the world. I ask this through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Focus on Your Potential

If you want to succeed at being yourself, building confidence, and overcoming insecurity, focus on your potential instead of your limitations. In other words, focus on your strengths instead of your weaknesses.

Although we cannot do all the things we would like to do, or even the things other people would like us to do, we can do everything God has called us to do. And we can be anything God says we can be.

Each of us is full of gifts and talents, potential and abilities. If we cooperate with God, we can enjoy the very best that God has for us. But if we set goals that are beyond our abilities and the gifts of grace in our life, we will become frustrated, and may even feel like a failure.

Gifts and talents are distributed by the Holy Spirit according to the grace that is on each person to handle them (see Rom. 12:6). If we don't go beyond what God has enabled and called us to do, we will have peace and joy and be successful in life.

¹²*constantly rejoicing in hope [because of our confidence in Christ], steadfast and patient in distress, devoted to prayer [continually seeking wisdom, guidance, and strength],*

POWERPOINT

Romans 12:16 convicted me until I finally reached a place of spiritual maturity where I was willing to do what it says. Are you willing to humble yourself and adjust to people and situations in order to live in harmony with others? Or can you be peaceful and pleasant only when you get your own way? These are straightforward questions, but I believe they are ones the Holy Spirit wants us to ask ourselves and answer honestly.



¹³contributing to the needs of God's people, pursuing [the practice of] hospitality.

¹⁴Bless those who persecute you [who cause you harm or hardship]; bless and do not curse [them]. [Matt 5:44; Luke 6:28]

¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice [sharing others' joy], and

weep with those who weep [sharing others' grief].

¹⁶Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty [conceited, self-important, exclusive], but associate with humble people [those with a realistic self-view]. Do not overestimate yourself. [Prov 3:7]

¹⁷Never repay anyone evil for evil. Take thought for what is right *and* gracious *and* proper in the sight of everyone. [Prov 20:22]

¹⁸If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave the way open for God's wrath [and His judicial righteousness]; for it is written [in Scripture], "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. [Deut 32:35]

²⁰"BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM; IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR BY DOING THIS YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD." [Prov 25:21, 22]

²¹Do not be overcome *and* conquered by evil, but overcome evil with good.

13 LET EVERY person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God [granted by His permission and sanction], and those which exist have been put in place by God. [Prov 8:15]

²Therefore whoever resists [governmental] authority resists the ordinance of God. And those who have resisted it will bring judgment (civil penalty) on themselves.

³For [civil] authorities are not a source of fear for [people

of] good behavior, but for [those who do] evil. Do you want to be unafraid of authority? Do what is good and you will receive approval *and* commendation.

⁴For he is God's servant to you for good. But if you do wrong, [you should] be afraid; for he does not carry the [executioner's] sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an avenger who brings punishment on the wrongdoer.

⁵Therefore one must be subject [to civil authorities], not only to escape the punishment [that comes with wrongdoing], but also as a matter of principle [knowing what is right before God].

⁶For this same reason you pay taxes, for *civil authorities* are God's servants, devoting themselves to governance.

⁷Pay to all what is due: tax to whom tax *is due*, customs to whom customs, respect to whom respect, honor to whom honor.

⁸Owe nothing to anyone except to love *and* seek the best for one another; for he who [unselfishly] loves his neighbor has fulfilled the [essence of the] law [relating to one's fellowman]. [Matt 22:36–40]

⁹The commandments, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and any other commandment are summed up in this statement: "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." [Ex 20:13–17; Lev 19:18]

¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor [it never hurts anyone]. Therefore [unselfish] love is the fulfillment of the Law.

¹¹Do this, knowing that this is a critical time. It is already the hour for you to awaken from your sleep [of spiritual

complacency]; for our salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed [in Christ].

¹²The night [this present evil age] is almost gone and the day [of Christ's return] is almost here. So let us fling away the works of darkness and put on the [full] armor of light.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Real Love

Some people think of love as a sensation—a wonderful feeling of excitement or gushy emotions that make us feel warm and cozy all over. While love can include wonderful feelings and powerful emotions, it's so much more than that.

Real love is a decision to unselfishly “seek the best for one another” (Rom. 13:8). Real love meets needs even when sacrifice is required in order to do so. The Bible makes this point in 1 John 3:18: “Let us not love [merely in theory] with word or with tongue [giving lip service to compassion], but in action and in truth [in practice and in sincerity, because practical acts of love are more than words].” Clearly, love moves us to take action—not just to theorize or talk. If we want to be like Jesus, we need to love others with the same kind of gracious, forgiving, generous, unconditional love He extends to us.

¹³Let us conduct ourselves properly *and* honorably as in the [light of] day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and irresponsibility, not in quarreling and jealousy.

¹⁴But clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for [nor even think about gratifying] the flesh in regard to its improper desires.

14 AS FOR the one whose faith is weak, accept him [into your fellowship], but not for [the purpose of] quarreling over his opinions.

²One man's faith permits him to eat everything, while the weak *believer* eats *only* vegetables [to avoid eating ritually unclean meat or something previously considered unclean].

³The one who eats [everything] is not to look down on the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat must not criticize *or* pass judgment on the one who eats [everything], for God has accepted him.

⁴Who are you to judge the servant of another? Before his own master he stands [approved] or falls [out of favor]. And he [who serves the Master—the Lord] will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

⁵One person regards one day as better [or more important] than another, while another regards every day [the same as any other]. Let everyone be fully convinced (assured, satisfied) in his own mind.

⁶He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord. He who eats, eats for the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; while he who abstains, abstains for the Lord and gives thanks to God.

⁷None of us lives for himself [for his own benefit, but for the Lord], and none of us dies for himself [but for the Lord].

⁸If we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord. So then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

⁹For Christ died and lived again for this reason, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

¹⁰But you, why do you criticize your brother? Or you again, why do you look down on your [believing] brother *or* regard him with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God [who alone is judge].

¹¹For it is written [in Scripture],

“AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME,
AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD.” [Is 45:23]

¹²So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

¹³Then let us not criticize one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block *or* a source of temptation in another believer’s way.

¹⁴I know and am convinced [as one] in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean [ritually defiled, and unholy] in itself; but [nonetheless] it is unclean to anyone who thinks it is unclean.

¹⁵If your brother is being hurt *or* offended because of food [that you insist on eating], you are no longer walking in love [toward him]. Do not let what you eat destroy *and* spiritually harm one for whom Christ died.

¹⁶Therefore do not let what is a good thing for you [because of your freedom to choose] be spoken of as evil [by someone else];

¹⁷for the kingdom of God is not *a matter of* eating and drinking [what one likes], but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸For the one who serves Christ in this way [recognizing that food choice is secondary] is acceptable to God and is approved by men.

¹⁹So then, let us pursue [with enthusiasm] the things which

make for peace and the building up of one another [things which lead to spiritual growth].

²⁰Do not, for the sake of food, tear down the work of God. All things indeed are [ceremonially] clean, but they are wrong for the person who eats and offends [another's conscience in the process].

²¹It is good [to do the right thing and] not eat meat or drink wine, or do anything that offends your brother *and* weakens him spiritually.

²²The faith which you have [that gives you freedom of choice], have as your own conviction before God [just keep it between yourself and God, seeking His will]. Happy is he who has no reason to condemn himself for what he approves.

²³But he who is uncertain [about eating a particular thing] is condemned if he eats, because he is not *acting* from faith. Whatever is not from faith is sin [whatever is done with doubt is sinful].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Focus on Jesus

The true meaning of God's Kingdom is not about getting things and having perfect circumstances. It is about seeking righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (see Rom. 14:17). Focus on Jesus and living the life He wants for you. Pursue and go after the things that are the most meaningful, and you will find that He will provide the other things you want and need.

If we seek first God's Kingdom and His way of being and doing, He has promised to provide all other things (see Matt. 6:33). If we delight ourselves in Him, He will give us the secret petitions and desires of our heart (see Ps. 37:4). I urge you to be sure you are seeking the right things or you won't truly be able to enjoy anything. Seek God's Kingdom! Seek to know who you are in Christ, to walk in peace, and to enjoy every moment of your life.

15 NOW WE who are strong [in our convictions and faith] ought to [patiently] put up with the weaknesses of those who are not strong, and not just please ourselves.

²Let each one of us [make it a practice to] please his neighbor for his good, to build him up spiritually.

³For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written

[in Scripture], “THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU (the Father) FELL ON ME (the Son).” [Ps 69:9]

⁴For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope *and* overflow with confidence in His promises.

⁵Now may the God who gives endurance and who supplies encouragement grant that you be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus,

⁶so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify *and* praise *and* honor the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁷Therefore, [continue to] accept *and* welcome one another, just as Christ has accepted *and* welcomed us to the glory of [our great] God.

⁸For I tell you that Christ has become a servant *and* a minister to the circumcision (Jews) on behalf of God’s truth, to confirm *and* verify the promises made to the fathers,

⁹and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy [to them, since God had no covenant with them]. As it is written *and* forever remains written,

“THEREFORE I PRAISE YOU AMONG THE GENTILES,
AND SING PRAISES TO YOUR NAME.” [Ps 18:49]

¹⁰Again it says,

“REJOICE *and* CELEBRATE, O GENTILES, ALONG WITH HIS
PEOPLE.” [Deut 32:43]

¹¹And again,

“PRAISE THE LORD ALL YOU GENTILES,
AND LET ALL THE PEOPLES PRAISE HIM!” [Ps 117:1]

¹²Again Isaiah says,

“THERE SHALL BE A ROOT OF JESSE,
HE WHO ARISES TO RULE [as King] OVER THE GENTILES,

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, God of hope, for
filling me with all joy and
peace in believing, through
the experience of my faith,
that by the power of the Holy
Spirit I may abound and
overflow with confidence in
Your promises.*

• adapted from Romans 15:13

IN HIM SHALL THE GENTILES HOPE.” [Is 11:1, 10; Rev 5:5;
22:16]

¹³May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing [through the experience of your faith] that by the power of the Holy Spirit you will abound in hope *and* overflow with confidence in His promises.

¹⁴Personally I am convinced about you, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, amply filled with all [spiritual] knowledge, and competent to admonish *and* counsel *and* instruct one another.

¹⁵Still, on some points I have written to you very boldly *and* without reservation to remind you [about them] again, because of the grace that was given to me from God,

¹⁶to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. I minister as a priest the gospel of God, in order that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable [to Him], sanctified [made holy and set apart for His purpose] by the Holy Spirit.

¹⁷In Christ Jesus, then, I have found [legitimate] reason for boasting in things related [to my service] to God.

¹⁸For I will not [even] presume to speak of anything except what Christ has done through me [as an instrument in His hands], resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles [to the gospel], by word and deed,

¹⁹with the power of signs and wonders, [and all of it] in the power of the Spirit. So [starting] from Jerusalem and as far *away* as Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel [faithfully preaching the good news] of Christ [where it had not before been preached].

²⁰Accordingly I set a goal to preach the gospel, not where Christ's name was already known, so that I would not build on another man's foundation;

²¹but [instead I would act on this goal] as it is written [in Scripture],

“THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE,
AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD [of Him] SHALL
UNDERSTAND.” [Is 52:15]

²²This [goal—my commitment to this principle] is the reason why I have often been prevented from coming to you [in Rome].

²³But now, with no further place for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you—

²⁴whenever I go [on my trip] to Spain—I hope to see you as I pass through [Rome], and to be helped on my journey there by you, after I have first enjoyed your company for a little while.

²⁵But for now, I am going to Jerusalem to serve the saints (Jewish believers).

²⁶For [Gentile believers in] Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints (Jewish believers) in Jerusalem.

²⁷They were pleased to do it, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual things, then they are indebted to serve them also in [tangible] material things.

²⁸Therefore, when I have finished this [mission] and have safely given to them what has been raised, I will go on by way of you to Spain.

²⁹I know that when I do come to you, I will come in the abundant blessing of Christ.

³⁰I urge you, believers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join together with me in your prayers to God in my behalf,

³¹[and pray] that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints (Jewish believers) *there*;

³²so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and find rest in your company.

³³May the God of peace be with you all! Amen.

16 NOW I introduce *and* commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess (servant) of the church at Cenchrea,

²that you may receive her in the Lord [with love and hospitality], as God's people ought to receive one another. And that you may help her in whatever matter she may require assistance from you, for she has been a helper of many, including myself.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Love Is a Decision

When Paul wrote to the church in Rome to receive Phoebe “in the Lord [with love and hospitality],” he specified that they were to “help her in whatever matter she may require assistance from you” (Rom. 16:2). Love is much more than a good feeling about someone. Love is displayed in how we treat people, not how we feel about them.

Love is a decision. When we are instructed to “put on and wrap yourselves in [unselfish] love” (Col. 3:14), it means we are to choose to love people. It is something we do on purpose, whether we feel like it or not. Part of walking in love is freely forgiving people. The Bible actually states that you cannot say you love God if you don’t love your brother and sister in Christ (see 1 John 4:20). If you want God’s will in your life, do things His way—love and forgive others.

³Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,
⁴who risked their own necks [endangering their very lives] for my life. To them not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

⁵Also *greet* the church that meets in their house. Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who is the first convert to Christ from [the west coast province of] Asia [Minor].

⁶Greet Mary, who has worked so hard for you.

⁷Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and [once] my fellow prisoners, who are held in high esteem in *the estimation of the apostles*, and who were [believers] in Christ before me.

⁸Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord.

⁹Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys.

¹⁰Greet Apelles, the one tested *and* approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the *household* of Aristobulus.

¹¹Greet my kinsman Herodion. Greet those of the *household* of Narcissus, who are in the Lord.

¹²Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet my beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord.

¹³Greet Rufus, an eminent *and* choice man in the Lord, also his mother [who has been] a mother to me as well.

¹⁴Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them.

¹⁵Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympus, and all God's people who are with them.

¹⁶Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

¹⁷I urge you, brothers and sisters, to keep your eyes on those who cause dissensions and create obstacles *or* introduce temptations [for others] to commit sin, [acting in ways] contrary to the doctrine which you have learned. Turn away from them.

¹⁸For such people do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites and base desires. By smooth and flattering

speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting [the innocent and the naive].

¹⁹For *the report of* your obedience has reached everyone, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil.

²⁰The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.
The [wonderful] grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

²¹Timothy, my fellow worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.

²²I, Tertius, the writer (scribe) of this letter, greet you in the Lord.

²³Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church here, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.

²⁴[The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.]

²⁵Now to Him who is able to establish *and* strengthen you [in the faith] according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery [of the plan of salvation] which has been kept secret for long ages past,

²⁶but now has been disclosed and through the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all the nations, according to the commandment of the eternal God, *leading them* to obedience to the faith,

²⁷to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forevermore! Amen.

1 Corinthians

Author: | Paul
Date: | About AD
55

First Corinthians is perhaps best known because of its thirteenth chapter, “The Love Chapter.” While understanding and applying that chapter to our lives is of the utmost importance, 1 Corinthians also addresses other significant issues for both spiritual life, such as being filled with the Holy Spirit and the exercise of spiritual gifts, and matters of practical, everyday living, such as how to take care of our physical bodies and how we should think about our finances.

First Corinthians can help us greatly as we endeavor to win the battle of the mind because it includes teaching and advice on our motives and behavior. When our thinking is right, it helps to purify our motives. Right motives lead to right behavior, and right behavior based on pure motives leads to a blessed life.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS:

We cannot comprehend with our natural minds all the good things God has prepared for us, but God has revealed them through the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 2:9–10).

Learn to think the way Christ thinks by meditating on God's ways, His Word, and His works (see 1 Corinthians 2:15–16).

Complaining opens the door to the destroyer, so be positive and speak words of thanksgiving on purpose (see 1 Corinthians 10:10–11).

Love always believes the best of every person (see 1 Corinthians 13:7).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM 1 CORINTHIANS:

For the message of the cross is foolishness [absurd and illogical] to those who are perishing and spiritually dead [because they reject it], but to us who are being saved [by God's grace] it is [the manifestation of] the power of God. | 1 Corinthians 1:18

We have the mind of Christ [to be guided by His thoughts and purposes]. | 1 Corinthians 2:16

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love [for others growing out of God's love for me], then I have become only a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal [just an annoying distraction] . | 1 Corinthians 13:1

Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory [as conquerors] through our Lord Jesus Christ. | 1 Corinthians 15:57

THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

1 PAUL, CALLED as an apostle (special messenger, personally chosen representative) of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes,

²To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified (set apart, made holy) in Christ Jesus, who are selected *and* called as saints (God's people), together with all those who in every place call on *and* honor the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their *Lord* and ours:

³Grace to you and peace [inner calm and spiritual well-being] from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴I thank my God always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus,

⁵so that in everything you were [exceedingly] enriched in Him, in all speech [empowered by the spiritual gifts] and in all knowledge [with insight into the faith].

⁶In this way our testimony about Christ was confirmed *and* established in you,

⁷so that you are not lacking in any *spiritual* gift [which comes from the Holy Spirit], as you eagerly wait [with confident trust] for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ

[when He returns].

⁸And He will also confirm you to the end [keeping you strong and free of any accusation, so that you will be] blameless *and* beyond reproach in the day [of the return] of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁹God is faithful [He is reliable, trustworthy and ever true to His promise—He can be depended on], and through Him you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

¹⁰But I urge you, believers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in full agreement in what you say, and that there be no divisions *or* factions among you, but that you be perfectly united in your way of thinking and in your judgment [about matters of the faith].

¹¹For I have been informed about you, my brothers and sisters, by those of Chloe's *household*, that there are quarrels *and* factions among you.

¹²Now I mean this, that each one of you says, "I am [a disciple] of Paul," or "I am [a disciple] of Apollos," or "I am [a disciple] of Cephas (Peter)," or "I am [a disciple] of Christ."

¹³Has Christ been divided [into different parts]? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul? [Certainly not!]

¹⁴I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, [Acts 18:8; Rom 16:23]

¹⁵so that no one would say that you were baptized into my name.

¹⁶Now I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know if I baptized anyone else.

¹⁷For Christ did not send me [as an apostle] to baptize, but

[commissioned and empowered me] to preach the good news [of salvation]—not with clever *and* eloquent speech [as an orator], so that the cross of Christ would not be made ineffective [deprived of its saving power].

¹⁸For the message of the cross is foolishness [absurd and illogical] to those who are perishing *and* spiritually dead [because they reject it], but to us who are being saved [by God's grace] it is [the manifestation of] the power of God.

¹⁹For it is written *and* forever remains written,

“I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE [the philosophy
of the philosophers],
AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER [who do not know Me]
I WILL NULLIFY.” [Is 29:14]

²⁰Where is the wise man (philosopher)? Where is the scribe (scholar)? Where is the debater (logician, orator) of this age? Has God not exposed the foolishness of this world's wisdom?

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Chose You

When you feel discouraged, remember that God has intentionally chosen you for His very own purpose, however unlikely a candidate you may feel you are. By doing so, He has placed before you a wide open door to show you His boundless grace, mercy, and power to change your life.

When God uses any one of us, though we may feel inadequate and unworthy at times, we can realize that our source is not in ourselves but in Him alone: “[This is] because the foolishness of God [is not foolishness at all and] is wiser than men [far beyond human comprehension], and the weakness of God is stronger than men [far beyond the limits of human effort]” (1 Cor. 1:25).

Each of us has a destiny, and there is no excuse not to fulfill it. We cannot use our weakness as an excuse, because God says that His strength is made perfect in weakness (see 2 Cor. 12:9). We cannot use the past as an excuse, because God has stated that if any person is in Christ, he is a new creature; old things have passed away, and all things have become new (see 2 Cor. 5:17).

Let me encourage you to take an inventory of how you feel about yourself. What is your image of yourself? Do you see yourself re-created in God's image, resurrected to a brand-new life that is just waiting for you to claim it? You can succeed at

being everything God intends for you to be.

²¹For since the world through all its [earthly] wisdom failed to recognize God, God in His wisdom was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached [regarding salvation] to save those who believe [in Christ and welcome Him as Savior].

²²For Jews demand signs (attesting miracles), and Greeks pursue [worldly] wisdom *and* philosophy,

²³but we preach Christ crucified, [a message which is] to Jews a stumbling block [that provokes their opposition], and to Gentiles foolishness [just utter nonsense],

²⁴but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks (Gentiles), Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. [Rom 8:28]

²⁵[This is] because the foolishness of God [is not foolishness at all and] is wiser than men [far beyond human comprehension], and the weakness of God is stronger than men [far beyond the limits of human effort].

²⁶Just look at your own calling, believers; not many [of you were considered] wise according to human standards, not many powerful *or* influential, not many of high *and* noble birth.

²⁷But God has selected [for His purpose] the foolish things of the world to shame the wise [revealing their ignorance], and God has selected [for His purpose] the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong [revealing their frailty].

²⁸God has selected [for His purpose] the insignificant (base) things of the world, and the things that are despised

and treated with contempt, [even] the things that are nothing, so that He might reduce to nothing the things that are,

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Jesus, You are wisdom from God for me. You are righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. You reveal God's plan of salvation, and You make me acceptable to God. You make me holy and set apart for God, and You provide my ransom for the penalty of sin.

• adapted from 1 Corinthians 1:30

²⁹so that no one may [be able to] boast in the presence of God.

³⁰But it is from Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God [revealing His plan of

salvation], and righteousness [making us acceptable to God], and sanctification [making us holy and setting us apart for God], and redemption [providing our ransom from the penalty for sin],

³¹so then, as it is written [in Scripture], “HE WHO BOASTS *and* GLORIES, LET HIM BOAST *and* GLORY IN THE LORD.” [Jer 9:24]

2 AND WHEN I came to you, brothers and sisters, proclaiming to you the testimony of God [concerning salvation through Christ], I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom [no lofty words of eloquence or of philosophy as a Greek orator might do];

²for I made the decision to know nothing [that is, to forego philosophical or theological discussions regarding inconsequential things and opinions while] among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified [and the meaning of His redemptive, substitutionary death and His resurrection].

³I came to you in [a state of] weakness and fear and great trembling.

⁴And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom [using clever rhetoric], but [they were delivered] in demonstration of the [Holy] Spirit [operating through me] and of [His] power [stirring the minds of the listeners and persuading them],

⁵so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom *and* rhetoric of men, but on the power of God.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

To Know Christ

When I read 1 Corinthians 2:2, I sense the passion in Paul's heart, and I feel sure that when he wrote these words he wrote them with strong emphasis. It was as though he was completely finished trying to understand everything, and he made a decisive choice to know nothing but Christ!

I believe that knowing Christ is the only way we can find peace with all the unanswered questions in life. Paul was a scholar, and discovering answers to questions had been part of his background for years. He was highly educated, but he learned to embrace childlike faith.

We know that God revealed Himself to Paul in a startling and undeniable way (see Acts 9:3–6), but as we all do, Paul eventually had to trust without sight or understanding. I don't mean we are to stop using our minds. God gave us the ability to think, and He expects us to use our minds, but we cannot find or know Him with our intellect. He is a mystery that exceeds the capacity of the human mind. We begin to grasp Who God is and what He means in our lives with the heart, by faith.

Speak God's Word

My eye has not seen and my ear has not heard, and it has not entered into my heart all that God has prepared for those who love Him, who hold Him in affectionate reverence, who obey Him, and who gratefully recognize the benefits that He has bestowed.

| adapted from 1 CORINTHIANS
2:9 |

⁶Yet we do speak wisdom among those *spiritually* mature [believers who have teachable hearts and a greater understanding]; but [it is a higher] wisdom not [the wisdom] of this *present* age nor of the rulers *and* leaders of this age, who are passing away;

⁷but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the *wisdom* once hidden [from man, but now revealed to us by God, that wisdom] which God predestined before the ages to our glory [to lift us into the glory of His presence].

⁸None of the rulers of this age recognized *and* understood

this *wisdom*; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;

⁹but just as it is written [in Scripture],

“THINGS WHICH THE EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND THE EAR HAS NOT HEARD,

AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN,

ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM
[who hold Him in affectionate reverence, who obey Him,
and who gratefully recognize the benefits that He has
bestowed].” [Is 64:4; 65:17]

¹⁰For God has unveiled them *and* revealed *them* to us through the [Holy] Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things [diligently], even [sounding and measuring] the [profound] depths of God [the divine counsels and things far beyond human understanding].

Speak God's Word

*I have the mind of Christ, to
be guided by His thoughts
and purposes.*

| adapted from 1 CORINTHIANS
2:16 |

¹¹For what person knows the thoughts and motives of a man except the man's spirit within him? So also no one knows the *thoughts* of God except the Spirit of God.

¹²Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the [Holy] Spirit who is from God, so that we may know *and* understand the [wonderful] things freely given to us by God.

¹³We also speak of these things, not in words taught *or* supplied by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining *and* interpreting spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words* [for those being guided by the Holy Spirit].

¹⁴But the natural [unbelieving] man does not accept the things [the teachings and revelations] of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness [absurd and illogical] to him; and he is incapable of understanding them, because they are spiritually discerned *and* appreciated, [and he is unqualified to judge spiritual matters].

¹⁵But the spiritual man [the spiritually mature Christian]

judges all things [questions, examines and applies what the Holy Spirit reveals], yet is himself judged by no one [the unbeliever cannot judge and understand the believer's spiritual nature].

¹⁶For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND *and* PURPOSES OF THE LORD, SO AS TO INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ [to be guided by His thoughts and purposes]. [Is 40:13]

3 HOWEVER, BROTHERS and sisters, I could not talk to you as to spiritual people, but [only] as to worldly people [dominated by human nature], *mere* infants [in the new life] in Christ!

²I fed you with milk, not solid food; for you were not yet able *to receive it*. Even now you are still not ready.

³You are still worldly [controlled by ordinary impulses, the sinful capacity]. For as long as there is jealousy and strife *and* discord among you, are you not unspiritual, and are you not walking like ordinary men [unchanged by faith]?

⁴For when one *of you* says, "I am [a disciple] of Paul," and another, "I am [a disciple] of Apollos," are you not [proving yourselves unchanged, just] *ordinary* people?

⁵What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Just servants through whom you believed [in Christ], even as the Lord appointed to each his task.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

The Mind of Christ

Have you noticed that the condition of our mind changes? One moment we may be calm and peaceful, and the next moment a phone call brings anxiety and fear. Then as quickly as someone else reassures us that all is well, our mind shifts back to calmness, even joyfulness.

Sometimes when something alarms me, I find that it is easy to hear God speak and to believe Him without any difficulty. Yet at other times, worry and anxiety push their way into my mind. Second Corinthians 5:7 says we are to walk by faith and not by sight; when we worry, we are not walking in faith.

For years, I had a critical, suspicious, and judgmental mind. I worried and was anxious, and my mind was filled with reasoning. I had become a Christian, yet the same thinking and mind-set that I had known for years remained normal to me—it was just the way I was. No one had taught me about the proper condition for the believer's mind.

God offers us a new way to think and a new way to live. He has called us to renew our minds (see Rom. 12:2), which is an

ongoing process. We don't learn to control our thinking all at one time.

What did Paul mean when he said "We have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16)? It means we begin to think the way Christ thinks. If we have His mind, we think on those things that are good and honorable and loving. I encourage you to begin your journey of renewing your mind, and keep at it daily. Let's strive to think with the mind of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 2:14, Paul wrote, "But the natural [unbelieving] man does not accept the things [the teachings and revelations] of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness [absurd and illogical] to him; and he is incapable of understanding them, because they are spiritually discerned *and* appreciated." We will never fully understand the things of God by exercising mental logic; we can only know Him as the Spirit of God reveals Him to our spirit. Our mind receives *information*, but our spirit can receive *revelation*!

Let's continually remind ourselves that we have Christ's mind—the ability to think loving and caring thoughts. We can defeat Satan's attacks.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Holy God, I want to live with the mind of Christ. I ask You to enable me to think positive, loving, caring thoughts about myself and about others. Help me to see and think on the good things in life and not the bad. In Jesus' name. Amen.

POWERPOINT

We know the Corinthian believers were physically able to think, hear, and speak, so what did Paul mean when he said, “I could not talk to you as to spiritual people” (1 Cor. 3:1)? He meant that they were carnal, not listening with their spiritual ears. Their conversation did not agree with God’s Word. If we want to walk with God, it’s necessary for us to agree with the way God thinks and the way He speaks.



⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God [all the while] was causing the growth.

⁷So neither is the one who plants nor the one who waters anything, but [only] God who causes the growth.

⁸He who plants and he who waters are one [in importance and esteem, working toward the same purpose]; but each will

receive his own reward according to his own labor.

⁹For we are God's fellow workers [His servants working together]; you are God's cultivated field [His garden, His vineyard], God's building. [Is 61:3]

¹⁰According to the [remarkable] grace of God which was given to me [to prepare me for my task], like a skillful master builder I laid a foundation, and now another is building on it. But each one must be careful how he builds on it,

¹¹for no one can lay a foundation other than the one which is [already] laid, which is Jesus Christ.

¹²But if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

¹³each one's work will be clearly shown [for what it is]; for the day [of judgment] will disclose it, because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality *and* character *and* worth of each person's work. [2 Cor 5:10]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Living Temples

Under the Old Covenant, the temple was the house of God, the place of prayer for His people, the children of Israel. No expense was spared to beautify the temple where the people came to worship the Lord their God. In 1 Kings 6, we have a description of Solomon's temple, which contained the ark of the covenant, God's pledge of His presence.

Under the New Covenant, the apostle Paul instructs us that God's presence is now a mystery revealed, which is Christ in us, "the hope and guarantee of [realizing the] glory" (Col. 1:27). Because of the union we now have in Christ, we are God's living temple (see 1 Cor. 3:16). We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit (collectively and individually), a building still under construction, but nonetheless His house, His tabernacle. This is why Paul goes to great length to tell us to live a holy life. We (the Church) are the temple of the living God.

While the children of Israel had to go to a specific place to offer their worship with detailed instructions, we now have the incredible privilege of worshiping God anywhere and at any time. Therefore, we can be called a house of prayer. We become the sanctuary of God because of the presence of the Holy One in us.

¹⁴If any person's work which he has built [on this foundation, that is, any outcome of his effort] remains [and survives this test], he will receive a reward.

¹⁵But if any person's work is burned up [by the test], he will suffer the loss [of his reward]; yet he himself will be saved, but only as [one who has barely escaped] through fire. [Job 23:10]

¹⁶Do you not know *and* understand that you [the church] are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells [permanently] in you [collectively and individually]?

¹⁷If anyone destroys the temple of God [corrupting it with false doctrine], God will destroy the destroyer; for the temple of God is holy (sacred), and that is what you are.

¹⁸Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool [discarding his worldly pretensions and acknowledging his lack of wisdom], so that he may become [truly] wise. [Is 5:21]

¹⁹For the wisdom of this world is foolishness (absurdity, stupidity) before God; for it is written [in Scripture], "[He is] THE ONE WHO CATCHES THE WISE *and* CLEVER IN THEIR CRAFTINESS;" [Job 5:13]

²⁰and again, "THE LORD KNOWS THE THOUGHTS of the [humanly] wise, THAT THEY ARE USELESS." [Ps 94:11]

²¹So let no one boast in men [about their wisdom, or of having this or that one as a leader]. For all things are yours,

²²whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas (Peter) or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things are yours,

²³and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.

4 SO THEN, let us [who minister] be regarded as servants of Christ and stewards (trustees, administrators) of the mysteries of God [that He chooses to reveal].

²In this case, moreover, it is required [as essential and demanded] of stewards that one be found faithful *and* trustworthy.

³But [as for me personally] it matters very little to me that I may be judged by you or *any* human court [on this point]; in fact, I do not even judge myself.

⁴I am aware of nothing against myself *and* I feel blameless, but I am not by this acquitted [before God]. It is the Lord who judges me.

⁵So do not go on passing judgment before the appointed time, *but wait* until the Lord comes, for He will both bring to light the [secret] things that are hidden in darkness and disclose the motives of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.

⁶Now I have applied these things [that is, the analogies about factions] to myself and Apollos for your benefit, believers, so that you may learn from us not to go beyond what is written [in Scripture], so that none of you will become arrogant *and* boast in favor of one [minister or teacher] against the other.

⁷For who regards you as superior *or* what sets you apart as special? What do you have that you did not receive [from another]? And if in fact you received it [from God or someone

else], why do you boast as if you had not received it [but had gained it by yourself]?

⁸[You behave as if] you are already filled [with spiritual wisdom and in need of nothing more]. Already you have become rich [in spiritual gifts]! You [in your conceit] have ascended your thrones *and* become kings without us; and how I wish [that it were true and] that you did reign as kings, so that we might reign with you.

⁹For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles at the end of the line, like men sentenced to death [and paraded as prisoners in a procession], because we have become a spectacle to the world [a show in the world's amphitheater], both to angels and to men.

¹⁰We are [regarded as] fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are highly esteemed, but we are dishonored.

¹¹To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty; we are *continually* poorly dressed, and we are roughly treated, and wander homeless.

¹²We work [for our living], working *hard* with our own hands. When we are reviled *and* verbally abused, we bless. When we are persecuted, we take it patiently *and* endure.

¹³When we are slandered, we *try to be* conciliatory *and* answer softly. We have become like the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now.

¹⁴I do not write these things to shame you, but to warn *and* advise you as my beloved children.

¹⁵For even if you were to have ten thousand teachers [to guide you] in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers

[who led you to Christ and assumed responsibility for you], for I became your father in Christ Jesus through the good news [of salvation].

¹⁶So I urge you, be imitators of me [just as a child imitates his father].

¹⁷For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my way of life in Christ [my conduct and my precepts for godly living], just as I teach everywhere in every church.

¹⁸Now some of you have become arrogant *and* pretentious, as though I were not coming to see you.

¹⁹But I will come to you soon, if the Lord is willing, and I will find out not just the talk of these arrogant people, but [evaluate] their [spiritual] power [whether they live up to their own claims].

²⁰For the kingdom of God is not based on talk but on power.

²¹Which do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a rod [of discipline and correction], or with love and a gentle spirit?

5 IT IS actually reported [everywhere] that there is sexual immorality among you, a kind of immorality that is condemned even among the [unbelieving] Gentiles: that someone has [an intimate relationship with] his father's wife. [Deut 22:30; 27:20]

²And you are proud *and* arrogant! You should have mourned in shame so that the man who has done this [disgraceful] thing would be removed from your fellowship!

³For I, though absent [from you] in body but present in

spirit, have already passed judgment on him who has committed this [act], as if I were present.

⁴In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I am with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus,

⁵you are to hand over this man to Satan for the destruction of his body, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Speak God's Word

*I will be very careful about
who I spend time with and
who I become close friends
with. I won't listen to gossip,
or be closely associated with
people who are sexually
immoral, greedy, or devoted
to anything that takes the
place of God.*

| adapted from 1 CORINTHIANS

5:10–11 |

⁶Your boasting [over the supposed spirituality of your church] is not good [indeed, it is vulgar and inappropriate]. Do you not know that [just] a little leaven ferments the whole batch [of dough, just as a little sin corrupts a person or an entire church]?

⁷Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new batch, just as you are, still unleavened. For Christ our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed.

⁸Therefore, let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with leaven of vice *and* malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and [untainted] truth. [Ex

12:19; 13:7; Deut 16:3]

⁹I wrote you in my [previous] letter not to associate with [sexually] immoral people—

¹⁰not meaning the immoral people of this world, or the greedy ones and swindlers, or idolaters, for then you would have to get out of the world *and* human society altogether!

¹¹But actually, I have written to you not to associate with any so-called [Christian] brother if he is sexually immoral or greedy, or is an idolater [devoted to anything that takes the place of God], or is a reviler [who insults or slanders or otherwise verbally abuses others], or is a drunkard or a swindler—you must not so much as eat with such a person. [2 Thess 3:6]

¹²For what business is it of mine to judge outsiders (non-believers)? Do you not judge those who are within *the church* [to protect the church as the situation requires]?

¹³God *alone* sits in judgment on those who are outside [the faith]. REMOVE THE WICKED ONE FROM AMONG YOU [expel him from your church]. [Deut 17:7]

6 DOES ANY one of you, when he has a complaint (civil dispute) with another [believer], dare to go to law before unrighteous men (non-believers) instead of [placing the issue] before the saints (God's people)?

²Do you not know that the saints (God's people) will [one day] judge the world? If the world is to be judged by you, are you not competent to try trivial (insignificant, petty) cases?

³Do you not know that we [believers] will judge angels?

How much more then [as to] matters of this life?

⁴So if you have lawsuits dealing with matters of this life, are you appointing those as judges [to hear disputes] who are of no account in the church?

⁵I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is not one wise man among you who [is governed by integrity and] will be able *and* competent to decide [private disputes] between his fellow believers,

⁶but *instead*, brother goes to law against brother, and that before [judges who are] unbelievers?

⁷Why, the very fact that you have lawsuits with one another is already a defeat. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?

⁸On the contrary, it is you who wrong and defraud, and you do this even to your brothers and sisters.

⁹Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit *or* have any share in the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate [by perversion], nor those who participate in homosexuality,

¹⁰nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers [whose words are used as weapons to abuse, insult, humiliate, intimidate, or slander], nor swindlers will inherit *or* have any share in the kingdom of God.

¹¹And such were some of you [before you believed]. But you were washed [by the atoning sacrifice of Christ], you were sanctified [set apart for God, and made holy], you were justified [declared free of guilt] in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the [Holy] Spirit of our God [the source of the believer's new

life and changed behavior].

¹²Everything is permissible for me, but not all things are beneficial. Everything is permissible for me, but I will not be enslaved by anything [and brought under its power, allowing it to control me].

Speak God's Word

I don't give food a place in my life that is out of balance, because God's Word says, "Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food, but God will do away with both of them." I don't get involved in sexual immorality because God says, "The body is not intended for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body [to save, sanctify, and raise it again because of the sacrifice of the cross]."

| adapted from 1 CORINTHIANS
6:13 |

¹³Food is for the stomach and the stomach for food, but God will do away with both of them. The body is not intended for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body [to save, sanctify, and raise it again because of the sacrifice of the cross].

¹⁴And God has not only raised the Lord [to life], but will also raise us up by His power.

¹⁵Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Am I therefore to take the members of Christ and make them part of a prostitute? Certainly not!

¹⁶Do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body *with her*? For He says, “THE TWO SHALL BE ONE FLESH.” [Gen 2:24]

¹⁷But the one who is united *and* joined to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*.

¹⁸Run away from sexual immorality [in any form, whether thought or behavior, whether visual or written]. Every *other* sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the one who is sexually immoral sins against his own body.

Speak God's Word

My body is a temple of the Holy Spirit Who is within me, Whom I have received as a gift from God. I am not my own, but I was bought with a price. I was actually purchased with the precious blood of Jesus and made His own. So then, I honor and glorify God with my body.

| *adapted from* 1 CORINTHIANS
6:19–20 |

POWERPOINT

Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Cor. 6:19–20) and we need to think of them that way—as the place where God’s Spirit dwells in us. One way we can love and honor God is to be good stewards of the health He has given us.

God has a special plan and destiny for each of us, an assignment only we can fulfill. To fulfill His call, we need to be as strong and healthy as possible, with our bodies in the best possible shape.



¹⁹Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is within you, whom you have [received as a gift] from God, and that you are not your own [property]?

²⁰You were bought with a price [you were actually purchased with the precious blood of Jesus and made His

own]. So then, honor *and* glorify God with your body.

1 NOW AS to the matters of which you wrote: It is good (beneficial, advantageous) for a man not to touch a woman [outside marriage].

²But because of [the temptation to participate in] sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.

³The husband must fulfill his [marital] duty to his wife [with good will and kindness], and likewise the wife to her husband.

⁴The wife does not have [exclusive] authority over her own body, but the husband *shares with her*; and likewise the husband does not have [exclusive] authority over his body, but the wife *shares with him*.

⁵Do not deprive each other [of marital rights], except perhaps by mutual consent for a time, so that you may devote yourselves [unhindered] to prayer, but come together again so that Satan will not tempt you [to sin] because of your lack of self-control.

⁶But I am saying this as a concession, not as a command.

⁷I wish that all the people were as I am; but each person has his own gift from God, one of this kind and one of that.

⁸But I say to the unmarried and to the widows, [that as a practical matter] it is good if they remain [single and entirely devoted to the Lord] as I am.

⁹But if they do not have [sufficient] self-control, they should marry; for it is better to marry than to burn *with passion*.

¹⁰But to the married [believers] I give instructions—not I, but the Lord—that the wife is not to separate from her husband,

¹¹(but even if she does leave him, let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband) and that the husband should not leave his wife.

¹²To the rest I declare—I, not the Lord [since Jesus did not discuss this]—that if any [believing] brother has a wife who does not believe [in Christ], and she consents to live with him, he must not leave her.

¹³And if any [believing] woman has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not leave him.

¹⁴For the unbelieving husband is sanctified [that is, he receives the blessings granted] through his [Christian] wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be [ceremonially] unclean, but as it is they are holy.

¹⁵But if the unbelieving partner leaves, let him leave. In such cases the [remaining] brother or sister is not [spiritually or morally] bound. But God has called us to peace.

¹⁶For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband [by leading him to Christ]? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife [by leading her to Christ]?

¹⁷Only, let each one live the life which the Lord has assigned him, and to which God has called him [for each person is unique and is accountable for his choices and conduct, let him walk in this way]. This is the rule I make in all

the churches.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Gives Wisdom

Knowledge is valuable, but if we depend on it more than we depend on God, we can become prideful about all we think we know. Education is important, but those who are not able to obtain much of it are not disqualified from being used by God. The world gives us education, but God gives us wisdom!

Rather than focusing excessively on education, let's focus on walking in love because that is the greatest command we find in God's Word. People are not likely to remember you because you were highly educated and could tell them a lot of the things you knew; but they will remember if you showed them love and made them feel good by doing so.

¹⁸Was anyone at the time of his calling [from God already] circumcised? He is not to become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called while uncircumcised? He is not to be circumcised. [Gal 5:1–3]

¹⁹Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but *what matters* is keeping the commandments of God.

²⁰Each one should remain in the condition in which he was [when he was] called.

²¹Were you a slave when you were called? Do not worry about that [since your status as a believer is equal to that of a freeborn believer]; but if you are able to gain your freedom, do

that.

²²For he who was a slave when he was called in the Lord is a freedman of the Lord, likewise he who was free when he was called is a slave of Christ.

²³You were bought with a price [a precious price paid by Christ]; do not become slaves to men [but to Christ].

²⁴Brothers, let each one remain with God in that *condition* in which he was [when he was] called.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that You
have bought me with a price,
a precious price paid by
Christ. I will not become a
slave to other people, but will
be a servant of Christ.*

• adapted from 1 Corinthians 7:23

²⁵Now concerning the virgins [of marriageable age] I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by

the Lord's mercy is trustworthy.

²⁶I think then that because of the impending distress [that is, the pressure of the current trouble], it is good for a man to remain as he is.

²⁷Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you unmarried? Do not seek a wife.

²⁸But if you do marry, you have not sinned [in doing so]; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned [in doing so]. Yet those [who marry] will have troubles (special challenges) in this life, and I am trying to spare you that.

²⁹But I say this, believers: the time has been shortened, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they did not;

³⁰and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess [anything];

³¹and those who use the world [taking advantage of its opportunities], as though they did not make full use of it. For the outward form of this world [its present social and material nature] is passing away.

³²But I want you to be free from concern. The unmarried man is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord;

³³but the married man is concerned about worldly things, how he may please his wife,

³⁴and *his interests* are divided. The unmarried woman or the virgin is concerned about the matters of the Lord, how to be holy *and* set apart both in body and in spirit; but a married woman is concerned about worldly things, how she may please

her husband.

³⁵Now I say this for your own benefit; not to restrict you, but to promote what is appropriate and secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.

³⁶But if any man thinks that he is not acting properly *and* honorably toward his virgin *daughter*; [by not permitting her to marry], if she is past her youth, and it must be so, let him do as he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry.

³⁷But the man who stands firmly committed in his heart, having no compulsion [to yield to his daughter's request], and has authority over his own will, and has decided in his own heart to keep his own virgin [daughter from being married], he will do well.

³⁸So then both the father who gives his virgin *daughter* in marriage does well, and he who does not give her in marriage will do better.

³⁹A wife is bound [to her husband by law] as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry whomever she wishes, only [provided that he too is] in the Lord.

⁴⁰But in my opinion a widow is happier if she stays as she is. And I think that I also have the Spirit of God [in this matter].

8 NOW ABOUT food sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge [concerning this]. Knowledge [alone] makes [people self-righteously] arrogant, but love [that unselfishly seeks the best for others] builds up *and* encourages others to grow [in wisdom].

²If anyone imagines that he knows *and* understands

anything [of divine matters, without love], he has not yet known as he ought to know.

³But if anyone loves God [with awe-filled reverence, obedience and gratitude], he is known by Him [as His very own and is greatly loved].

⁴In this matter, then, of eating food offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world [it has no real existence], and that there is no God but one. [Deut 6:4]

⁵For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords,

⁶yet for us there is but one God, the Father, who is the source of all things, and we *exist* for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things [that have been created], and we [believers exist and have life and have been redeemed] through Him. [Mal 2:10]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

You Are Loved

Love—knowing you are loved—is what every person wants. Every person wants to feel valuable. Every person wants to feel that he or she matters.

Guess what? God loves you unconditionally. He doesn't love you because of anything you do or don't do; God just loves you (see 1 Cor. 8:3). You can't buy His love, but you should receive it as a wonderful gift from Him. Nothing can separate you from the love of God (see Rom. 8:38–39).

You were created by the hand of God, on purpose, and you are an unrepeatable miracle. There is nobody else exactly like you. There will never be anyone else exactly like you. And God has an amazingly wonderful plan for your life.

⁷However, not all [believers] have this knowledge. But some, being accustomed [throughout their lives] to [thinking of] the idol until now [as real and living], still eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and because their conscience is weak, it is defiled (guilty, ashamed).

⁸Now food will not commend us to God *nor* bring us close to Him; we are no worse off if we do not eat, nor are we better if we do eat.

⁹Only be careful that this liberty of yours [this power to choose] does not somehow become a stumbling block [that is,

a temptation to sin] to the weak [in conscience].

¹⁰For if someone sees you, a person having knowledge, eating in an idol's temple, then if he is weak, will he not be encouraged to eat things sacrificed to idols [and violate his own convictions]?

¹¹For through your knowledge (spiritual maturity) this weak man is ruined [that is, he suffers in his spiritual life], the brother for whom Christ died.

¹²And when you sin against the brothers and sisters in this way and wound their weak conscience [by confusing them], you sin against Christ.

¹³Therefore, if [my eating a certain] food causes my brother to stumble (sin), I will not eat [such] meat ever again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.

9 AM I not free [unrestrained and exempt from any obligation]? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our [risen] Lord [in person]? Are you not [the result and proof of] my work in the Lord?

²If I am not [considered] an apostle to others, at least I am one to you; for you are the seal *and* the certificate *and* the living evidence of my apostleship in the Lord [confirming and authenticating it].

³This is my defense to those who would put me on trial *and* interrogate me [concerning my authority as an apostle]:

⁴Have we not the right to our food and drink [at the expense of the churches]?

⁵Have we not the right to take along with us a believing

wife, as do the rest of the apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas (Peter)?

⁶Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to stop doing manual labor [in order to support our ministry]?

⁷[Consider this:] Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?

⁸Do I say these things only from a man's perspective? Does the Law not endorse the same principles?

⁹For it is written in the Law of Moses, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE AN OX WHILE IT IS TREADING OUT THE GRAIN [to keep it from eating the grain]." Is it [only] for oxen that God cares? [Deut 25:4]

¹⁰Or does He speak entirely for our sake? Yes, it was written for our sake: The plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the harvest.

¹¹If we have sown [the good seed of] spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

¹²If others share in this rightful claim over you, do not we even more? However, we did not exercise this right, but we put up with everything so that we will not hinder [the spread of] the good news of Christ.

¹³Do you not know that those who officiate in the sacred services of the temple eat from the temple [offerings of meat and bread] and those who regularly attend the altar have their share from the [offerings brought to the] altar? [Deut 18:1]

¹⁴So also [on the same principle] the Lord directed those who preach the gospel to get their living from the gospel.

¹⁵But I have used none of these privileges, nor am I writing this [to suggest] that any such provision be made for me now. For it would be better for me to die than to have anyone deprive me of my boast [in this matter of financial support].

¹⁶For if I [merely] preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast about, for I am compelled [that is, absolutely obligated to do it]. Woe to me if I do not preach the good news [of salvation]!

¹⁷For if I do this work of my own free will, then I have a reward; but if it is not of my will [but by God's choosing], I have been entrusted with a [sacred] stewardship.

¹⁸What then is my reward? [Just this:] that, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge [to everyone], so as not to take advantage of my rights [as a preacher and apostle] in [preaching] the gospel.

POWERPOINT

If we think of reaching our goals as a runner running a race to win (see 1 Cor. 9:24), we need to understand that each runner has his own style. To me, that means we need to be ourselves and not try to copy someone else. We must follow

God as He leads us individually. He has created each of us uniquely, and He does not lead everyone the same way. To win *your* race, run the way God leads *you*.



¹⁹For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to everyone, so that I may win more [for Christ].

²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews [for Christ]; to men under the Law, [I became] as one under the Law, though not being under the Law myself, so that I might win those who are under the Law.

²¹To those who are without (outside) the Law, [I became] as one without the Law, though [I am] not without the law of God, but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law.

²²To the weak I became [as the] weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means [in any and every way] save some [by leading them to faith in Jesus Christ].

²³And I do all this for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings along with you.

²⁴Do you not know that in a race all the runners run [their very best to win], but only one receives the prize? Run [your race] in such a way that you may seize the prize *and* make it yours!

²⁵Now every athlete who [goes into training and] competes in the games is disciplined *and* exercises self-control in all things. They do it to win a crown that withers, but we [do it to receive] an imperishable [crown that cannot wither].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The Importance of Discipline

Second Timothy 1:7 says that God has given us a spirit “of power and of love and of sound judgment and personal discipline.” Translated from the Greek language, the word discipline means “saving the mind or to be safe; an admonishment or calling to soundness of mind or to self-control.” In other words, a person who is thinking properly with soundness of mind will have discipline in all areas of his or her life. I believe that the apostle Paul’s personal discipline, including the discipline of his body, is one of the key reasons he was able to fulfill God’s plan for him (see 1 Cor. 9:27).

Our thoughts, words, and emotions are among the most important areas where we need to exercise discipline. A disciplined person will maintain the correct mental attitude toward issues that arise. Though difficult, it is much easier to maintain a right attitude than to regain it once it’s lost. Let me say it once again: It is much easier to maintain a right attitude than to regain it once it’s lost.

²⁶Therefore I do not run without a definite goal; I do not flail around like one beating the air [just shadow boxing].

²⁷But [like a boxer] I strictly discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached [the gospel] to others, I

myself will not somehow be disqualified [as unfit for service].

10 FOR I do not want you to be unaware, believers, that our fathers were all under the cloud [in which God's presence went before them] and they all passed [miraculously and safely] through the [Red] Sea; [Ex 13:21; 14:22, 29]

²And all [of them] were baptized into Moses [into his safekeeping as their leader] in the cloud and in the sea;

³and all [of them] ate the same spiritual food; [Ex 16:4, 35]

⁴and all [of them] drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. [Ex 17:6; Num 20:11]

⁵Nevertheless, God was not well-pleased with most of them, for they were scattered along the ground in the wilderness [because their lack of self-control led to disobedience which led to death]. [Num 14:29, 30]

⁶Now these things [the warnings and admonitions] took place as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they did. [Num 11:4, 34]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

From Disappointed to Reappointed

We all have been disappointed at one time or another. It would be surprising if we went through a month without encountering some kind of disappointment. We are “appointed” (set in a certain direction) for something to happen a certain way, and when it doesn’t happen that way, we become “disappointed.”

Disappointment not dealt with turns into discouragement. If we stay discouraged for very long, we are liable to become devastated, and devastation leaves us unable to handle anything.

Many devastated Christians are lying along the roadside of life because they have not learned how to handle disappointment. The devastation they are experiencing now may have begun with a minor disappointment that was not dealt with properly.

It is not God’s will for us to live disappointed, devastated, or oppressed! When we become “disappointed,” we can learn to become “re-appointed” to keep from becoming discouraged, then devastated.

When we learn to place our hope and confidence in Jesus the Rock (see 1 Cor. 10:4) and resist the devil at the onset, we can live in the joy and peace of the Lord, free from discouragement. Happiness and joy do not come from the outside. They come

from within. They are a conscious decision, a deliberate choice, one that we make ourselves each day we live.

Choose to steadfastly withstand the devil's temptation to let disappointment defeat you, and press on to live in the fullness of the life God has provided for you through His Son Jesus Christ.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

There's Always a Way Out

Years ago, a comedian's favorite punch line was, "The devil made me do it." Audiences laughed every time because they knew how often they'd given in to temptation, and it's always easy to blame someone else or circumstances for our actions and problems. But in our hearts we know it is wrong to use excuses or blame others as a reason to stay in bondage. Christ came to set us free!

The apostle Paul makes clear that "no temptation [regardless of its source] has overtaken *or* enticed you that is not common to human experience [nor is any temptation unusual or beyond human resistance]; but God is faithful [to His word—He is compassionate and trustworthy], and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability [to resist], but along with the temptation He [has in the past and is now and] will [always] provide the way out as well, so that you will be able to endure it [without yielding, and will overcome temptation with joy]" (1 Cor. 10:13).

Satan takes our circumstances and uses them to build

strongholds in our minds and lives. He will use whatever he can—our sense of weakness, our problems from childhood, or the wrong things we did in our past. If the devil can darken our minds—make us think we can't possibly overcome or win—we've lost.

One more thing: When we give in to the temptation, aren't we subtly saying that God is not able to help us? We need to stop shifting blame or ignoring situations and take full responsibility for our actions or inactions. We can believe that God is faithful and will always deliver us in plenty of time. We can develop a "can do" attitude that says, "God will not let me be tempted beyond my ability to resist." That's God's promise, and He lays His reputation on the line with those words. God never abandons us or leaves us helpless.

Our problems are usually internal. They involve our thoughts and our attitudes. The results—our outward behavior—flow from those thoughts and attitudes. If we keep our mind turned toward Jesus, and if we listen to His voice, we'll find He leads us to a safe landing place—always.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Father God, forgive me for blaming You for my circumstances or blaming other people for my failures. You provide a way of escape in every temptation. Thank You! Amen.

Speak God's Word

*No temptation has overtaken
or enticed me that is not
common to human experience
or beyond human resistance;
but God is faithful to His
word—He is compassionate
and trustworthy, and He will
not let me be tempted beyond
my ability to resist. Along
with the temptation, He will
always provide the way out
as well, so that I will be able
to endure it without yielding,
and will overcome temptation
with joy.*

| adapted from 1 CORINTHIANS
10:13 |

⁷Do not be worshipers of handmade gods, as some of them were; just as it is written [in Scripture], “THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK [after sacrificing to the golden calf at Horeb], AND STOOD UP TO PLAY [indulging in immoral activities].” [Ex 32:6]

⁸We must not indulge in [nor tolerate] sexual immorality, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand [suddenly] fell [dead] in a single day! [Num 25:1–18]

⁹We must not tempt the Lord [that is, test His patience, question His purpose or exploit His goodness], as some of them did—and they were killed by serpents. [Num 21:5, 6]

¹⁰And do not murmur [in unwarranted discontent], as some of them did—and were destroyed by the destroyer. [Num 16:41, 49]

¹¹Now these things happened to them as an example *and* warning [to us]; they were written for our instruction [to admonish and equip us], upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

¹²Therefore let the one who thinks he stands firm [immune to temptation, being overconfident and self-righteous], take care that he does not fall [into sin and condemnation].

¹³No temptation [regardless of its source] has overtaken *or* enticed you that is not common to human experience [nor is any temptation unusual or beyond human resistance]; but God is faithful [to His word—He is compassionate and trustworthy], and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability [to resist], but along with the temptation He [has in the past and is now and] will [always] provide the way out as well, so that you will be able to endure it [without yielding, and will overcome temptation with joy].

¹⁴Therefore, my beloved, run [keep far, far away] from [any sort of] idolatry [and that includes loving anything more than God, or participating in anything that leads to sin and enslaves the soul].

¹⁵I am speaking as to wise *and* sensible people; judge [carefully and thoughtfully consider] for yourselves what I say.

¹⁶Is the cup of blessing which we bless [at the Lord's Supper] not a sharing in the blood of Christ? [Indeed it is.] Is the bread which we break not a sharing in the body of Christ? [Indeed it is.]

¹⁷Since there is one bread, we [believers] who are many are [united into] one body; for we all partake of the one bread [which represents the body of Christ].

¹⁸Consider the people of Israel; are those who eat the sacrifices not partners of the altar [united in their worship of the same God]? [Indeed they are.] [Lev 7:6]

¹⁹What do I mean then? That a thing offered to idols is anything [special or changed simply because it is offered], or that an idol is anything?

²⁰On the contrary, the things which the Gentiles (pagans) sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons [in effect], and not to God; and I do not want you to become partners with demons [by eating at feasts in pagan temples]. [Deut 32:17]

²¹You cannot drink [both] the Lord's cup and the cup of demons. You cannot share in both the Lord's table and the table of demons [thereby becoming partners with them].

²²Do we [really] provoke the Lord to jealousy [when we eat food sacrificed to handmade "gods" at pagan feasts]? Are we [spiritually] stronger than He? [Certainly not! He knows that the idols are nothing. But we deeply offend Him.] [Deut 32:21; Eccl 6:10; Is 45:9]

²³All things are lawful [that is, morally legitimate, permissible], but not all things are beneficial *or* advantageous.

All things are lawful, but not all things are constructive [to character] *and* edifying [to spiritual life].

²⁴Let no one seek [only] his own good, but [also] that of the other person.

²⁵[Regarding meat offered to idols:] Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking any questions for the sake of your conscience,

²⁶FOR THE [whole] EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND EVERYTHING THAT IS IN IT. [Ps 24:1; 50:12]

²⁷If one of the unbelievers invites you [to a meal at his home] and you want to go, eat whatever is served to you without asking questions [about its source] for the sake of your conscience.

²⁸But if anyone says to you, "This meat has been offered in sacrifice to an idol," do not eat it, out of consideration for the one who told you, and for conscience's sake—

²⁹and by conscience I mean for the sake of the other *man's*, not yours. For why is my freedom [of choice] judged by another's conscience [another's ethics—another's sense of right and wrong]?

³⁰If I take my share [of food] with thankfulness, why am I accused because of something for which I give thanks?

³¹So then, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of [our great] God.

³²Do not offend Jews or Greeks or even the church of God [but live to honor Him];

³³just as I please everyone in all things [as much as possible adapting myself to the interests of others], not seeking my own benefit but that of the many, so that they [will

be open to the message of salvation and] may be saved.

11 IMITATE ME, just as I *imitate* Christ.

²I praise *and* appreciate you because you remember me in everything and you firmly hold to the traditions [the substance of my instructions], just as I have passed them on to you.

³But I want you to understand that Christ is the head (authority over) of every man, and man is the head of woman, and God is the head of Christ.

⁴Every man who prays or prophesies with *something* on his head dishonors his head [and the One who is his head].

⁵And every woman who prays or prophesies when she has her head uncovered disgraces her head; for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved [in disgrace].

⁶If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, she should cover her head.

⁷A man ought not have his head covered [during worship], since he is the image and [reflected] glory of God; but the woman is [the expression of] man's glory. [Gen 1:26]

⁸For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; [Gen 2:21–23]

⁹for indeed man was not created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man. [Gen 2:18]

¹⁰Therefore the woman ought to have a *sign of* authority on her head, for the sake of the angels [so as not to offend them].

¹¹Nevertheless, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman.

¹²For as the woman originates from the man, so also man is born through the woman; and all things [whether male or female] originate from God [as their Creator].

¹³Judge for yourselves; is it proper for a woman to offer prayer to God [publicly] with her head uncovered?

¹⁴Does not common sense itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him,

¹⁵but if a woman has long hair, it is her ornament *and* glory? For her long hair is given to her as a covering.

¹⁶Now if anyone is inclined to be contentious [about this], we have no other practice [in worship than this], nor do the churches of God [in general].

¹⁷But in giving this next instruction, I do not praise you, because when you meet together it is not for the better but for the worse.

¹⁸For, in the first place, when you meet together in church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and in part I believe it,

¹⁹for [doubtless] there have to be factions among you, so that those who are of approved character may be clearly recognized among you.

²⁰So when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper,

²¹for when you eat, each one hurries to get his own supper first [not waiting for others or the poor]. So one goes hungry while another gets drunk.

²²What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and

drink? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those [impoverished believers] who have nothing? What will I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? In this I will not praise you!

²³For I received from the Lord Himself that [instruction] which I passed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night in which He was betrayed took bread;

²⁴and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is (represents) My body, which is [offered as a sacrifice] for you. Do this in [affectionate] remembrance of Me."

²⁵In the same way, after supper *He took* the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant [ratified and established] in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in [affectionate] remembrance of Me."

²⁶For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are [symbolically] proclaiming [the fact of] the Lord's death until He comes [again].

²⁷So then whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in a way that is unworthy [of Him] will be guilty of [profaning and sinning against] the body and blood of the Lord.

²⁸But a person must [prayerfully] examine himself [and his relationship to Christ], and only when he has done so should he eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

²⁹For anyone who eats and drinks [without solemn reverence and heartfelt gratitude for the sacrifice of Christ], eats and drinks a judgment on himself if he does not recognize the body [of Christ].

³⁰That [careless and unworthy participation] is the reason

why many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep [in death].

³¹But if we evaluated *and* judged ourselves honestly [recognizing our shortcomings and correcting our behavior], we would not be judged.

³²But when we [fall short and] are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined [by undergoing His correction] so that we will not be condemned [to eternal punishment] along with the world.

³³So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat [the Lord's Supper], wait for one another [and see to it that no one is left out].

³⁴If anyone is too hungry [to wait], let him eat at home, so that you will not come together for judgment [on yourselves]. About the remaining matters [of which I was informed], I will take care of them when I come.

12 NOW ABOUT the spiritual *gifts* [the special endowments given by the Holy Spirit], brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.

²You know that when you were pagans, *you were* led off after speechless idols; however you were led off [whether by impulse or habit].

³Therefore I want you to know that no one speaking by the [power and influence of the] Spirit of God can say, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is [my] Lord," except by [the power and influence of] the Holy Spirit.

⁴Now there are [distinctive] varieties of *spiritual* gifts

[special abilities given by the grace and extraordinary power of the Holy Spirit operating in believers], but it is the same Spirit [who grants them and empowers believers].

⁵And there are [distinctive] varieties of ministries *and* service, but it is the same Lord [who is served].

⁶And there are [distinctive] ways of working [to accomplish things], but it is the same God who produces all things in all *believers* [inspiring, energizing, and empowering them].

⁷But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit [the spiritual illumination and the enabling of the Holy Spirit] for the common good.

⁸To one is given through the [Holy] Spirit [the power to speak] the message of wisdom, and to another [the power to express] the word of knowledge *and* understanding according to the same Spirit;

⁹to another [wonder-working] faith [is given] by the same [Holy] Spirit, and to another the [extraordinary] gifts of healings by the one Spirit;

¹⁰and to another the working of miracles, and to another prophecy [foretelling the future, speaking a new message from God to the people], and to another discernment of spirits [the ability to distinguish sound, godly doctrine from the deceptive doctrine of man-made religions and cults], to another *various* kinds of [unknown] tongues, and to another interpretation of tongues.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Grace Is Power

Grace is the power of the Holy Spirit coming to us freely, enabling us to do with ease what we could never do on our own. You might find other definitions describing grace as God's divine favor, and that is certainly true, but His grace is also the power you need to live in victory. He grants us a variety of spiritual gifts (special abilities given by grace), and He gives extraordinary power of the Holy Spirit to operate in us (see 1 Cor. 12:4).

Grace can only be received through faith, and that is one of the main reasons we need to resist every kind of fear. When we allow fear to rule us, we unwittingly receive what Satan has planned for our lives. When we live by faith through grace, God is able to work His divine plan in us. Whatever you need to do today, lean on God and let Him empower you to be victorious.

¹¹All these things [the gifts, the achievements, the abilities, the empowering] are brought about by one and the same [Holy] Spirit, distributing to each one individually just as He chooses.

¹²For just as the body is one and yet has many parts, and all the parts, though many, form [only] one body, so it is with Christ.

¹³For by one [Holy] Spirit we were all baptized into one body, [spiritually transformed—united together] whether Jews or Greeks (Gentiles), slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one [Holy] Spirit [since the same Holy Spirit fills each life]. [Rom 3:22; Gal 3:28]

¹⁴For the [human] body does not consist of one part, but of many [limbs and organs].

¹⁵If the foot says, “Because I am not a hand, I am not *a part* of the body,” is it not on the contrary still *a part* of the body?

¹⁶If the ear says, “Because I am not an eye, I am not *a part* of the body,” is it not on the contrary still *a part* of the body?

¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole [body] were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?

¹⁸But now [as things really are], God has placed *and* arranged the parts in the body, each one of them, just as He willed *and* saw fit [with the best balance of function].

¹⁹If they all were a single *organ*, where would [the rest of] the body be?

²⁰But now [as things really are] there are many parts [different limbs and organs], but a single body.

²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”

²²But quite the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are [absolutely] necessary;

²³and as for those *parts* of the body which we consider less honorable, these we treat with greater honor; and our less presentable parts are treated with greater modesty,

²⁴while our more presentable parts do not require it. But God has combined the [whole] body, giving greater honor to that part which lacks it,

²⁵so that there would be no division *or* discord in the body [that is, lack of adaptation of the parts to each other], but that the parts may have the same concern for one another.

²⁶And if one member suffers, all the parts share the suffering; if one member is honored, all rejoice with it.

²⁷Now you [collectively] are Christ's body, and individually [you are] members of it [each with his own special purpose and function].

²⁸So God has appointed *and* placed in the church [for His own use]: first apostles [chosen by Christ], second prophets [those who foretell the future, those who speak a new message from God to the people], third teachers, then those who work miracles, then those with the gifts of healings, the helpers, the administrators, and speakers in *various* kinds of [unknown] tongues.

²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?

³⁰Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

³¹But earnestly desire *and* strive for the greater gifts [if acquiring them is going to be your goal].

And yet I will show you a still more excellent way [one of the choicest graces and the highest of them all: unselfish love].

13 IF I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but

have not love [for others growing out of God's love for me], then I have become only a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal [just an annoying distraction].

²And if I have *the gift of* prophecy [and speak a new message from God to the people], and understand all mysteries, and [possess] all knowledge; and if I have all [sufficient] faith so that I can remove mountains, but do not have love [reaching out to others], I am nothing.

³If I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it does me no good at all.

⁴Love endures with patience *and* serenity, love is kind *and* thoughtful, and is not jealous *or* envious; love does not brag and is not proud *or* arrogant.

⁵It is not rude; it is not self-seeking, it is not provoked [nor overly sensitive and easily angered]; it does not take into account a wrong *endured*.

⁶It does not rejoice at injustice, but rejoices with the truth [when right and truth prevail].

⁷Love bears all things [regardless of what comes], believes all things [looking for the best in each one], hopes all things [remaining steadfast during difficult times], endures all things [without weakening].

⁸Love never fails [it never fades nor ends]. But as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for the gift of special knowledge, it will pass away.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Forgive and Forget

“Love,” the apostle Paul tells us, “does not take into account a wrong endured” (1 Cor. 13:5), yet most of us keep up-to-date records of all the offenses we have suffered, no matter how big or how small. But if we want joy to operate in our lives, we will have to learn how to forgive and forget.

Forgetting is a choice. It's not that we are unable to remember, but we choose to remember the better things in life instead of the ways we have been hurt or disappointed: “If there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think continually on these things [center your mind on them, and implant them in your heart]” (Phil. 4:8). God is telling you the things that will bring you joy. Nowhere does He say to remember what people have done to offend or hurt you. God wants you to forgive, forget, and fill your mind with worthy things.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

What Love Is

Paul's words about love in 1 Corinthians 13:4–8 are so familiar to most of us that I encourage you to read them again very slowly and consider every word. As much as I cherish these words, I can honestly say that living them has not always been easy for me. As a child, I was not exposed to this kind of love—in fact, I was taught to be suspicious of everyone and to trust no one.

As I got older, on several occasions I encountered people whose actions confirmed that my suspicions were justified. While it is wise to be cautiously aware of people's motives, we should be careful that we don't allow an overly suspicious nature to poison our mind and negatively affect our ability to love and accept other people.

For example, suppose a church friend drops a hint about some negative things that she heard a woman named Doris say about you. If you already have a suspicious mind and believe the secondhand information, it will poison your mind against Doris and your suspicions will grow. Every time Doris says

something to you, you may think, *What does she really mean?* If you see Doris praising the Lord in worship, you will think, *She's such a hypocrite.*

This is how Satan gains a stronghold in your mind. If he can make you suspicious of others, it isn't long before you don't trust anything they say, and you may even start wondering who else may be talking about you behind your back.

This is how suspicion can cripple relationships and destroy our joy while it leads us astray. This is why learning to develop a 1 Corinthians 13 kind of love is so important.

It took me a while to overcome a lifetime of suspicions, but I finally learned that when we love God's way, there will be no place in our mind for suspicion of others. We are better off if we trust people and find out we are wrong about them than to distrust them and be mistaken!

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord, I thank You for showing me how to overcome suspicion by teaching me how to love others with Your kind of love. Thank You, Jesus, for being patient with me and for being my great example. Amen.

POWERPOINT

1 Corinthians 13:7 says that love looks “for the best in each one.” We can learn to find the good in everything and in everyone. Let me encourage you to live with love, always looking for what is good and believing the best about people.



⁹For we know in part, and we prophesy in part [for our knowledge is fragmentary and incomplete].

¹⁰But when that which is complete *and* perfect comes, that which is incomplete *and* partial will pass away.

¹¹When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.

¹²For now [in this time of imperfection] we see in a mirror dimly [a blurred reflection, a riddle, an enigma], but then [when the time of perfection comes we will see reality] face to face. Now I know in part [just in fragments], but then I will know

fully, just as I have been fully known [by God].

¹³And now there remain: faith [abiding trust in God and His promises], hope [confident expectation of eternal salvation], love [unselfish love for others growing out of God's love for me], these three [the choicest graces]; but the greatest of these is love.

14 PURSUE [THIS] love [with eagerness, make it your goal], yet earnestly desire *and* cultivate the spiritual *gifts* [to be used by believers for the benefit of the church], but especially that you may prophesy [to foretell the future, to speak a new message from God to the people].

²For one who speaks in an *unknown* tongue does not speak to people but to God; for no one understands him *or* catches his meaning, but by the Spirit he speaks mysteries [secret truths, hidden things].

³But [on the other hand] the one who prophesies speaks to people for edification [to promote their spiritual growth] and [speaks words of] encouragement [to uphold and advise them concerning the matters of God] and [speaks words of] consolation [to compassionately comfort them].

⁴One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church [promotes growth in spiritual wisdom, devotion, holiness, and joy].

⁵Now I wish that all of you spoke in *unknown* tongues, but *even* more [I wish] that you would prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater [and more useful] than the one who speaks in tongues, unless he translates *or* explains [what he

says], so that the church may be edified [instructed, improved, strengthened].

⁶Now, believers, if I come to you speaking in *unknown* tongues, how will I benefit you unless I also speak to you [clearly] either by revelation [revealing God's mystery], or by knowledge [teaching about God], or by prophecy [foretelling the future, speaking a new message from God to the people], or by instruction [teaching precepts that develop spiritual maturity]?

⁷Yet *even* lifeless things, whether flute or harp, when producing a sound, if they do not produce distinct [musical] tones, how will anyone [listening] know what is piped or played?

⁸And if the [war] bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle?

⁹So it is with you, if you speak words [in an unknown tongue] that are not intelligible *and* clear, how will anyone understand what you are saying? You will be talking into the air [wasting your breath]!

¹⁰There are, I suppose, a great many kinds of languages in the world [unknown to us], and none is lacking in meaning.

¹¹But if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will [appear to] be a foreigner to the one who is speaking [since he knows exactly what he is saying], and the one who is speaking will [appear to] be a foreigner to me.

¹²So it is with you, since you are so very eager to have spiritual gifts *and* manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in ways that will build up the church [spiritually].

¹³Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he

may [be gifted to] translate *or* explain [what he says].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Praying with the Holy Spirit

Consider what Paul said about the mind and the spirit in prayer: “I will pray with the spirit [by the Holy Spirit that is within me] and I will pray with the mind [using words I understand]” (1 Cor. 14:15).

Paul is our example and teacher in this area. He said that he knew how to pray with his mind—about things that he thought needed prayer; but he also knew how to be led by the Holy Spirit and pray in a way that may not have made any sense to his mind.

Think of it this way. God calls us to prayer. That’s our joy and responsibility. Sometimes when we talk to God, our words seem inadequate. It’s as though there is a depth to our burdens—so overwhelming—that transcends words. No matter what we say to God out of our own minds, we feel we have not broken through and obtained a victory.

I encourage you to research what the Word of God says about speaking in tongues because that is also a way of “praying in the Holy Spirit.” Study Acts 2, which describes how the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke out in languages unknown to them. Paul wished that all the Corinthian believers spoke in unknown tongues, and he further said that nobody should forbid anyone to do so (see 1 Cor. 14:5, 39).

When we pray in the Spirit, our minds and our spirits work together. Our minds yield to our spirits, and we are praying the perfect prayer that God desires.

You may not fully understand these things, but I hope you'll keep an open mind to all the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We all need all the supernatural help we can get to help us live our lives victoriously. I encourage you to seek God for yourself in this area, so your prayers can be as powerful as possible.

¹⁴For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unproductive [because it does not understand what my spirit is praying].

¹⁵Then what am I to do? I will pray with the spirit [by the Holy Spirit that is within me] and I will pray with the mind [using words I understand]; I will sing with the spirit [by the Holy Spirit that is within me] and I will sing with the mind [using words I understand].

¹⁶Otherwise if you bless [and give thanks to God] in the spirit only, how will any outsider *or* someone who is not gifted [in spiritual matters] say the “Amen” [of agreement] to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying? [1 Chr 16:36; Ps 106:48]

¹⁷You are giving thanks well enough [in a way that God is glorified], but the other person [who does not understand you] is not edified [and spiritually strengthened since he cannot join in your thanksgiving].

¹⁸I thank God that I speak in [unknown] tongues more than all of you;

¹⁹nevertheless, in public worship I would rather say five

understandable words in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue [which others cannot understand].

POWERPOINT

The Corinthians were born-again believers, baptized in the

Holy Spirit, operating in the gifts of the Spirit; and yet Paul said they were carnal. They were ruled by their emotions.

They were envious and jealous, with division and strife among them. All these behaviors are

rooted in insecurity and immaturity. The Corinthians were immature not only in their actions, but also *in their thinking* (see 1 Cor. 14:20).

They had not grasped in their minds who they were in Christ, and they did not know the

hope of their calling. Let's pray that we will be mature in our thinking so we will do and be everything God has for us to accomplish and become.



²⁰Brothers and sisters, do not be children [immature, childlike] in your thinking; be infants in [matters of] evil [completely innocent and inexperienced], but in your minds be mature [adults].

²¹It is written in the Law, “BY MEN OF STRANGE TONGUES AND BY THE LIPS OF FOREIGNERS I WILL SPEAK TO THIS PEOPLE, AND NOT EVEN THEN WILL THEY LISTEN TO ME,” says the Lord. [Is 28:11, 12]

²²Therefore, [unknown] tongues are [meant] for a [supernatural] sign, not to believers but to unbelievers [who might be receptive]; while prophecy [foretelling the future, speaking a new message from God to the people] is not for unbelievers but for believers.

²³So then, if the whole church gathers together and all of you speak in [unknown] tongues, and outsiders *or* those who are not gifted [in spiritual matters] or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind?

²⁴But if all prophesy [foretelling the future, speaking a new message from God to the people], and an unbeliever or outsider comes in, he is convicted [of his sins] by all, and he is called to account by all [because he can understand what is being said];

²⁵the secrets of his heart are laid bare. And so, falling on his face, he will worship God, declaring that God is really among you.

²⁶What then is *the right course*, believers? When you meet together, each one has a psalm, a teaching, a revelation (disclosure of special knowledge), a tongue, *or* an interpretation. Let everything be constructive *and* edifying *and* done for the good of all the church.

²⁷If anyone speaks in a tongue, *it should be limited* to two or at the most three, and *each one speaking* in turn, and one must interpret [what is said].

²⁸But if there is no one to interpret, the one [who wishes to speak in a tongue] must keep silent in church; let him speak to himself and to God.

²⁹Let two or three prophets speak [as inspired by the Holy Spirit], while the rest pay attention *and* weigh carefully what is said.

³⁰But if an inspired revelation is made to another who is seated, then the first one must be silent.

³¹For [in this way] you can all prophesy one by one, so that everyone may be instructed and everyone may be encouraged;

³²for the spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets [the prophecy is under the speaker's control, and he can stop speaking];

³³for God [who is the source of their prophesying] is not *a God of confusion and disorder* but of peace *and* order.

As [is the practice] in all the churches of the saints (God's people),

³⁴the women should be silent in the churches, for they are not authorized to speak, but are to take a subordinate place, as the Law says.

³⁵If there is anything they want to learn [that is, if they have questions about anything being said or taught], they are to ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to talk in church.

³⁶Did the word of the Lord originate from you

[Corinthians], or has it come to you only [so that you know best what God requires]?

³⁷If anyone thinks *and* claims that he is a prophet [a true spokesman for God] or spiritually astute [filled with and energized by the Holy Spirit], let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment.

³⁸If anyone does not recognize this [that it is a command of the Lord], he is not recognized [by God].

³⁹Therefore, believers, desire earnestly to prophesy [to foretell the future, to speak a new message from God to the people], and do not forbid speaking in *unknown* tongues.

⁴⁰But all things must be done appropriately and in an orderly manner.

15 NOW BROTHERS and sisters, let me remind you [once again] of the good news [of salvation] which I preached to you, which you welcomed *and* accepted and on which you stand [by faith].

²By this *faith* you are saved [reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, and set apart for His purpose], if you hold firmly to the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain [just superficially and without complete commitment].

³For I passed on to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to [that which] the Scriptures [foretold], [Is 53:5–12]

⁴and that He was buried, and that He was [bodily] raised on the third day according to [that which] the Scriptures

[foretold], [Ps 16:9, 10]

⁵and that He appeared to Cephas (Peter), then to the Twelve.

⁶After that He appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, the majority of whom are still alive, but some have fallen asleep [in death].

⁷Then He was seen by James, then by all the apostles,

⁸and last of all, as to one untimely (prematurely, traumatically) born, He appeared to me also. [Acts 9:1–9]

⁹For I am the least [worthy] of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I [at one time] fiercely oppressed *and* violently persecuted the church of God.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, God, for always
giving me the victory through
my Lord Jesus Christ!*

• *adapted from 1 Corinthians*

15:54, 57

¹⁰But by the [remarkable] grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not without effect. In fact, I worked harder than all of the apostles, though it was not I, but the grace of God [His unmerited favor and blessing which was] with me.

¹¹So whether it was I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed *and* trusted in *and* relied on with confidence.

¹²Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how is it that some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

¹³But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised;

¹⁴and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain [useless, amounting to nothing], and your faith is also vain [imaginary, unfounded, devoid of value and benefit—not based on truth].

¹⁵We are even discovered to be false witnesses [misrepresenting] God, because we testified concerning Him that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised.

¹⁶For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised, either;

¹⁷and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless *and* powerless [mere delusion]; you are still in your sins [and under the control and penalty of sin].

¹⁸Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.

¹⁹If we who are [abiding] in Christ have hoped only in this life [and this is all there is], then we are of all people most

miserable *and* to be pitied.

²⁰But now [as things really are] Christ has *in fact* been raised from the dead, [and He became] the first fruits [that is, the first to be resurrected with an incorruptible, immortal body, foreshadowing the resurrection] of those who have fallen asleep [in death]. [Col 1:18]

²¹For since [it was] by a man that death *came* [into the world], it is also by a Man that the resurrection of the dead *has come*.

²²For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

²³But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then those who are Christ's [own will be resurrected with incorruptible, immortal bodies] at His coming.

²⁴After that comes the end (completion), when He hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after He has made inoperative *and* abolished every ruler and every authority and power.

²⁵For Christ must reign [as King] until He has put all His enemies under His feet. [Ps 110:1]

²⁶The last enemy to be abolished *and* put to an end is death.

²⁷For HE (the Father) HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS (Christ's) FEET. But when He says, "All things have been put in subjection [under Christ]," it is clear that He (the Father) who put all things in subjection to Him (Christ) is excepted [since the Father is not in subjection to His own Son]. [Ps 8:6]

²⁸However, when all things are subjected to Him (Christ),

then the Son Himself will also be subjected to the One (the Father) who put all things under Him, so that God may be all in all [manifesting His glory without any opposition, the supreme indwelling and controlling factor of life].

²⁹Otherwise, what will those do who are being baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people even baptized for them?

³⁰[For that matter] why are we [running such risks and putting ourselves] in danger [nearly] every hour [if there is no resurrection]?

³¹I assure you, believers, by the pride which I have in you in [your union with] Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily [I face death and die to self].

³²What good has it done me if, [merely] from a human point of view, I fought with wild animals at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised [at all], LET US EAT AND DRINK [enjoying ourselves now], FOR TOMORROW WE DIE. [Is 22:13; 2 Cor 1:8, 9]

³³Do not be deceived: “Bad company corrupts good morals.”

³⁴Be sober-minded [be sensible, wake up from your spiritual stupor] as you ought, and stop sinning; for some [of you] have no knowledge of God [you are disgracefully ignorant of Him, and ignore His truths]. I say this to your shame.

³⁵But someone will say, “How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body will they come?”

³⁶You fool! Every time you plant *seed* you sow something that does not come to life [germinating, springing up and growing] unless it *first* dies.

³⁷The seed you sow is not the body (the plant) which it is going to become, but it is a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or some other grain.

³⁸But God gives it a body just as He planned, and to each kind of seed a body of its own [is given]. [Gen 1:11]

³⁹All flesh is not the same. There is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish.

⁴⁰There are also heavenly bodies [sun, moon and stars] and earthly bodies [humans, animals, and plants], but the glory *and* beauty of the heavenly is one kind, and the *glory* of the earthly is another.

⁴¹There is a glory *and* beauty of the sun, another glory of the moon, and yet another [distinctive] glory of the stars; and one star differs from another in glory *and* brilliance.

⁴²So it is with the resurrection of the dead. The [human] body that is sown is perishable *and* mortal, it is raised imperishable *and* immortal. [Dan 12:3]

⁴³It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in strength;

⁴⁴it is sown a natural body [mortal, suited to earth], it is raised a spiritual body [immortal, suited to heaven]. As surely as there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual *body*.

⁴⁵So it is written [in Scripture], “The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL (an individual);” the last Adam (Christ) *became* a life-giving spirit [restoring the dead to life]. [Gen 2:7]

⁴⁶However, the spiritual [the immortal life] is not first, but the physical [the mortal life]; then the spiritual.

⁴⁷The first man [Adam] is from the earth, earthy [made of

dust]; the second Man [Christ, the Lord] is from heaven. [Gen 2:7]

⁴⁸As is the earthly man [the man of dust], so are those who are of earth; and as is the heavenly [Man], so are those who are of heaven.

⁴⁹Just as we have borne the image of the earthly [the man of dust], we will also bear the image of the heavenly [the Man of heaven].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Steadfast and Immovable

Many people feel able and qualified to do a particular thing, and yet they live frustrated lives because the right doors never seem to open for them to do it. Their opportunities never seem to come. Why? I believe many people are “able but not stable.” God has given people abilities, but they may not have made the effort to mature and develop a stable character.

When we are stable and mature in character, we can do what is best no matter how we happen to feel (see Col. 2:5). God will be able to trust us, and other people will be able to depend on us. As long as we are breathing, we will have times of abundance and times when we struggle, times when circumstances are up and times when they’re down. Let circumstances do what they will; meanwhile, be determined to remain “steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

⁵⁰Now I say this, believers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit *nor* be part of the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable (mortal) inherit the imperishable (immortal).

⁵¹Listen very carefully, I tell you a mystery [a secret truth decreed by God and previously hidden, but now revealed]; we will not all sleep [in death], but we will all be [completely] changed [wondrously transformed],

⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at [the sound of] the last trumpet call. For a trumpet will sound, and the dead [who believed in Christ] will be raised imperishable, and we will be [completely] changed [wondrously transformed].

⁵³For this perishable [part of us] must put on the imperishable [nature], and this mortal [part of us that is capable of dying] must put on immortality [which is freedom from death].

⁵⁴And when this perishable puts on the imperishable, and this mortal puts on immortality, then the Scripture will be fulfilled that says, “DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory (vanquished forever). [Is 25:8]

⁵⁵“O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?” [Hos 13:14]

⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin [by which it brings death] is the law;

⁵⁷but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory [as conquerors] through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵⁸Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord [always doing your best and doing more than is needed], being *continually* aware that your labor [even to the point of exhaustion] in the Lord is not futile *nor* wasted [it is never without purpose].

16 NOW CONCERNING the money collected for [the relief of] the saints [in Jerusalem], you are to do the same as I directed the churches of Galatia *to do*.

²On the first day of every week each one of you is to put something aside, in proportion to his prosperity, and save it so that no collections [will need to] be made when I come.

³When I arrive, I will send whomever you approve with letters [of authorization] to take your gift [of charity and love] to Jerusalem;

⁴and if it is fitting for me to go too, they will accompany me.

⁵I will visit you after I go through Macedonia, for I am only passing through Macedonia;

⁶but it may be that I will stay with you [for a while], or even spend the winter, so that you may send me on my way to wherever I may go *afterward*.

⁷For I do not wish to see you right now *just* in passing, but I hope to remain with you for some time [later on], if the Lord permits.

⁸But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost,

⁹because a wide door for effective service has opened to me [in Ephesus, a very promising opportunity], and there are many adversaries. [Acts 19:23–41]

¹⁰If Timothy comes, see to it that [you put him at ease, so that] he has nothing to fear in regard to you, for he is [devotedly] doing the Lord's work, just as I am.

¹¹So allow no one to treat him with disdain [as if he were inconsequential]. But send him off [cordially, and speed him on his way] in peace, so that he may come to me, for I am expecting him [to come along] with the *other* brothers.

¹²As for our brother Apollos, I have strongly encouraged him to visit you with the other brothers. It was not at all his

desire to come now, but he will come when he has the opportunity.

13 Be on guard; stand firm in your faith [in God, respecting His precepts and keeping your doctrine sound]. Act like [mature] men *and* be courageous; be strong. [Ps 31:24]

Speak God's Word

*I am on my guard, standing
firm in my faith in God,
respecting His precepts and
keeping my doctrine sound. I
act maturely, and I am
courageous and strong!*

| adapted from 1 CORINTHIANS

16:13 |

¹⁴Let everything you do be done in love [motivated and inspired by God's love for us].

¹⁵Brothers and sisters, you know that *those of* the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to ^{*}God's people—now I urge you

¹⁶to be subject to such leaders [treating them with courtesy and respect], and to everyone who helps in the work and labors [for the benefit of yourselves and the church].

¹⁷I rejoice because Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus have arrived, for they have made up for your absence.

¹⁸They have refreshed my spirit as well as yours. So fully

acknowledge such men *and* deeply appreciate them.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Focus on Loving Others

From start to finish, God's Word encourages and challenges us to "let everything you do be done in love [motivated and inspired by God's love for us]" (1 Cor. 16:14). Love other people; it is the example Jesus set for us throughout His life and ministry on earth.

If you truly desire to love others the way God loves you, choose to fill your mind with kind, loving, unselfish, and generous thoughts. Take a few minutes each morning and ask God to show you what you can do for somebody else that day. You can even choose a specific person. Focus on loving others and purpose to think good thoughts about them, and you will have a life full of love and happiness and become a great encourager to others.

¹⁹The churches of Asia send you their greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church [that meets] in their house, send you their warm greetings in the Lord.

²⁰All the believers greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

²¹This greeting is in my own hand—Paul.

²²If anyone does not love the Lord [does not obey and respect and believe in Jesus Christ and His message], he is to be accursed. Maranatha (O our Lord, come)!

²³The grace of our Lord Jesus [His unmerited favor, His spiritual blessing, His profound mercy] be with you.

²⁴My love be with all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen.

2 Corinthians

Author: | Paul
Date: | About AD
55, seemingly a few
months after 1
Corinthians

Among other reasons, the apostle Paul wrote this very personal letter as a follow-up to 1 Corinthians to support and encourage the Christians who had been loyal to Christ, despite challenges and difficulties in Corinth.

One key theme of 2 Corinthians is that because Jesus took our sin upon Himself and died in our place, we are now granted right standing with God. In the battle of the mind, the enemy often tries to make us think we are separated or distant from God because of our sin and guilt, but 2 Corinthians 5:17–21 clearly tells us the right way to think about this issue.

Second Corinthians also includes powerful insights on the battle of the mind, which you'll see in chapter 10—teaching

and advice that will help you gain victory over the devil in your thought life.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM 2 CORINTHIANS:

The war we fight is a spiritual war and cannot be fought in the physical realm. We win by using powerful spiritual weapons (see 2 Corinthians 10:3).

Through careful strategy and lies, Satan attempts to set up fortresses or strongholds in our mind—areas in which we are held in bondage due to a certain way of thinking (see 2 Corinthians 10:4–5).

You have the mind of Christ, so choose to be positive and in alignment with God's Word. Cast down every mental stronghold and take your thoughts captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ (see 2 Corinthians 10:5).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM 2 CORINTHIANS:

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty [emancipation from bondage, true freedom]. | 2 Corinthians 3:17

If anyone is in Christ... he is a new creature [reborn and renewed by the Holy Spirit]. | 2 Corinthians 5:17

The weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood]. Our weapons are divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying sophisticated arguments and every exalted and proud thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought and purpose captive to the obedience of Christ. | 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

1 PAUL, AN apostle (special messenger, personally chosen representative) of Christ Jesus (the Messiah) by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother,

To the church of God which is at Corinth, and to all the saints (God's people) throughout Achaia (southern Greece):

²Grace to you and peace [inner calm and spiritual well-being] from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³Blessed [gratefully praised and adored] be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort,

⁴who comforts *and* encourages us in every trouble so that we will be able to comfort *and* encourage those who are in any kind of trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

⁵For just as Christ's sufferings are ours in abundance [as they overflow to His followers], so also our comfort [our reassurance, our encouragement, our consolation] is abundant through Christ [it is truly more than enough to endure what we must].

⁶But if we are troubled *and* distressed, it is for your comfort

and salvation; or if we are comforted *and* encouraged, it is for your comfort, which works [in you] when you patiently endure the same sufferings which we experience.

⁷And our hope for you [our confident expectation of good for you] is firmly grounded [assured and unshaken], since we know that just as you share *as partners* in our sufferings, so also you share *as partners* in our comfort.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Receive Comfort, Give Comfort

God obviously knows how important comfort is to us, because He gave the Comforter and the Encourager to us when He sent the Holy Spirit. No one is as good as He is at comforting us when we are hurting or grieving. Only because we have Him in our lives can we be comforted when people around us do not know how to comfort us or understand how much we need it. The Holy Spirit is the Parakletos, the Greek word for one who walks alongside us, giving aid, encouraging us, building us up, edifying us, and comforting us. Jesus said that when He went away, He would send another Comforter, the Holy Spirit (see John 14:16).

According to 2 Corinthians 1:3–4, God is the source of every comfort and encouragement. I believe that although He wants to comfort and encourage us through other people, He is the ultimate source of the amazing and often-needed ministry of comfort.

God comforts us in our times of need so we might then comfort others when they experience loss or heartache. The next time you find yourself in need of comfort, remember that you can receive it from God; and then share that same kind of comfort with someone else.

POWERPOINT

There may be times in our lives when God allows us to go through difficulties to enable us to eventually minister to and “comfort *and* encourage those who are in any kind of trouble,” because we ourselves have been comforted by God (see 2 Cor. 1:4). If this is what God permits in our lives, we can be assured that we are able to handle it, because He promises never to allow us to go through more than we can bear. Experiencing God’s faithfulness in our own painful situations is what enables us to share with others that God will be faithful to them also. We went through a test, but now we have a testimony!



⁸For we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about our trouble in [the west coast province of] Asia [Minor], how we were utterly weighed down, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life [itself].

⁹Indeed, we felt within ourselves that we had received the sentence of death [and were convinced that we would die, but this happened] so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead.

¹⁰He rescued us from so great a *threat of* death, and will *continue to* rescue us. On Him we have set our hope. And He will again rescue us [from danger and draw us near],

¹¹while you join in helping us by your prayers. Then thanks will be given by many persons on our behalf for the gracious gift [of deliverance] granted to us through *the prayers of many* [believers].

¹²This is our [reason for] proud confidence: our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world [in general], and especially toward you, with pure motives and godly sincerity, not in human wisdom, but in the grace of God [that is, His gracious lovingkindness that leads people to Christ and spiritual maturity].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Total Dependence on God

In 2 Corinthians 1:8–9, Paul wrote of times when he and his comrades experienced troubles so intense that they felt they had received a death sentence, but the reason for it was to keep them from trusting in themselves rather than relying completely on God. At times God allows our troubles to be more than we can possibly handle on our own so we will ultimately realize our need for Him.

If you feel that what is going on in your life right now is more than you can bear, you don't see a way out, and you absolutely don't know what to do, consider yourself in a good place. You now know that the only thing you can do is to trust God, and that is exactly what He wants.

God wants us to be totally dependent on Him and to realize that He never fails. It often takes a while for this truth to become rooted in our thought process, and sometimes we have to experience difficulties in order for that to happen. Part of God's plan for us is that we move from a mind-set of independence to one of wholehearted trust in Him.

¹³For we write you nothing other than what you read and understand [there is no double meaning in what we say]. And I hope you will [accurately] understand [divine things] until the end;

¹⁴just as you have [already] partially understood us, [and one day will recognize] that you can be proud of us just as we are of you, in the day of our Lord Jesus.

¹⁵It was with this confidence that I planned at first to visit you, so that you might receive twice a token of grace;

¹⁶that is, [I wanted] to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and [then] to come back to you [on my return] from Macedonia, and have you send me on my way to Judea.

¹⁷So then, was I indecisive *or* capricious when I was [originally] planning this? Or the things I plan, do I plan in a self-serving way like a worldly man, ready to say, “Yes, yes” and “No, no” [at the same time]?

¹⁸But [as surely as] God is faithful *and* means what He says, our message to you is not “Yes” and “No” [at the same time].

¹⁹For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, by me, Silvanus, and Timothy, was not “Yes” and “No,” but has proved to be “Yes” in Him [true and faithful, the divine “Yes” affirming God’s promises].

²⁰For as many as are the promises of God, in Christ they are [all answered] “Yes.” So through Him we say our “Amen” to the glory of God.

²¹Now it is God who establishes *and* confirms us [in joint fellowship] with you in Christ, and who has anointed us [empowering us with the gifts of the Spirit];

²²it is He who has also put His seal on us [that is, He has appropriated us and certified us as His] and has given us the [Holy] Spirit in our hearts as a pledge [like a security deposit to guarantee the fulfillment of His promise of eternal life].

²³But I call on God as my soul's witness, that it was to spare you [pain and discouragement] that I did not come again to Corinth—

²⁴not that we rule [like dictators] over your faith, but *rather* we work with you for [the increase of] your joy; for in your faith you stand firm [in your strong conviction that Jesus of Nazareth—the Messiah—is the Son of God, through whom we obtain eternal salvation].

2 BUT I made up my mind not to grieve you with another painful visit.

²For if I cause you grief [by a well-deserved rebuke], who then provides me enjoyment but the very one whom I have made sad?

³And I wrote this same thing to you, so that when I came, I would not be filled with sorrow by those who ought to make me glad, for I trusted in you *and* felt confident that my joy would be shared by all of you.

⁴For I wrote to you out of great distress and with an anguished heart, and with many tears, not to cause you sorrow but to make you realize the [overflowing] love which I have especially for you.

⁵But if someone has caused [all this] sorrow, he has caused it not to me, but in some degree—not to put it too severely—[he has distressed and grieved] all of you.

⁶For such a one this punishment by the majority is sufficient,

⁷so instead [of further rebuke, now] you should rather

[graciously] forgive and comfort *and* encourage him, to keep him from being overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.

⁸Therefore I urge you to reinstate him in your affections *and* reaffirm your love for him.

⁹For this was my purpose in writing, to see if you would stand the test, whether you are obedient *and* committed to following my instruction in all things.

¹⁰If you forgive anyone anything, I too forgive [that one]; and what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of [and with the approval of] Christ,

¹¹to keep Satan from taking advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his schemes.

¹²Now when I arrived at Troas to *preach* the good news of Christ, even though a door [of opportunity] opened for me in the Lord,

¹³my spirit could not rest because I did not find my brother Titus *there*; so saying goodbye to them, I left for Macedonia.

¹⁴But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us spreads *and* makes evident everywhere the sweet fragrance of the knowledge of Him.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Thank You, God! You always lead me in triumph in Christ, and through me You spread and make evident everywhere the sweet fragrance of the knowledge of Him.

• adapted from 2 Corinthians 2:14

¹⁵For we are the *sweet* fragrance of Christ [which ascends] to God, [discernible both] among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing;

¹⁶to the *latter* one an aroma from death to death [a fatal, offensive odor], but to the other an aroma from life to life [a vital fragrance, living and fresh]. And who is adequate *and* sufficiently qualified for these things?

¹⁷For we are not like many, [acting like merchants] peddling God's word [shortchanging and adulterating God's message]; but from pure [uncompromised] motives, as [commissioned and sent] from God, we speak [His message] in Christ in the sight of God.

3 ARE WE starting to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some [false teachers], letters of recommendation to you or from you? [No!]

²You are our letter [of recommendation], written in our hearts, recognized and read by everyone.

³You show that you are a letter from Christ, delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. [Ex 24:12; 31:18; 32:15, 16; Jer 31:33]

⁴Such is the confidence *and* steadfast reliance *and* absolute trust that we have through Christ toward God.

⁵Not that we are sufficiently qualified in ourselves to claim anything as *coming* from us, but our sufficiency *and* qualifications come from God.

⁶He has qualified us [making us sufficient] as ministers of a new covenant [of salvation through Christ], not of the letter [of a written code] but of the Spirit; for the letter [of the Law] kills [by revealing sin and demanding obedience], but the Spirit gives life. [Jer 31:31]

⁷Now if the ministry of death, engraved in letters on stones [the covenant of the Law which led to death because of sin], came with such glory *and* splendor that the Israelites were not able to look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, [a brilliance] that was fading, [Ex 34:29–35]

⁸how will the ministry of the Spirit [the new covenant which allows us to be Spirit-filled] fail to be even more glorious *and* splendid?

⁹For if the ministry that brings condemnation [the old covenant, the Law] has glory, how much more does glory overflow in the ministry that brings righteousness [the new covenant which declares believers free of guilt and sets them apart for God's special purpose]!

¹⁰Indeed, what had glory [the Law], in this case no longer has glory because of the glory that surpasses it [the gospel].

¹¹For if that [Law] which fades away *came* with glory, *how* much more *must* that [gospel] which remains *and* is permanent abide in glory *and* splendor!

¹²Since we have such a [glorious] hope *and* confident expectation, we speak with great courage,

¹³and we are not like Moses, *who* used to put a veil over his face so that the Israelites would not gaze at the end of the glory which was fading away.

¹⁴But [in fact] their minds were hardened [for they had lost the ability to understand]; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed [only] in Christ.

¹⁵But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil [of blindness] lies over their heart;

¹⁶but whenever a person turns [in repentance and faith] to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

¹⁷Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there* is liberty [emancipation from bondage, true freedom]. [Is 61:1, 2]

¹⁸And we all, with unveiled face, *continually* seeing as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are *progressively* being transformed into His image from [one degree of] glory to [even more] glory, which comes from the Lord, [who is] the Spirit.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Gradual Growth

The devil is a faultfinder. If we focus only on what is wrong in life, with ourselves, and with other people, we are following his example. However, God has given us a new nature. If we are truly living as His children, we can learn to function from the renewed part of our being (see Eph. 4:22–24).

The Bible says we “are progressively being transformed into His image from [one degree of] glory to [even more] glory, which comes from the Lord, [who is] the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18). As we follow the leading of our renewed spirit and the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, we will develop new habits and new, healthy, godly ways of thinking, but it does take time.

God operates on the principle of “gradual growth”—things changing little by little. Rather than focusing on how far you still have to go, recognize instead how far you have come. Staying positive will help you in all areas of life.

4 THEREFORE, SINCE we have this ministry, just as we received mercy [from God, granting us salvation, opportunities, and blessings], we do not get discouraged *nor* lose our motivation.

²But we have renounced the disgraceful things hidden because of shame; not walking in trickery or adulterating the

word of God, but by stating the truth [openly and plainly], we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.

³But even if our gospel is [in some sense] hidden [behind a veil], it is hidden [only] to those who are perishing;

⁴among them the god of this world [Satan] has blinded the minds of the unbelieving to prevent them from seeing the illuminating light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

⁵For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves [merely] as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.

⁶For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give us the Light of the knowledge of the glory *and* majesty of God [clearly revealed] in the face of Christ. [Gen 1:3]

⁷But we have this *precious* treasure [the good news about salvation] in [unworthy] earthen vessels [of human frailty], so that the grandeur *and* surpassing greatness of the power will be [shown to be] from God [His sufficiency] and not from ourselves.

POWERPOINT

It is important to be confident, but it is also important to remember that the strength resulting from confidence can quickly be lost in conceit. It is vital to remain humble. Second Corinthians 4:7 says, “We have this *precious* treasure [the good news about salvation] in [unworthy] earthen vessels [of human frailty], so that the grandeur *and* surpassing greatness of the power will be [shown to be] from God [His sufficiency] and not from ourselves.” God deserves all the credit and glory for any good work manifesting in our lives.



KEYS to a Victorious Life

The Right Attitude Toward Difficulty

I am quite sure that Paul didn't enjoy his difficulties any more than we enjoy ours, but he definitely seemed to have a right and victorious attitude toward them. He considered (thought) that they would work something good in him. He said they were preparing and producing an everlasting weight of glory.

The beauty of faith is that we can see the unseen. We can see with the eye of faith what we cannot see with the natural eye. By faith we trust God and believe His Word, and that allows us to always believe that in and through all things, God is working toward our good and our advancement. No matter what difficulty you might be enduring right now, if you will decide to believe that it will ultimately work out for your good, it will give you comfort and help you not to be discouraged. Remember that God is good, and He has a good plan for you!

⁸We are pressured in every way [hedged in], but not crushed; perplexed [unsure of finding a way out], but not driven to despair;

⁹hunted down *and* persecuted, but not deserted [to stand alone]; struck down, but never destroyed;

¹⁰always carrying around in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the [resurrection] life of Jesus also may be shown in our

body.

¹¹For we who live are constantly [experiencing the threat of] being handed over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the [resurrection] life of Jesus also may be evidenced in our mortal body [which is subject to death].

¹²So *physical* death is [actively] at work in us, but [spiritual] life [is actively at work] in you.

¹³Yet we have the same spirit of faith as he had, who wrote in *Scripture*, "I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE." We also believe, therefore we also speak, [Ps 116:10]

¹⁴knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will also raise us with Jesus and will present us [along] with you in His presence.

¹⁵For all [these] things are for your sake, so that as [God's remarkable, undeserved] grace reaches to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of [our great] God.

¹⁶Therefore we do not become discouraged [spiritless, disappointed, or afraid]. Though our outer self is [progressively] wasting away, yet our inner *self* is being [progressively] renewed day by day.

¹⁷For our momentary, light distress [this passing trouble] is producing for us an eternal weight of glory [a fullness] beyond all measure [surpassing all comparisons, a transcendent splendor and an endless blessedness]!

¹⁸So we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen; for the things which are visible are temporal [just brief and fleeting], but the things which are invisible are everlasting *and* imperishable.

5 FOR WE know that if the earthly tent [our physical body] which is our house is torn down [through death], we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

²For indeed in this *house* we groan, longing to be clothed with our [immortal, eternal] celestial dwelling,

³so that by putting it on we will not be found naked.

⁴For while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened [often weighed down, oppressed], not that we want to be unclothed [separated by death from the body], but to be clothed, so that what is mortal [the body] will be swallowed up by life [after the resurrection].

POWERPOINT

In 2 Corinthians 5:8, we read that Paul had the proper perspective on death. His mind-set was that to be absent from the body meant to be at home with the Lord. He knew that death was inevitable for him, just as it is for all of us, and he purposed not to allow the fear of death to keep him from fulfilling God's will. There is no point in fearing what we cannot avoid. We should not let the fear of death prevent us from living our lives to the fullest! Everyone will eventually die, but that is not as important as where we will spend eternity!



Speak God's Word

*Because I am in Christ,
joined to Him by faith in Him
as Savior; I am a new
creation, reborn and renewed
by the Holy Spirit. Old things
have passed away. Behold,
new things have come
because spiritual awakening
brings a new life.*

| adapted from 2 CORINTHIANS

5:17 |

⁵Now He who has made us *and* prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave us the [Holy] Spirit as a pledge [a guarantee, a down payment on the fulfillment of His promise].

⁶So then, being always filled with good courage *and* confident hope, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—

⁷for we walk by faith, not by sight [living our lives in a manner consistent with our confident belief in God's promises]

—
⁸we are [as I was saying] of good courage *and* confident hope, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at

home with the Lord.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Generosity Defeats Selfishness

We are all creatures of habit, but bad habits can be broken and replaced with good ones. If we focus on developing good habits, the bad ones won't have any room to operate in our lives. One good habit we can form is that of being generous, being people who continually reach out to others to make their lives better. Spend some time daily thinking about what you can do for others.

I admit that I was a selfish, self-centered person for much of my life. We don't have to learn to be selfish. We are born with that ability. Thankfully, through the new birth in Jesus Christ, we can change. Jesus died so that we no longer have to live to and for ourselves (see 2 Cor. 5:15). That is good news! We can be free from selfishness. We can be delivered from constantly thinking, What about me? We won't have to fear that our needs won't be met, because God will always take care of our needs when we are attentive to the needs of others and when our attitude toward them is generous.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Willingness To Change Brings Victory

Someone might say, “I’ve always had a bad temper. I can’t help the way I am. My father had a bad temper too.” These excuses for bad behavior could go on endlessly. People use excuses to justify the way they are. Such excuses are an attempt to resist change.

Not facing the truth about ourselves and making excuses is part of Satan’s deceptive influence. For example, he might tell us that we’re not rude—we’re just speaking the truth as we see it. If he convinces us that other people are at fault because “they’re just too sensitive,” we don’t feel responsible, and we think we’re okay. Having convinced us that we don’t have to change, the devil has won a battle in our lives.

When I went through a period of extreme negativity, I never thought of myself as being negative. I was just being realistic! I could see the weaknesses and problems of others, and I was quite happy to show them how they could overcome. I thought

I was being helpful. It never occurred to me in my prideful state that people wanted acceptance and encouragement, not judgment and criticism.

We need to realize that God is able to deliver us when we have ungodly attitudes or display bad behaviors rooted in ungodly thoughts. We start the Christian life as new creations “[reborn and renewed by the Holy Spirit]; the old things... have passed away” (2 Cor. 5:17). Our past is wiped away.

Freedom begins when we face our problems without excuses. “Yes, I’m negative, but I am sorry and I want to change.” We do not have to remain the way we are, now or in the future. With God’s help, our minds can be renewed according to the Word of God, and the better our thinking becomes, the better our attitude will be.

The most difficult part may be to face the truth about ourselves and say to God, “I’m a negative person, and I have no excuse.” You may have tried to change yourself in the past, but it didn’t work. Now you can begin to win the battle over Satan’s stronghold by facing truth, asking for God’s help, and studying His Word in the area that gives you problems. God’s Word is filled with power that will set you free.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Holy God, forgive me for my negative thinking. Help me so that Satan has no stronghold over my mind. Please destroy every negative aspect of my thinking, through Jesus my Lord. Amen.

Speak God's Word

*I have become the
righteousness of God. I have
been made acceptable to Him
and placed in a right
relationship with Him by His
gracious lovingkindness.*

| adapted from 2 CORINTHIANS
5:21 |

⁹Therefore, whether we are at home [on earth] or away from home [and with Him], it is our [constant] ambition to be pleasing to Him.

¹⁰For we [believers will be called to account and] must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be repaid for what has been done in the body, whether good or bad [that is, each will be held responsible for his actions, purposes, goals, motives—the use or misuse of his time, opportunities and abilities].

¹¹Therefore, since we know the fear of the Lord [and understand the importance of obedience and worship], we persuade people [to be reconciled to Him]. But we are plainly known to God [He knows everything about us]; and I hope that we are plainly known also in your consciences [your God-

given discernment].

¹²We are not commending ourselves to you again, but are giving you an occasion to be [rightfully] proud of us, so that you will have *an answer* for those who take pride in [outward] appearances [the virtues they pretend to have] rather than what is [actually] in heart.

¹³If we are out of our mind [just unstable fanatics as some critics say], it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for your benefit.

¹⁴For the love of Christ controls *and* compels us, because we have concluded this, that One died for all, therefore all died;

¹⁵and He died for all, so that all those who live would no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and was raised for their sake.

¹⁶So from now on we regard no one from a human point of view [according to worldly standards and values]. Though we have known Christ from a human point of view, now we no longer know Him *in this way*.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The Great Exchange

One of the very best truths I know is that God's righteousness is available to us (see 2 Cor. 5:21). It is a gift to us at the time we receive Jesus Christ as Savior. It comes by grace through faith. Since it is a gift, it cannot be earned or deserved, and there is no way for us to pay for it. The righteousness God gives to us has already been purchased by the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

God takes our sin from us and gives us His very own righteousness; and by an act of His love and mercy, He views us as being in right standing with Him through our faith. This is the great exchange! God takes our sins, puts them on Jesus, and gives us His righteousness. Someone had to pay for sin, and we could not, so God sent His only Son, Jesus, to do the job. He became our substitute.

Are you willing to change your thoughts and words to agree with the way God thinks and speaks about you? Will you come into agreement with Him? Instead of thinking and saying, "I am no good. I can't do anything right. I will never measure up to what I need to be," start saying, "I am the righteousness of God in Christ. God sees me as righteous, and I am in right relationship with Him through Jesus." The more you accept His righteousness as a gift, the more you will find yourself doing the right thing!

¹⁷Therefore if anyone is in Christ [that is, grafted in, joined to Him by faith in Him as Savior], *he is* a new creature [reborn and renewed by the Holy Spirit]; the old things [the previous moral and spiritual condition] have passed away. Behold, new things have come [because spiritual awakening brings a new life].

¹⁸But all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ [making us acceptable to Him] and gave us the ministry of reconciliation [so that by our example we might bring others to Him],

¹⁹that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting people's sins against them [but canceling them]. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation [that is, restoration to favor with God].

²⁰So we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making His appeal through us; we [as Christ's representatives] plead with you on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God.

²¹He made Christ who knew no sin to [judicially] be sin on our behalf, so that in Him we would become the righteousness of God [that is, we would be made acceptable to Him and placed in a right relationship with Him by His gracious lovingkindness].

6 WORKING TOGETHER *with Him*, we strongly urge you not to receive God's grace in vain [by turning away from sound doctrine and His merciful kindness].

²For He says,

“AT THE ACCEPTABLE TIME (the time of grace) I LISTENED TO

YOU,
AND I HELPED YOU ON THE DAY OF SALVATION.”

Behold, now is “THE ACCEPTABLE TIME,” behold, now is “THE DAY OF SALVATION”—[Is 49:8]

³we put no obstruction in anyone’s path, so that the ministry will not be discredited,

⁴but we commend ourselves in every way as servants of God: in great endurance, in sufferings, in hardships, in distresses,

⁵in beatings, in imprisonments, in riots, in labors, in sleepless nights, in hunger,

⁶in purity *and* sincerity, in knowledge *and* spiritual insight, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love,

⁷in [speaking] the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand [like holding the sword to attack] and for the left [like holding the shield to defend],

⁸amid glory and dishonor; by evil report and good report; *branded* as deceivers and yet [vindicated as] truthful;

⁹as unknown [to the world], yet well-known [by God and His people]; as dying, yet we live; as punished, yet not killed;

¹⁰as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet bestowing riches on many; as having nothing, yet possessing all things.

¹¹We are speaking freely to you, Corinthians [we are keeping nothing back], and our heart is opened wide. [Is 60:5; Ezek 33:22]

¹²There is no limit to our affection for you, but you are limited in your own affection [for us].

¹³Now in the same way as a fair exchange [for our love toward you]—I am speaking as [I would] to children—open wide [your hearts] *to us* also.

¹⁴Do not be unequally bound together with unbelievers [do not make mismatched alliances with them, inconsistent with your faith]. For what partnership can righteousness have with lawlessness? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?

¹⁵What harmony can there be between Christ and Belial (Satan)? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?

¹⁶What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said:

“I WILL DWELL AMONG THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM;
AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.
[Ex 25:8; 29:45; Lev 26:12; Jer 31:1; Ezek 37:27]

¹⁷“SO COME OUT FROM AMONG UNBELIEVERS AND BE SEPARATE,”
says the Lord,

“AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN;
And I will graciously receive you *and* welcome you [with
favor], [Is 52:11]

¹⁸And I will be a Father to you,
And you will be My sons and daughters,”
Says the Lord Almighty. [Is 43:6; Hos 1:10]

7 THEREFORE, SINCE we have these [great and wonderful] promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, completing holiness [living

a consecrated life—a life set apart for God's purpose] in the fear of God.

²Make room for us *in your hearts*; we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have cheated no one.

³I do not say *this* to condemn *you*, for I have said before that you are [nested] in our hearts [and you will remain there] to die together and to live together [with us].

⁴Great is my confidence in you; great is my pride *and* boasting on your behalf. I am filled [to the brim] with comfort; I am overflowing with joy in spite of all our trouble.

⁵For even when we arrived in Macedonia our bodies had no rest, but we were oppressed at every turn—conflicts *and* disputes without, fears *and* dread within.

⁶But God, who comforts *and* encourages the depressed *and* the disquieted, comforted us by the arrival of Titus.

⁷And not only by his arrival, but also by [his account of] the encouragement which he received in regard to you. He told us about your longing [for us], your mourning [over sin], *and* how eagerly you took my part and supported me, so that I rejoiced even more.

⁸For even though I did grieve you with my letter, I do not regret it [now]; though I did regret it—for I see that the letter hurt you, though only for a little while—

⁹yet I am glad now, not because you were hurt *and* made sorry, but because your sorrow led to repentance [and you turned back to God]; for you felt a grief such as God meant you to feel, so that you might not suffer loss in anything on our account.

Speak God's Word

*God, who comforts and
encourages the depressed
and the disquieted, comforts
me.*

| *adapted from* 2 CORINTHIANS
7:6 |

¹⁰For [godly] sorrow that is in accord with *the will of* God produces a repentance without regret, *leading* to salvation; but worldly sorrow [the hopeless sorrow of those who do not believe] produces death.

¹¹For [you can look back and] see what an earnestness *and* authentic concern this godly sorrow has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves [against charges that you tolerate sin], what indignation [at sin], what fear [of offending God], what longing [for righteousness and justice], what passion [to do what is right], what readiness to punish [those who sin and those who tolerate sin]! At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in the matter.

¹²So even though I wrote to you [as I did], it was not for the sake of the offender nor for the sake of the one offended, but in order to make evident to you before God how earnestly you do care for us [and your willingness to accept our

authority].

¹³It is for this reason that we are comforted *and* encouraged.

And in addition to our comfort, we were especially delighted at the joy of Titus, because you have refreshed his spirit.

¹⁴For if I have boasted to him at all concerning you, I was not disappointed. But just as everything we ever said to you was true, so our boasting [about you] to Titus has proved true also.

¹⁵His affection is greater than ever as he remembers the obedience [to his guidance] that all of you exhibited, and how you received him with the greatest respect.

¹⁶I rejoice that in everything I have [perfect] confidence in you.

8 NOW, BROTHERS and sisters, we want to tell you about the grace of God which has been evident in the churches of Macedonia [awakening in them a longing to contribute];

²for during an ordeal of severe distress, their abundant joy and their deep poverty [together] overflowed in the wealth of their lavish generosity.

³For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, *they gave* voluntarily,

⁴begging us insistently for the privilege of participating in the service for [the support of] the saints [in Jerusalem].

POWERPOINT

A spirit of generosity causes a person to give even when doing so seems unreasonable.

According to 2 Corinthians

8:2–3, even though the churches in Macedonia were experiencing severe distress and deep poverty, they had so much joy that it overflowed in lavish generosity. They gave according to their ability, and even beyond their ability (what would have been comfortable). Let's do our best to follow their example as God leads us.



⁵Not only [did they give materially] as we had hoped, but first they gave themselves to the Lord and to us [as His representatives] by the will of God [disregarding their personal interests and giving as much as they possibly could].

⁶So we urged Titus that, as he began it, he should also

complete this gracious work among you as well.

⁷But just as you excel in everything, [and lead the way] in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in genuine concern, and in your love for us, see that you excel in this gracious work [of giving] also.

⁸I am not saying *this* as a command [to dictate to you], but to prove, by [pointing out] the enthusiasm of others, the sincerity of your love as well.

⁹For you are recognizing [more clearly] the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [His astonishing kindness, His generosity, His gracious favor], that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that by His poverty you might become rich (abundantly blessed).

¹⁰I give you *my* opinion in this matter: this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to take action [to help the believers in Jerusalem], but also [the first] to desire *to do it*.

¹¹So now finish this, so that your eagerness in desiring it may be equaled by your completion of it, according to your ability.

¹²For if the eagerness [to give] is there, it is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.

¹³For it is not [intended] that others be relieved [of their responsibility] and that you be burdened [unfairly], but that there be equality [in sharing the burden]—

¹⁴at this present time your surplus [over necessities] *is going to supply* their need, so that [at some other time] their surplus may be *given to supply* your need, that there may be

equality;

¹⁵as it is written [in Scripture], “HE WHO *gathered* MUCH DID NOT HAVE TOO MUCH, AND HE WHO *gathered* LITTLE DID NOT LACK.” [Ex 16:18]

¹⁶But thanks be to God who puts the same genuine concern for you in the heart of Titus.

¹⁷For Titus not only accepted our appeal, but was so very interested in you that he has gone to *visit* you of his own accord.

¹⁸And we have sent along with him the brother who is praised in the gospel [ministry] throughout all the churches;

¹⁹and not only *this*, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us in regard to this gracious offering which we are administering for the glory of the Lord Himself, and *to show* our eagerness [as believers to help one another].

²⁰We are taking precaution so that no one will [find anything with which to] discredit us in our administration of this generous gift.

²¹For we have regard for what is honorable [and above suspicion], not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

²²We have sent with them our brother, whom we have often tested and found to be diligent in many things, but who is now even more diligent [than ever] because of his great confidence in you.

²³As for Titus, *he is* my partner and fellow worker in your service; and as for the [other two] brothers, *they are* [special] messengers of the churches, a glory *and* credit to Christ.

²⁴Therefore, show these men, in the sight of the churches,

the proof of your love and our reason for being proud of you.

9 NOW IT is unnecessary for me to write to you about the offering [that is to be made] for the saints [in Jerusalem];

²for I know your eagerness [to promote this cause], and I have [proudly] boasted to the people of Macedonia about it, telling them that Achaia has been prepared since last year [for this contribution], and your enthusiasm has inspired the majority of them [to respond].

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Help me, Lord, to give to others thoughtfully and with purpose, not grudgingly or under compulsion, because You love a cheerful giver and You delight in those whose hearts are in their gifts.

• adapted from 2 Corinthians 9:7

³Still, I am sending the brothers [on to you], so that our pride in you may not be an empty boast in this case, and so that you may be prepared, just as I told them you would be;

⁴otherwise, if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—to say nothing of yourselves—will be humiliated for being so confident.

⁵That is why I thought it necessary to urge these brothers to go to you [before I come] and make arrangements in advance for this generous, previously promised gift of yours, so that it would be ready, not as something extorted [or wrung out of you], but as a [voluntary and] generous gift.

⁶Now [remember] this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows generously [that blessings may come to others] will also reap generously [and be blessed].

⁷Let each one give [thoughtfully and with purpose] just as he has decided in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver [and delights in the one whose heart is in his gift]. [Prov 22:9]

⁸And God is able to make all grace [every favor and earthly blessing] come in abundance to you, so that you may always [under all circumstances, regardless of the need] have complete sufficiency in everything [being completely self-sufficient in Him], and have an abundance for every good work *and* act of charity.

⁹As it is written *and* forever remains written,

“He [the benevolent and generous person] SCATTERED
ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR,
HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER!” [Ps 112:9]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Giving Out of Abundance

The Bible includes more than two thousand verses that deal with our responsibility to the poor and needy. To help other people, we need strength, good health, and clarity of mind. We need money to help people who are struggling financially. We need clothes to be able to share with people who need them.

In 2 Corinthians 9:8, Paul teaches us that “God is able to make all grace [every favor and earthly blessing] come in abundance to you, so that you may always [under all circumstances, regardless of the need] have complete sufficiency in everything [being completely self-sufficient in Him], and have an abundance for every good work and act of charity.” If you are willing to share with others and meet their needs, God will not only meet your needs, He will give you an abundance of supply so you will always be able to give.

¹⁰Now He who provides seed for the sower and bread for food will provide and multiply your seed for sowing [that is, your resources] and increase the harvest of your righteousness [which shows itself in active goodness, kindness, and love]. [Is 55:10; Hos 10:12]

¹¹You will be enriched in every way so that you may be generous, and this [generosity, administered] through us is producing thanksgiving to God [from those who benefit].

¹²For the ministry of this service (offering) is not only supplying the needs of the saints (God's people), but is also overflowing through many expressions of thanksgiving to God.

¹³Because of this act of ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to the gospel of Christ which you confess, as well as for your generous participation [in this gift] for them and for all [the other believers in need],

¹⁴and they also long for you while they pray on your behalf, because of the surpassing measure of God's grace [His undeserved favor, mercy, and blessing which is revealed] in you.

¹⁵Now thanks be to God for His indescribable gift [which is precious beyond words]!

10 NOW I, Paul, urge you by the gentleness and graciousness of Christ—I who am meek [so they say] when with you face to face, but bold [outspoken and fearless] toward you when absent!

²I ask that when I do come I will not be driven to the boldness that I intend to show toward those few who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh [like men without the Spirit].

Speak God's Word

*Though I walk in the flesh, I
do not carry on my spiritual
warfare according to the
flesh. The weapons of my
warfare are not physical
weapons of flesh and blood.
My weapons are divinely
powerful for the destruction
of fortresses.*

| *adapted from* 2 CORINTHIANS

10:3–4 |

POWERPOINT

The strongholds that Paul wrote about in 2 Corinthians 10:4 are in our minds. They are areas of our thinking that Satan dominates through lies we have believed. The only weapon mighty enough to destroy those lies is God's Word, because His Word is truth. When we study it, know it, believe it, obey it, and speak it, Satan becomes a defeated foe and strongholds in our minds are destroyed.



³For though we walk in the flesh [as mortal men], we are not carrying on our [spiritual] warfare according to the flesh *and* using the weapons of man.

⁴The weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood]. Our weapons are divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

⁵*We are* destroying sophisticated arguments and every exalted *and* proud thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought *and* purpose captive to the obedience of Christ,

⁶being ready to punish every act of disobedience, when your own obedience [as a church] is complete.

⁷You are looking [only] at the outward appearance of things. If anyone is confident that he is Christ's, he should reflect *and* consider this, that just as he is Christ's, so too are we.

⁸For even though I boast rather freely about the authority the Lord gave us for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be ashamed [of the truth],

⁹nor do I want to seem to be trying to frighten you with my letters;

¹⁰for they say, "His letters are weighty and forceful *and* impressive, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible [of no account]."

¹¹Let such people realize that what we say by word in letters when we are absent, is the same as what *we are* in action when present.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Winning the Battles of the Mind

One of Satan's devices that we must recognize so we can resist and overcome him is his evil work in the human mind (see 2 Cor. 10:4–5). Satan desires to control our thoughts, because he knows well that our thoughts determine our actions. He injects thoughts and lies into our minds, hoping we will accept them as our own and act accordingly. Our goal should be to know God's Word well enough to immediately recognize and reject all thoughts that do not agree with His Word and to replace them with thoughts that do agree with it.

Fearful, angry, or judgmental thoughts are among Satan's most-used weapons in trying to deceive and diminish God's children. God has a large, free, full life planned for us, and Satan seeks to limit us in every way, so we will live small, joyless, unproductive lives. He is a thief and a liar.

We should immediately investigate the source of any thought or imagination that causes us to shrink back, feel inferior or incompetent to do what God has called us to do, or to limit us in any way. The thoughts the enemy plants in our

minds never empower us; they always steal from us. They torment us, preventing progress and growth in our lives. God certainly is not the author of such thoughts or imaginings; Satan is.

If we will keep our mind actively focused on positive things and not let it be idle or passive, we will rob Satan of his opportunities to influence our thinking and build strongholds in our minds. We can choose to think our own thoughts based on God's Word instead of merely waiting to see what thoughts come to mind.

I encourage you to learn to recognize thoughts that are unclean, fearful, slanderous, envious, angry, judgmental, or deceitful and reject them immediately. I have heard it said that we cannot keep a bird from flying over our head, but we can refuse to let it make a nest in our hair. We might say the same about Satan's desire to control our thoughts. We cannot keep him from trying to use our minds for his evil work, but we can prevent his success by filling our minds with the Word of God and speaking God's Word in every situation. As we continue in God's Word, we will ultimately gain victory over the enemy in our minds.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Holy Spirit, teach me to recognize the work of the enemy when he tries to plant thoughts in my mind, to resist him, and to use the Word of God to pull down the mental strongholds he seeks to build in me. In Christ's name, I pray. Amen.

POWERPOINT

People often say, “I can’t help what I think. Thoughts just come to me whether I want them to or not.” While it is true that thoughts frequently come without being invited, it is not true that we cannot do anything about them. Second Corinthians 10:5 teaches us to destroy wrong thoughts. This means we cannot allow them to stay in our minds. We can eliminate any thought the enemy plants in our minds by simply choosing to think something else.



¹²We do not have the audacity to put ourselves in the same class or compare ourselves with some who [supply testimonials to] commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they lack wisdom *and* behave like fools.

¹³We, on the other hand, will not boast beyond our proper limit, but [will keep] within the limits of our commission (territory, authority) which God has granted to us as a measure, which reaches *and* includes even you.

Speak God's Word

*I take every thought and
purpose captive to the
obedience of Christ.*

| adapted from 2 CORINTHIANS
10:5 |

¹⁴We are not overstepping the limits of our province, as if we did not [legitimately] reach to you, for we were the [very] first to come even as far as you with the good news of Christ.

¹⁵We do not go beyond our proper limit, boasting in the work of other men, but we have the hope that as your faith [in Christ and His divine power] continues to grow, our field among you may be greatly expanded [but still within the limits of our commission],

¹⁶so that *we may* preach the gospel even in the lands beyond you, but not to boast in work already accomplished in another one's field of activity.

¹⁷However, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS BOAST IN THE LORD." [Jer 9:24]

¹⁸For it is not he who commends *and* praises himself who is approved [by God], but it is the one whom the Lord commends *and* praises.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Change Your Mind

Take captive every thought coming into your mind that does not agree with the Word of God (see 2 Cor. 10:5). Lead those thoughts away, and let them be replaced with ones that are obedient to Jesus Christ. In other words, change your mind! When you recognize that you are thinking something you should not think, stop thinking about it and start thinking about something that is good and wholesome.

This is something we have to be persistent in doing. If you feel weary in the beginning of this new endeavor, I understand because I felt the same way. Instead of fighting with negative thoughts, simply replace them with positive ones. If you choose to think something good, the bad thought cannot occupy that space in your mind anymore. We always overcome evil with good (see Rom. 12:21).

11 I WISH you would bear with me [while I indulge] in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me [as you read this].

²I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy because I have promised you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. [Hos 2:19, 20]

³But I am afraid that, even as the serpent beguiled Eve by

his cunning, your minds may be corrupted *and* led away from the simplicity of [your sincere and] pure devotion to Christ. [Gen 3:4]

⁴For [you seem willing to allow it] if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted. You tolerate all this beautifully [welcoming the deception].

⁵Yet I consider myself in no way inferior to the [so-called] super-apostles.

⁶But even if I am unskilled in speaking, yet I am not [untrained] in knowledge [I know what I am talking about]; but we have made this evident to you in every way, in all things.

⁷Or did I [perhaps] sin by humbling myself so that you might be exalted *and* honored, because I preached God's gospel to you free of charge?

⁸I robbed other churches by accepting [more than their share of] financial support for my ministry to you.

⁹And when I was with you and ran short [financially], I did not burden any of you; for what I needed was fully supplied by the brothers (Silas and Timothy) who came from Macedonia (the church at Philippi). So I kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and will continue to do so. [Phil 4:15, 16]

¹⁰As the truth of Christ is in me, my boast [of independence] will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia (southern Greece).

¹¹Why? Because I do not love you [or wish you well, or have regard for your welfare]? God knows [that I do]!

¹²But what I am doing I will keep doing, [for I am

determined to keep this independence] in order to cut off the claim of those who want an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things they brag about.

¹³For such men are counterfeit apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ.

¹⁴And no wonder, since Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.

¹⁵So it is no great surprise if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness, but their end will correspond with their deeds.

¹⁶I repeat then, let no one think that I am foolish; but even if you do, at least accept me as foolish, so that I too may boast a little.

¹⁷What I say in this confident boasting, I say not as the Lord would [with His authority], but foolishly.

¹⁸Since many boast [of worldly things and brag] about human accomplishments, I will boast too.

¹⁹For you, being so wise, gladly tolerate *and* accept the foolish [like me]!

²⁰For you tolerate it if anyone makes you his slave; or devours you *and* your possessions; or takes advantage of you; or acts presumptuously; or hits you in the face.

²¹To my shame, I must say, we have been too weak [in comparison to those pseudo-apostles who take advantage of you].

But in whatever anyone else dares to boast—I am speaking foolishly—I also dare to boast.

²²Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.

²³Are they [self-proclaimed] servants of Christ?—I am speaking as if I were out of my mind—I am more so [for I exceed them]; with far more labors, with far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, and often in danger of death.

²⁴Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine *lashes*. [Deut 25:3]

²⁵Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent *adrift* on the sea;

²⁶many times on journeys, [exposed to] danger from rivers, danger from bandits, danger from my own countrymen, danger from the Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger on the sea, danger among those posing as believers;

²⁷in labor and hardship, often unable to sleep, in hunger and thirst, often [driven to] fasting [for lack of food], in cold and exposure [without adequate clothing].

²⁸Besides those external things, there is the daily [inescapable] pressure of my concern for all the churches.

²⁹Who is weak, and I do not feel [his] weakness? Who is made to sin, and I am not on fire [with sorrow and concern]?

³⁰If I must boast, I will boast of the things that reveal my weakness [the things by which I am made weak in the eyes of my opponents].

³¹The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed *and* to be praised forevermore, knows that I am not lying.

³²In Damascus the governor (ethnarch) under King Aretas guarded the city of Damascus in order to arrest me,

³³and I was [actually] let down in a basket through a

window in the wall, and slipped through his fingers.

12 IT IS necessary to boast, though nothing is gained by it; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord.

²I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, [only] God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. [Luke 23:43]

³And I know that such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, [only] God knows—

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that Your
grace is sufficient for me. Your
lovingkindness and Your
mercy are more than enough
—always available—
regardless of the situation; for
Your power is being perfected
and is completed and shows*

itself most effectively in my weakness.

• adapted from 2 Corinthians 12:9

⁴was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words which man is not permitted to speak [words too sacred to tell].

⁵On behalf of such a man [and his experiences] I will boast; but in my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to my weaknesses.

⁶If I wish to boast, I will not be foolish, because I will be speaking the truth. But I abstain [from it], so that no one will credit me with more than [is justified by what] he sees in me or hears from me.

⁷Because of the surpassing greatness *and* extraordinary nature of the revelations [which I received from God], for this reason, to keep me from thinking of myself as important, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan, to torment *and* harass me—to keep me from exalting myself! [Job 2:6]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Give God What You're Not

Don't just give God what you are and what you feel you have to offer—give Him what you are not. If you make mistakes or feel that you are lacking in some area of your life, give it to God and let Him be your all. If you give God everything you are and everything you are not, He will give you everything He is and has. Victory is not about what you can do; it's about what God can do through you.

Paul said that God's strength was made perfect in his weakness (see 2 Cor. 12:9). Jesus said to gather up the fragments so nothing is wasted (see John 6:12). If you will give Jesus all of you, even the worn-out, used-up fragments, He will make something awesome out of them. Let God begin to flow through your strengths and your weaknesses.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Examine Your Conduct

Don't ever be afraid to take a close look at yourself and, with the Holy Spirit's help, recognize any area that is a moral weakness or any conduct that needs improvement. Paul urged believers to examine their conduct to see if they were bearing the proper fruit that should accompany faith in Christ (see 2 Cor. 13:5).

For example, we might ask ourselves what we are doing to help other people, and if we find that we are not doing anything, or not doing as much as we should be doing, we can repent and with God's help begin doing what is right.

I don't encourage people to focus excessively on their faults. We are told to look "away from all that will distract us" and to focus our eyes on Jesus, Who is the Author and Finisher of our faith (see Heb. 12:2). But I do believe it is wise to spend time with God asking Him to reveal to us anything that needs to change. The psalmist David asked God to examine Him (see Ps. 26:2; 139:23), and we can follow his example and the instructions of 2 Corinthians 13:5.

In the past three days, God has revealed in me some wrong attitudes and thought processes I was not even aware of. I am thankful because now I can not only repent, but I am also free to ask for and receive God's help in changing. We cannot deal with things we are not aware of! God loves us completely at

all times, and we can feel safe to look at ourselves honestly and talk with Him about them without any fear of rejection.

⁸Concerning this I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might leave me;

⁹but He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you [My lovingkindness and My mercy are more than enough—always available—regardless of the situation]; for [My] power is being perfected [and is completed and shows itself most effectively] in [your] weakness.” Therefore, I will all the more gladly boast in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ [may completely enfold me and] may dwell in me.

¹⁰So I am well pleased with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, and with difficulties, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak [in human strength], then I am strong [truly able, truly powerful, truly drawing from God’s strength].

¹¹Now I have become foolish; you have forced me [by questioning my apostleship]. Actually I should have been commended by you [instead of being treated disdainfully], for I was not inferior to those super-apostles, even if I am nobody.

¹²The signs that indicate a genuine apostle were performed among you fully *and* most patiently—signs and wonders and miracles.

¹³For in what respect were you treated as inferior to the rest of the churches, except [for the fact] that I did not burden you [with my financial support]? Forgive me [for doing you] this injustice!

¹⁴Now for the third time I am ready to visit you. I will not

burden you [financially], because I do not want what is yours [not your money or your possessions], but you. For children are not responsible to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.

¹⁵But I will very gladly spend [my own resources] and be utterly spent for your souls. If I love you greatly, am I to be loved less [by you]?

¹⁶But be that as it may, I did not burden you [with my support]. But [some say that] I was sly and took you by trickery.

¹⁷Did I take advantage of you *or* make any money off you through any of the messengers I sent you? [Certainly not!]

¹⁸I urged Titus to go, and I sent the brother with him. Titus did not take advantage of you, did he? [No!] Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit and walk in the same steps? [Of course!]

¹⁹All this time you have been thinking that we are [merely] defending ourselves to you. It is in the sight of God that we have been speaking [as one] in Christ; and everything, dearly beloved, is to strengthen you [spiritually].

²⁰For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you not to be as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish—that perhaps *there may be* strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder;

²¹I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality and decadence which they formerly practiced.

13 THIS IS the third time that I am visiting you. EVERY FACT SHALL BE SUSTAINED *and* CONFIRMED BY THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES. [Deut 19:15]

²I have already warned those who have sinned in the past and all the rest *as well*, and I warn them now even though I am absent [from you] as I did when I was with you the second time, that if I come back I will not spare *anyone*,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Fight Stress with Peace

When we are stressed out, we would like to eliminate the causes of the problems, but the source of stress is not merely our difficulties, circumstances, and situations. Stress comes from approaching problems with the world's perspective rather than with faith in Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. No one enjoys dealing with problems, and we are tempted to worry and become stressed about them. Thankfully, as God's children, we have another option. We can trust God and watch Him do amazing things in our lives.

Paul instructs us in 2 Corinthians 13:11 to "live in peace [enjoy the spiritual well-being experienced by believers who walk closely with God]." It was Jesus' blood that bought our peace, but to enjoy peace we must be willing to change our approach to life. We will never enjoy peace without a willingness to adjust and adapt ourselves. We need to sacrifice worry and reasoning if we are to know peace. Peace is available at all times, but we must pursue it aggressively (see 1 Pet. 3:11).

Even though we will have difficult issues to deal with, we can have Jesus' peace because He has overcome the world and deprived the world of its power to harm us (see John 16:33). He left us with the power to stop allowing ourselves to be agitated and disturbed (see John 14:27)! Peace is available if we will choose it.

³since you seek [forensic] proof that Christ is speaking in *and* through me. He is not weak *or* ineffective in dealing with you, but powerful within you.

⁴For even though He was crucified in weakness [yielding Himself], yet He lives [resurrected] by the power of God [His Father]. For we too are weak in Him [as He was humanly weak], yet we are alive *and* well [in fellowship] with Him because of the power of God *directed* toward you.

⁵Test *and* evaluate yourselves *to see* whether you are in the faith *and* living your lives as [committed] believers. Examine yourselves [not me]! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves [by an ongoing experience] that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test *and* are rejected as counterfeit?

⁶But I hope you will acknowledge that we do not fail the test *nor* are we to be rejected.

⁷But I pray to God that you may do nothing wrong. Not so that we [and our teaching] may appear to be approved, but that you may continue doing what is right, even though we [by comparison] may seem to have failed.

⁸For we can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth [and the gospel—the good news of salvation].

⁹We are glad when we are weak [since God's power comes freely through us], but you [by comparison] are strong. We also pray for this, that you be made complete [fully restored, growing and maturing in godly character and spirit—pleasing your heavenly Father by the life you live].

¹⁰For this reason I am writing these things while absent

from you, so that when I come, I will not need to deal severely [with you], in my use of the authority which the Lord has given me [to be used] for building you up and not for tearing you down.

¹¹Finally, believers, rejoice! Be made complete [be what you should be], be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace [enjoy the spiritual well-being experienced by believers who walk closely with God]; and the God of love and peace [the source of lovingkindness] will be with you.

¹²Greet one another with a holy kiss.

¹³All ~~the~~ God's people greet you.

¹⁴The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Galatians

Author: | Paul
Date: |
Approximately AD 53–
57

Many times, a significant mental battle that believers fight is the battle between law and grace. Simply put, this is the conflict between religion and relationship. Religion tells us what we are “supposed to do” in order to be a good Christian, but relationship draws us into wanting to live God’s way because we know His love for us and we love Him in return. When we live by the law, we strive by works of the flesh to “do” right, while in relationship we allow the Holy Spirit to empower us to “be” right. As a result, our thoughts, motives, and behaviors are in accordance with God’s Word and that leads to a blessed life.

Galatians explains the battle between the law and grace, the flesh and the Spirit, and religion and relationship. I encourage you to meditate on its truths and be set free from legalism to live in vital relationship with God.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM GALATIANS:

Because Christ purchased our freedom on the cross, we are released from condemnation (see Galatians 3:13).

In Christ, you can be set free and you can stay free (see Galatians 5:1).

For good results, plant positive, life-filled thoughts into your mind and heart (see Galatians 6:7).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM GALATIANS:

Christ purchased our freedom and redeemed us from the curse of the Law and its condemnation by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS [crucified] ON A TREE (cross).” | Galatians 3:13

But the fruit of the Spirit [the result of His presence within us] is love [unselfish concern for others], joy, [inner] peace, patience [not the ability to wait, but how we act while waiting], kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law. | Galatians 5:22–23

Let us not grow weary or become discouraged in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap, if we do not give in. | Galatians 6:9

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

1 PAUL, AN apostle (not commissioned *and* sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ—the Messiah—and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead),

²and all the brothers who are with me,

To the churches of Galatia:

³Grace to you and peace [inner calm and spiritual well-being] from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,

⁴who gave Himself [as a sacrifice to atone] for our sins [to save and sanctify us] so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, in accordance with the will *and* purpose *and* plan of our God and Father—

⁵to Him be [ascribed all] the glory through the ages of the ages. Amen.

⁶I am astonished *and* extremely irritated that you are so quickly shifting your allegiance *and* deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different [even contrary] gospel;

⁷which is really not another [gospel]; but there are [obviously] some [people masquerading as teachers] who are disturbing *and* confusing you [with a misleading, counterfeit

teaching] and want to distort the gospel of Christ [twisting it into something which it absolutely is not].

⁸But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we [originally] preached to you, let him be condemned to destruction!

⁹As we have said before, so I now say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel different from that which you received [from us], let him be condemned to destruction!

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Thank You, Jesus, for giving Yourself as a sacrifice to atone for my sins, to save and sanctify me so that You might rescue me from this present evil age, in accordance with the will and purpose and plan of God.

• adapted from Galatians 1:4

POWERPOINT

The apostle Paul asked, “Am I now trying to win the favor *and* approval of men, or of God? Or am I seeking to please someone? If I were still trying to be popular with men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10). In other words, trying to please people gives them control and can have a negative impact on God’s will for your life. Focus on your relationship with God and on pleasing Him more than trying to please people.



¹⁰Am I now trying to win the favor *and* approval of men, or of God? Or am I seeking to please someone? If I were still trying to be popular with men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

¹¹For I want you to know, believers, that the gospel which

was preached by me is not man's gospel [it is not a human invention, patterned after any human concept].

¹²For indeed I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but *I received it* through a [direct] revelation of Jesus Christ.

¹³You have heard of my career *and* former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to hunt down *and* persecute the church of God extensively and [with fanatical zeal] tried [my best] to destroy it.

¹⁴And [you have heard how] I surpassed many of my contemporaries among my countrymen in [my advanced study of the laws of] Judaism, as I was extremely loyal to the traditions of my ancestors.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The Courage To Be Different

If you are going to be the person you are called to be in Christ, it is vital that you have the courage to be yourself, which may mean that you may not be just like everyone else you know. You may not want to do the things they do or manage your life as they manage theirs. People very often want us to do things that we don't feel we should do. When that happens, we should always follow our hearts rather than theirs.

Becoming a people-pleaser is one of the traps we often fall into, and it can ultimately make us very unhappy. We want to please others and be well liked and accepted, but if it becomes extreme and leads to someone else running our life and our losing our freedom, we must always say no to people, and yes to God (see Gal. 1:10). Let us always remember that our true worth and value are in Christ and His love and acceptance of us, not in being accepted by the people we know.

Follow the Holy Spirit as He leads you to be the person you were created to be and to do the things God has called you to do. God will give you relationships that are healthy and allow you to follow your heart and be yourself. Being fully and completely yourself is the only way you will ever be truly happy.

¹⁵But when God, who had chosen me *and* set me apart before I was born, and called me through His grace, was pleased [Is 49:1; Jer 1:5]

¹⁶to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles [as the good news—the way of salvation], I did not immediately consult with anyone [for guidance regarding God's call and His revelation to me].

¹⁷Nor did I [even] go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia *and* stayed awhile, and afterward returned once more to Damascus.

¹⁸Then three years later I did go up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas (Peter), and I stayed with him fifteen days.

¹⁹But I did not see any other apostle except James, the [half] brother of the Lord.

²⁰(Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you as if I were standing before God that I am not lying.)

²¹Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.

²²And I was still unknown by sight to the churches which were in Christ in Judea (Jerusalem and the surrounding region);

²³they only kept hearing, “He who used to persecute us is now preaching the [good news of the] faith which he once was trying to destroy.”

²⁴And they were glorifying God [as the Author and Source of what had taken place and all that had been accomplished] in me.

2 THEN AFTER a period of fourteen years I again went up to Jerusalem, [this time] with Barnabas, taking Titus along also.

²I went up [to Jerusalem] because of a [divine] revelation, and I put before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles. But *I did so* in private before those of reputation, for fear that I might be running or had run [the course of my ministry] in vain.

³But [all went well, for] not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled [as some had anticipated] to be circumcised, despite the fact that he was a Greek.

⁴My concern was because of the false brothers [those people masquerading as Christians] who had been secretly smuggled in [to the community of believers]. They had slipped in to spy on the freedom which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us back into bondage [under the Law of Moses].

⁵But we did not yield to them even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel would continue to remain with you [in its purity].

⁶But from those who were of high reputation (whatever they were—in terms of individual importance—makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality—He is not impressed with the positions that people hold nor does He recognize distinctions such as fame or power)—well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me [that is, they had nothing to add to my gospel message nor did they impose any new requirements on me]. [Deut 10:17]

⁷But on the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised (Gentiles), just as Peter *had been* [entrusted to proclaim the gospel] to the circumcised

(Jews);

⁸(for He who worked effectively for Peter *and* empowered him in his ministry to the Jews also worked effectively for me *and* empowered me in my ministry to the Gentiles).

⁹And recognizing the grace [that God had] bestowed on me, James and Cephas (Peter) and John, who were reputed to be pillars [of the Jerusalem church], gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we could go to the Gentiles [with their blessing] and they to the circumcised (Jews).

¹⁰*They asked* only [one thing], that we remember the poor, the very thing I was also eager to do.

¹¹Now when Cephas (Peter) came to Antioch, I opposed him face to face [about his conduct there], because he stood condemned [by his own actions].

¹²Before certain men came from James, he used to eat [his meals] with the Gentiles; but when the men [from Jerusalem] arrived, he *began* to withdraw and separate himself [from the Gentile believers], because he was afraid of those from the circumcision.

¹³The rest of the Jews joined him in this hypocrisy [ignoring their knowledge that Jewish and Gentile Christians were united, under the new covenant, into one faith], with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.

**A Prayer To
Renew Your**

Mind



Thank You, Lord, that I am not justified and placed in right standing with You by works of the Law, but only through faith in Your beloved Son, Christ Jesus.

• adapted from Galatians 2:16

¹⁴But when I saw that they were not being straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I told Cephas (Peter) in front of everyone, “If you, being a Jew, live [as you have been living] like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how is it that you are [now virtually] forcing the Gentiles to live like Jews [if they want to eat with you]?”

¹⁵[I went on to say] “We are Jews by birth and not sinners from among the Gentiles;

¹⁶yet we know that a man is not justified [and placed in right standing with God] by works of the Law, but [only] through faith in [God’s beloved Son,] Christ Jesus. And even we [as Jews] have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the Law. By observing the Law no one will ever be justified [declared free of the guilt of sin and its penalty]. [Ps 143:2]

¹⁷“But if, while we seek to be justified in Christ [by faith], we ourselves are found to be sinners, does that make Christ an advocate *or* promoter of our sin? Certainly not!

¹⁸“For if I [or anyone else should] rebuild [through word or by practice] what I once tore down [the belief that observing the Law is essential for salvation], I prove myself to be a transgressor.

¹⁹“For through the Law I died to the Law *and* its demands on me [because salvation is provided through the death and resurrection of Christ], so that I might [from now on] live to God.

²⁰“I have been crucified with Christ [that is, in Him I have shared His crucifixion]; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. The *life* I now live in the body I live by faith [by adhering to, relying on, and completely trusting] in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

You're on Your Way

What did Paul mean when he said, "I die daily [I face death and die to self]" (1 Cor. 15:31)? It is true that Paul faced the possibility of physical death every day, but Paul was also saying that he had to say no to himself and his fleshly desires every single day. Every day he had to lay down his own will in order for God's will to be done.

Twenty years after his conversion, Paul wrote, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). It took Paul twenty years to get to the place where he was no longer living merely for himself, so don't feel bad if you still struggle with the same issue. Just keep making progress and say, "I'm not where I need to be, but thank God I'm not where I used to be. I'm okay, and I'm on my way!"

²¹"I do not ignore *or* nullify the [gracious gift of the] grace of God [His amazing, unmerited favor], for if righteousness *comes* through [observing] the Law, then Christ died needlessly. [His suffering and death would have had no purpose whatsoever.]"

3 O YOU foolish *and* thoughtless *and* superficial Galatians, who has bewitched you [that you would act like this], to whom

—right before your very eyes—Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified [in the gospel message]?

²This is all I want to ask of you: did you receive the [Holy] Spirit as the result of obeying [the requirements of] the Law, or was it the result of hearing [the message of salvation and] with faith [believing it]?

³Are you so foolish *and* senseless? Having begun [your new life by faith] with the Spirit, are you now being perfected *and* reaching spiritual maturity by the flesh [that is, by your own works and efforts to keep the Law]?

⁴Have you suffered so many things *and* experienced so much all for nothing—if indeed it was all for nothing?

⁵So then, does He who supplies you with His [marvelous Holy] Spirit and works miracles among you, do it as a result of the works of the Law [which you perform], or because you [believe confidently in the message which you] heard with faith?

⁶Just as Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS, [as conformity to God's will and purpose—so it is with you also]. [Gen 15:6]

⁷So understand that it is the people who live by faith [with confidence in the power and goodness of God] who are [the true] sons of Abraham.

⁸The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, proclaimed the good news [of the Savior] to Abraham in advance [with this promise], *saying*, “IN YOU SHALL ALL THE NATIONS BE BLESSED.” [Gen 12:3]

⁹So then those who are people of faith [whether Jew or Gentile] are blessed *and* favored by God [and declared free of

the guilt of sin and its penalty, and placed in right standing with Him] along with Abraham, the believer.

10For all who depend on the Law [seeking justification and salvation by obedience to the Law and the observance of rituals] are under a curse; for it is written, “CURSED (condemned to destruction) IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, SO AS TO PRACTICE THEM.” [Deut 27:26]

Speak God's Word

*Christ purchased my freedom
and redeemed me from the
curse of the Law and its
condemnation by becoming a
curse for me—for it is written,
“CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO
HANGS [CRUCIFIED] ON A TREE
(cross).”*

| adapted from GALATIANS 3:13 |

¹¹Now it is clear that no one is justified [that is, declared free of the guilt of sin and its penalty, and placed in right standing] before God by the Law, for “THE RIGHTEOUS (the just, the upright) SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.” [Hab 2:4]

¹²But the Law does not rest on *or* require faith [it has nothing to do with faith], but [instead, the Law] *says*, “HE WHO PRACTICES THEM [the things prescribed by the Law] SHALL LIVE BY THEM [instead of faith].” [Lev 18:5]

¹³Christ purchased our freedom *and* redeemed us from the curse of the Law *and* its condemnation by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS [crucified] ON A TREE (cross)” —[Deut 21:23]

¹⁴in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might also come to the Gentiles, so that we would all receive [the realization of] the promise of the [Holy] Spirit through faith.

¹⁵Brothers and sisters, I speak in terms of human relations: even though a last will and testament is just a human covenant, yet when it has been signed *and* made legally binding, no one sets it aside or adds to it [modifying it in some way].

¹⁶Now the promises [in the covenants] were decreed to Abraham and to his seed. God does not say, “And to seeds (descendants, heirs),” as if [referring] to many [persons], but as to one, “And to your Seed,” who is [none other than] Christ. [Gen 13:15; 17:8]

¹⁷This is what I mean: the Law, which came into existence four hundred and thirty years later [after the covenant concerning the coming Messiah], does not *and* cannot invalidate the covenant previously established by God, so as to abolish the promise. [Ex 12:40]

¹⁸For if the inheritance [of what was promised] is based on [observing] the Law [as these false teachers claim], it is no longer based on a promise; however, God granted it to Abraham [as a gift] by virtue of His promise.

¹⁹Why, then, the Law [what was its purpose]? It was added [after the promise to Abraham, to reveal to people their guilt] because of transgressions [that is, to make people conscious of the sinfulness of sin], and [the Law] was ordained through angels *and* delivered to Israel by the hand of a mediator [Moses, the mediator between God and Israel, to be in effect] until the Seed would come to whom the promise had been

made.

²⁰Now the mediator *or* go-between [in a transaction] is not [needed] for just one *party*; whereas God is *only* one [and was the only One giving the promise to Abraham, but the Law was a contract between two, God and Israel; its validity depended on both].

²¹Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a *system of* law had been given which could impart life, then righteousness (right standing with God) would actually have been based on law.

²²But the Scripture has imprisoned everyone [everything—the entire world] under sin, so that [the inheritance, the blessing of salvation] which was promised through faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe [in Him and acknowledge Him as God's precious Son].

²³Now before faith came, we were kept in custody under the Law, [perpetually] imprisoned [in preparation] for the faith that was destined to be revealed,

²⁴with the result that the Law has become our tutor *and* our disciplinarian *to guide us* to Christ, so that we may be justified [that is, declared free of the guilt of sin and its penalty, and placed in right standing with God] by faith.

²⁵But now that faith has come, we are no longer under [the control and authority of] a tutor *and* disciplinarian.

²⁶For you [who are born-again have been reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, sanctified and] are all children of God [set apart for His purpose with full rights and privileges] through faith in Christ Jesus.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Put on Love

We are created to receive and give love. If we do anything but love and allow ourselves to be loved, it is like wearing clothes that are too small for us—it's uncomfortable and it steals our joy!

God tells us in His Word to put on love (see Col. 3:12–14). I believe the phrase “put on” means to do it on purpose. We are to clothe ourselves “with Christ” (Gal. 3:27), Who is love (see 1 John 4:8). We are instructed to put on behavior characterized by mercy, compassion, kind feelings, gentle ways, and patience, which is tireless and long-suffering. We are challenged to be people who endure whatever comes with a good temper and to readily pardon one another. Just as each day we choose clothing to wear that is comfortable and looks good on us, we also need to make spiritual choices that are comfortable and look good on us as we go out into society and represent Jesus.

²⁷For all of you who were baptized into Christ [into a spiritual union with the Christ, the Anointed] have clothed yourselves with Christ [that is, you have taken on His characteristics and values].

²⁸There is [now no distinction in regard to salvation] neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is

neither male nor female; for you [who believe] are all one in Christ Jesus [no one can claim a spiritual superiority]. [Rom 3:22; 1 Cor 12:13]

²⁹And if you belong to Christ [if you are in Him], then you are Abraham's descendants, and [spiritual] heirs according to [God's] promise.

4 NOW WHAT I mean [when I talk about children and their guardians] is this: as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave even though he is the [future owner and] master of all [the estate];

²but he is under [the authority of] guardians and household administrators *or* managers until the date set by his father [when he is of legal age].

³So also we [whether Jews or Gentiles], when we were children (spiritually immature), were kept like slaves under the elementary [man-made religious or philosophical] teachings of the world.

⁴But when [in God's plan] the proper time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the [regulations of the] Law,

⁵so that He might redeem *and* liberate those who were under the Law, that we [who believe] might be adopted as sons [as God's children with all rights as fully grown members of a family]. [Rom 11:17-24]

⁶And because you [really] are [His] sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying out, "Abba! Father!"

⁷Therefore you are no longer a slave (bond-servant), but a

son; and if a son, then also an heir through [the gracious act of] God [through Christ].

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, for sending
Your Son so that He might
redeem and liberate those
who were under the Law, that
we who believe might be
adopted as Your children,
with all rights as fully grown
members of a family.*

• adapted from Galatians 4:4–5

⁸But at that time, when you did not know [the true] God *and* were unacquainted with Him, you [Gentiles] were slaves to those [pagan] things which by [their very] nature were not *and* could not be gods *at all*.

⁹Now, however, since you have come to know [the true] God [through personal experience], or rather to be known by

God, how is it that you are turning back again to the weak and worthless elemental principles [of religions and philosophies], to which you want to be enslaved all over again?

¹⁰[For example,] you observe [particular] days and months and seasons and years.

¹¹I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored [to the point of exhaustion] over you in vain.

¹²Believers, I beg of you, become as I am [free from the bondage of Jewish ritualism and ordinances], for I *have become* as you are [a Gentile]. You did me no wrong [when I first came to you; do not do it now].

¹³On the contrary, you know that it was because of a physical illness that I [remained and] preached the gospel to you the first time;

¹⁴and even though my physical condition was a trial to you, you did not regard it with contempt, or scorn *and* reject me; but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus *Himself*.

¹⁵What then has become of that sense of blessing *and* the joy that you once had [from your salvation and your relationship with Christ]? For I testify of you that, if possible, you would have torn out your own eyes and given them to me [to replace mine].

¹⁶So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?

¹⁷These men [the Judaizers] eagerly seek you [to entrap you with honeyed words and attention, to win you over to their philosophy], not honorably [for their purpose is not honorable or worthy of consideration]. They want to isolate you [from us who oppose them] so that you will seek them.

¹⁸Now it is always pleasant to be eagerly sought after [provided that it is] for a good purpose, and not just when I am with you [seeking you myself—but beware of the others doing it].

¹⁹My little children, for whom I am again in [the pains of] labor until Christ is [completely and permanently] formed within you—

²⁰how I wish that I were with you now and could change my tone, because I am perplexed in regard to you.

²¹Tell me, you who are bent on being under the Law, do you not listen to [what] the Law [really says]?

²²For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman [Hagar] and one by the free woman [Sarah]. [Gen 16:15; 21:2, 9]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

A Positive Attitude in All Circumstances

When the Galatians began to believe false teaching, Paul asked them, "What then has become of... the joy that you once had?" (Gal. 4:15). They had been taught truth that set them free from the bondage of Jewish laws and rituals, but they had begun to fall back into the bondage from which they had been delivered.

There are many reasons we may lose our joy and the blessed enjoyment of life, one of which is to lose our faith in what Jesus has done for us, and once again think that God's love and acceptance can be purchased with our own good works. Gaining freedom from legalism is important, but so is remaining free from it! Right believing will always produce joy.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Stand Firm in Freedom

As your relationship with God matures, you will find yourself living less by rules and regulations and more by the desires of your heart. As you learn more of God's Word, you will find His desires filling your heart, and it will be easier for you to discern God's will. God wants you to know His heart well enough that you will want to follow the prompting, leading, and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Once you are free in Christ, keep standing firm in that liberty and do not become ensnared with legalism, which is the yoke of bondage you have put off (see Gal. 5:1). God wants to bring you into a new place, a place full of freedom to follow your heart.

²³But the child of the slave woman was born according to the flesh *and* had an ordinary birth, while the son of the free woman was born in fulfillment of the promise.

²⁴Now these facts are about to be used [by me] as an allegory [that is, I will illustrate by using them]: for these *women* can represent two covenants: one [covenant originated] from Mount Sinai [where the Law was given] that bears children [destined] for slavery; she is Hagar.

²⁵Now Hagar is (represents) Mount Sinai in Arabia and she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with

her children.

²⁶But the Jerusalem above [that is, the way of faith, represented by Sarah] is free; she is our mother.

²⁷For it is written [in the Scriptures],

“REJOICE, O BARREN WOMAN WHO HAS NOT GIVEN BIRTH;
BREAK FORTH INTO A [joyful] SHOUT, YOU WHO ARE NOT IN
LABOR;

FOR THE DESOLATE WOMAN HAS MANY MORE CHILDREN
THAN SHE WHO HAS A HUSBAND.” [Is 54:1]

²⁸And we, [believing] brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children [not merely of physical descent, like Ishmael, but are children born] of promise [born miraculously].

²⁹But as at that time the child [of ordinary birth] born according to the flesh persecuted the son *who was born* according to [the promise and working of] the Spirit, so it is now also. [Gen 21:9]

³⁰But what does the Scripture say?

“CAST OUT THE BONDWOMAN [Hagar] AND HER SON [Ishmael],
FOR NEVER SHALL THE SON OF THE BONDWOMAN BE HEIR *and*
SHARE THE INHERITANCE WITH THE SON OF THE FREE
WOMAN.” [Gen 21:10]

³¹So then, believers, we [who are born again—reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, and set apart for His purpose] are not children of a slave woman [the natural], but of the free woman [the supernatural].

5 IT WAS for this freedom that Christ set us free [completely liberating us]; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery [which you once removed].

²Notice, it is I, Paul, who tells you that if you receive circumcision [as a supposed requirement of salvation], Christ will be of no benefit to you [for you will lack the faith in Christ that is necessary for salvation].

³Once more I solemnly affirm to every man who receives circumcision [as a supposed requirement of salvation], that he is under obligation *and* required to keep the whole Law.

POWERPOINT

Galatians 5:1 is very clear that even though we have been completely liberated from a yoke of slavery, we need to “keep standing firm” and to not allow ourselves to be entrapped in it again. Satan is very shrewd, and he does not give up easily. We could say he never gives up the hope of drawing us back into bondage. This is why it’s important for us to live watchfully, ready to recognize and immediately confront things that steal our liberty in Christ.



⁴You have been severed from Christ, if you seek to be justified [that is, declared free of the guilt of sin and its penalty, and placed in right standing with God] through the Law; you have fallen from grace [for you have lost your grasp on God’s unmerited favor and blessing].

⁵For we [not relying on the Law but] through the [strength and power of the Holy] Spirit, by faith, are waiting [confidently] for the hope of righteousness [the completion of our salvation].

⁶For [if we are] in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but only faith activated *and* expressed *and* working through love.

⁷You were running [the race] well; who has interfered *and* prevented you from obeying the truth?

⁸This [deceptive] persuasion is not from Him who called you [to freedom in Christ].

⁹A little leaven [a slight inclination to error, or a few false teachers] leavens the whole batch [it perverts the concept of faith and misleads the church].

¹⁰I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view [contrary to mine on the matter]; but the one who is disturbing you, whoever he is, will have to bear the penalty.

¹¹But as for me, brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision [as I had done before I met Christ; and as some accuse me of doing now, as necessary for salvation], why am I still being persecuted [by Jews]? In that case the stumbling block of the cross [to unbelieving Jews] has been abolished.

¹²I wish that those who are troubling you [by teaching that circumcision is necessary for salvation] would even [go all the way and] castrate themselves!

¹³For you, my brothers, were called to freedom; only do not let your freedom *become* an opportunity for the sinful nature (worldliness, selfishness), but through love serve *and* seek the

best for one another.

¹⁴For the whole Law [concerning human relationships] is fulfilled in one precept, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF [that is, you shall have an unselfish concern for others and do things for their benefit].” [Lev 19:18]

¹⁵But if you bite and devour one another [in bickering and strife], watch out that you [along with your entire fellowship] are not consumed by one another.

POWERPOINT

Galatians 5:16 teaches us to walk in the Spirit so we will not carry out the desires of our sinful nature. I encourage you to spend your time focusing on and following the Holy Spirit so that you will leave no time or room in your life to follow the flesh. This is a very important biblical truth. God is good and filled with light and life. What God offers is always more powerful than what Satan offers to entice us. God's goodness conquers evil; His light swallows up the darkness; and His life conquers and overcomes death. The enemy wants us to follow him, but God wants us to walk in the Spirit and let Him lead us into the good life Jesus died for us to enjoy.



WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Follow the Spirit, Obey the Word

The devil constantly wages war on the battlefield of the mind. Our soul is the tangible area between our spirit—the place where God Himself lives—and our physical body. It is made up of our mind, will, and emotions. It tells us what we think, what we want, and how we feel. When our mind is constantly stirred up with concern, worry, and anxiety, our God-given inner voice of insight and understanding is drowned out.

God cares about us and about our needs. He wants greater things for us than we want for ourselves. When we allow the devil to overtake our mind with worry and anxiety instead of following God's Spirit, we are living the life of the flesh, and it keeps us outside God's will. Galatians 5:16 says, "But I say, walk *habitually* in the [Holy] Spirit [seek Him and be responsive to His guidance], and then you will certainly not carry out the desire of the sinful nature."

In order for us to truly enjoy the abundant life Jesus died to give us, we need to stop worrying and start following the promptings of the Holy Spirit. It doesn't matter what our need

is—God knows and God cares. Satan is the one who whispers, “God doesn’t care about you.”

Let me encourage you to stop worrying about your own needs and focus instead on God and His love for you. You might even need to say to yourself out loud, “God loves me, and nothing can separate me from His love. He has forgiven and cleansed me. He is taking care of me and all my problems. God has a positive plan for my future because His Word says so” (see Rom. 8:38–39; 1 John 1:9; Jer. 29:11).

Every time worry and anxiety try to steal your righteousness, peace, and joy, find out what God’s Word says; then believe it and speak it. God wants us to reach the point where no matter what is going on, we remain calm, and that cannot happen unless we trust Him to take care of us no matter what our circumstances are in life.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Heavenly Father, thank You for caring for me and for assuring me that You will provide for every need I have. In the name of Jesus Christ, free me from the things that bind me so I can be totally free to love and follow You. Amen.

POWERPOINT

Galatians 5:17 describes how the spirit and the flesh war against each other, continually antagonistic toward one another. We need to learn to deal with the flesh, taking authority over it instead of allowing it to rule us.

According to Romans 8:13, the only way to deal with the flesh is to develop the habit of putting it to death. Putting the flesh to death simply means to say no to its demands and learn to not follow it. It requires rejecting the influence and ways of the world, resisting selfishness, and rejecting the works of the flesh.



¹⁶But I say, walk *habitually* in the [Holy] Spirit [seek Him and be responsive to His guidance], and then you will certainly

not carry out the desire of the sinful nature [which responds impulsively without regard for God and His precepts].

¹⁷For the sinful nature has its desire which is opposed to the Spirit, and the [desire of the] Spirit opposes the sinful nature; for these [two, the sinful nature and the Spirit] are in direct opposition to each other [continually in conflict], so that you [as believers] do not [always] do whatever [good things] you want to do.

¹⁸But if you are guided *and* led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the Law.

¹⁹Now the practices of the sinful nature are *clearly* evident: they are sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality (total irresponsibility, lack of self-control),

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Love and Self-Control

The fruit of the Holy Spirit is beautiful, and it enables us to not only enjoy our life, but to show true love to the people we deal with in our daily life. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is in us as believers in Jesus Christ, but it must be developed into maturity. That occurs as we study and use the fruit repeatedly. Love is the first of the fruit listed, and self-control is the last. I think they are listed in that order on purpose.

Love and self-control are like bookends that hold the rest of the fruit of the Spirit in place (see Gal. 5:22–23). All the fruit initially grow from love and are kept in place by self-control. Walking in the fruit of the Spirit involves being patient, kind, humble, displaying good manners, not being selfish, and other good fruit as well. Although it would be nice if we automatically behaved that way toward people, it rarely happens without developing and using self-control.

We may be able to do it sometimes, but at other times we may not feel well physically, or a day might be filled with frustrations, and walking in the fruit of the Spirit is more difficult. But thank God that He is patient with us and will continue helping us develop the fullness of the fruit in our lives if that is our true desire.

Speak God's Word

The fruit of the Spirit and the result of His presence within me is love and unselfish concern for others, joy, inner peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

| adapted from GALATIANS
5:22–23 |

²⁰idolatry, sorcery, hostility, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions [that promote heresies],

²¹envy, drunkenness, riotous behavior, and *other* things like these. I warn you beforehand, just as I did previously, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²²But the fruit of the Spirit [the result of His presence within us] is love [unselfish concern for others], joy, [inner] peace, patience [not the ability to wait, but how we act while waiting], kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

²³gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.

²⁴And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the

sinful nature together with its passions and appetites.

²⁵If we [claim to] live by the [Holy] Spirit, we must also walk by the Spirit [with personal integrity, godly character, and moral courage—our conduct empowered by the Holy Spirit].

²⁶We must not become conceited, challenging or provoking one another, envying one another.

6 BROTHERS, IF anyone is caught in any sin, you who are spiritual [that is, you who are responsive to the guidance of the Spirit] are to restore such a person in a spirit of gentleness [not with a sense of superiority or self-righteousness], keeping a watchful eye on yourself, so that you are not tempted as well.

²Carry one another's burdens and in this way you will fulfill the requirements of the law of Christ [that is, the law of Christian love]. [John 13:34]

³For if anyone thinks he is something [special] when [in fact] he is nothing [special except in his own eyes], he deceives himself.

⁴But each one must carefully scrutinize his own work [examining his actions, attitudes, and behavior], and then he can have the personal satisfaction and inner joy of doing something commendable without comparing himself to another.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Sow Good Seeds

In the Bible we learn the principle of sowing and reaping. Beginning in Genesis, God teaches us that as long as the earth remains, there will be seedtime and harvest (see Gen. 8:22).

We can readily understand how a farmer sows seeds and waits for his harvest, but we need more understanding about what I will refer to as “spiritual seed.” We can see a tomato seed with our eyes and understand the process of planting and expecting a harvest of tomatoes. We cannot see attitudes, thoughts, or words, but they are also seeds that operate in the spiritual (unseen) realm, and they also produce a harvest based on what was planted.

If people continually sow negative thoughts, attitudes, and words, they will produce negative results in their lives. Likewise, if they sow positive, hopeful, life-filled thoughts, attitudes, and words, they will see good, positive results.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Victories Come Little by Little

I meet many believers who are so disappointed about their repeated failures and their perceived lack of spiritual maturity that they feel like giving up. That's not the way of the Holy Spirit. No matter how long it takes us to mature, God doesn't give up on us. The Holy Spirit continually works with us and helps us grow spiritually.

We can dwell on the negatives of our Christian walk rather than our successes, but that will only prevent us from making progress. Making us think about our defects and shortcomings is a trick of the devil. If we focus on (think about) what we're not or what we haven't accomplished, we allow the enemy to advance.

Many believers seem to think that holy, victorious living comes from one major victory after another. We do have times of great breakthroughs; however, most of our victories come slowly, little by little. Because spiritual growth happens slowly, we are often unaware of how far we have developed. If the devil can make us think that we are not making progress, he

has gained an important stronghold in our mind.

My advice to any believer facing those moments of discouragement is to pay attention to the words of Galatians 6:9: “Let us not grow weary *or* become discouraged in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap, if we do not give in.” Another translation says not to “lose heart.” God is saying, “Don’t quit. Keep fighting.”

Life can be a struggle at times, and the enemy will never stop trying to get us to give up. We will never reach the place where we do not have to fight the good fight of faith. But it’s not just our fight. The battle belongs to the Lord (see 2 Chr. 20:15), and He is with us at all times, urging us forward.

“Don’t quit. Don’t give up.” That’s the message we need to hear. When I think of this, I also think of Isaiah 43:1–2: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you [from captivity]; I have called you by name; you are Mine! When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you. When you walk through fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you.”

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God, despite my failures, You are with me, encouraging me not to give up. Please help me to remember that, with Your help, I can win. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

⁵For every person will have to bear [with patience] his own burden [of faults and shortcomings for which he alone is responsible].

⁶The one who is taught the word [of God] is to share all good things with his teacher [contributing to his spiritual and material support].

⁷Do not be deceived, God is not mocked [He will not allow Himself to be ridiculed, nor treated with contempt nor allow His precepts to be scornfully set aside]; for whatever a man sows, this *and* this only is what he will reap.

⁸For the one who sows to his flesh [his sinful capacity, his worldliness, his disgraceful impulses] will reap from the flesh ruin *and* destruction, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

⁹Let us not grow weary *or* become discouraged in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap, if we do not give in.

¹⁰So then, while we [as individual believers] have the opportunity, let us do good to all people [not only being helpful, but also doing that which promotes their spiritual well-being], and especially [be a blessing] to those of the household of faith (born-again believers).

POWERPOINT

Our words, thoughts, attitudes, and actions are seeds that we sow, and seeds produce a harvest. Sow mercy; reap mercy. Sow judgment; reap judgment. Sow kindness; reap kindness. If you don't like how your life is right now, I have good news for you. You can change your life by sowing the right seeds. If you're struggling in life right now, chances are you didn't make one wrong choice to end up where you are, and you can't make one right choice to get yourself out of it. Change won't happen overnight. But if you invest your life in learning what is the right thing to do, and then do it with God's help, you will reap the harvest (see Gal. 6:5–9).



Speak God's Word

*I will not grow weary or
become discouraged in doing
good, for at the proper time I
will reap, if I do not give in.*

| adapted from GALATIANS 6:9 |

¹¹See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.

¹²Those who want to make a good impression in public [before the Jews] try to compel you to be circumcised, just so they will escape being persecuted for [faithfulness to] the cross of Christ.

¹³For even the circumcised [Jews] themselves do not [really] keep the Law, but they want to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh [that is, in the fact that they convinced you to be circumcised].

¹⁴But far be it from me to boast [in anything or anyone], except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

¹⁵For neither is circumcision anything [of any importance], nor uncircumcision, but [only] a new creation [which is the result of a new birth—a spiritual transformation—a new nature in Christ Jesus].

¹⁶Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule [who discipline themselves and conduct their lives by this principle], and upon the [true] Israel of God (Jewish believers). [Ps 125:5]

¹⁷From now on let no one trouble me [by making it necessary for me to justify my authority as an apostle, and the absolute truth of the gospel], for I bear on my body the branding-marks of Jesus [the wounds, scars, and other outward evidence of persecutions—these testify to His ownership of me].

¹⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, my brothers and sisters. Amen.

Ephesians

Author: | Paul
Date: | About AD
60

Ephesians is a wonderful book filled with great insights and advice about living the Christian life. Meditating on its truths and applying them to our everyday lives can help us win the battle of the mind in many ways.

One of the key principles of Ephesians is that God loves us without limitation and accepts us unconditionally. Many Christians struggle with thoughts of rejection or insecurity. One of the enemy's frequently used tactics is to attack our minds with the idea that God does not really love us or that we must do something to earn His acceptance. Ephesians offers us the truths that defeat those lies.

If you are a new believer or a believer who wants to be reminded of what it really means to be a Christian and truly know God's love, take time to study and live by the book of Ephesians.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM EPHESIANS:

Salvation is not based on performance; it is a gracious gift from God (see Ephesians 2:8–9).

Bless others by speaking good words that build them up (see Ephesians 4:29).

God's Word is a powerful weapon against the enemy, so fill your mind with the Word and speak it every day (see Ephesians 6:17).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM EPHESIANS:

So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through your faith. And may you, having been [deeply] rooted and [securely] grounded in love, be fully capable of comprehending with all the saints (God's people) the width and length and height and depth of His love [fully experiencing that amazing, endless love]. | Ephesians 3:17–18

Be continually renewed in the spirit of your mind [having a fresh, untarnished mental and spiritual attitude]. | Ephesians 4:23

Be strong in the Lord [draw your strength from Him and be empowered through your union with Him] and in the power of His [boundless] might. Put on the full armor of God... so that you may be able to [successfully] stand up against all the schemes and the strategies and the deceits of the devil. | Ephesians 6:10–11

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE EPHESIANS

1 PAUL, AN apostle (special messenger, personally chosen representative) of Christ Jesus (the Messiah, the Anointed), by the will of God [that is, by His purpose and choice],

To the saints (God's people) who are at Ephesus and are faithful *and* loyal *and* steadfast in Christ Jesus:

²Grace to you and peace [inner calm and spiritual well-being] from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³Blessed *and* worthy of praise be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ,

⁴just as [in His love] He chose us in Christ [actually selected us for Himself as His own] before the foundation of the world, so that we would be holy [that is, consecrated, set apart for Him, purpose-driven] and blameless in His sight. In love

⁵He predestined *and* lovingly planned for us to be adopted to Himself as [His own] children through Jesus Christ, in accordance with the kind intention *and* good pleasure of His will—

⁶to the praise of His glorious grace *and* favor, which He so freely bestowed on us in the Beloved [His Son, Jesus Christ].

⁷In Him we have redemption [that is, our deliverance and salvation] through His blood, [which paid the penalty for our sin and resulted in] the forgiveness *and* complete pardon of our sin, in accordance with the riches of His grace

Speak God's Word

*I bless and praise the God
and Father of my Lord Jesus
Christ, who has blessed me
with every spiritual blessing
in the heavenly realms in
Christ.*

| *adapted from* EPHESIANS 1:3 |

POWERPOINT

If you think seriously about Ephesians 1:4, the power of these words will seep into your soul and bring a life-changing revelation of God's love. God decided to love you before you were ever on earth. The only thing that stands between you and God's love is the decision to believe and receive it. As someone who believes in Jesus, God sees you as thoroughly blameless, and He has set you apart for Himself, as His very own, because He loves you so much.



⁸which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and understanding [with practical insight]

⁹He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ,

¹⁰with regard to the fulfillment of the times [that is, the end of history, the climax of the ages]—to bring all things together in Christ, [both] things in the heavens and things on the earth.

¹¹In Him also we have received an inheritance [a destiny—we were claimed by God as His own], having been predestined (chosen, appointed beforehand) according to the purpose of Him who works everything in agreement with the counsel *and* design of His will,

¹²so that we who were the first to hope in Christ [who first put our confidence in Him as our Lord and Savior] would exist to the praise of His glory.

¹³In Him, you also, when you heard the word of truth, the good news of your salvation, and [as a result] believed in Him, were stamped with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit [the One promised by Christ] as owned *and* protected [by God]. [John 7:39; Acts 2:33]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Sees the Good

God does not want us to feel frustrated and condemned. He wants us to realize that we are pleasing to Him and that we can come to Him just as we are. The enemy keeps trying to tell us what we are not, but God keeps trying to tell us what we are—His beloved children upon whom He has freely bestowed His glorious grace and favor (see Eph. 1:6).

God never reminds us of how far we have fallen. He always reminds us of how far we have risen. He reminds us of how much we have overcome, how well we are doing, how precious we are in His sight, and how much He loves us. God will also give us direction and correction, but it is always because He loves us and wants to help us move forward in His good plan for us.

The devil tells us we cannot possibly be acceptable to God because we are not perfect. God tells us that we are accepted in the Beloved because of what He has already done for us.

God wants us to know that His hand is upon us, that His angels are watching over us, that His Holy Spirit is in us and with us to help us in everything we do. He wants us to know that Jesus is our Friend, and that as we walk with Him day by day, good things are going to take place in our lives. If we listen to God rather than to the devil, He will give us peace about the past, joy for the present, and hope for the future.

¹⁴The Spirit is the guarantee [the first installment, the pledge, a foretaste] of our inheritance until the redemption of *God's own* [purchased] possession [His believers], to the praise of His glory.

¹⁵For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people,

¹⁶I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers;

¹⁷[I always pray] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may grant you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation [that gives you a deep and personal and intimate insight] into the true knowledge of Him [for we know the Father through the Son].

¹⁸And [I pray] that the eyes of your heart [the very center and core of your being] may be enlightened [flooded with light by the Holy Spirit], so that you will know *and* cherish the hope [the divine guarantee, the confident expectation] to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints (God's people),

¹⁹and [so that you will begin to know] what the immeasurable *and* unlimited *and* surpassing greatness of His [active, spiritual] power is in us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of His mighty strength

²⁰which He produced in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His own right hand in the heavenly *places*,

²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion [whether angelic or human], and [far above] every name that is named [above every title that can be conferred], not only in

this age *and* world but also in the one to come.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



I always pray, Lord, that You would grant me a spirit of wisdom and revelation that gives me a deep, personal, intimate insight into the true knowledge of You. I pray that the eyes of my heart will be enlightened by the Holy Spirit so I will know the hope to which You have called me and I will begin to know the surpassing greatness of Your power that is in us who believe.

• *adapted from Ephesians 1:17–19*

²²And He put all things [in every realm] in subjection under

Christ's feet, and appointed Him as [supreme and authoritative] head over all things in the church, [Ps 8:6; Col 1:18]

²³which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills *and* completes all things in all [believers].

2 AND YOU [He made alive when you] were [spiritually] dead *and* separated from Him because of your transgressions and sins,

²in which you once walked. You were following the ways of this world [influenced by this present age], in accordance with the prince of the power of the air (Satan), the spirit who is now at work in the disobedient [the unbelieving, who fight against the purposes of God].

³Among these [unbelievers] we all once lived in the passions of our flesh [our behavior governed by the sinful self], indulging the desires of human nature [without the Holy Spirit] and [the impulses] of the [sinful] mind. We were, by nature, children [under the sentence] of [God's] wrath, just like the rest [of mankind].

⁴But God, being [so very] rich in mercy, because of His great *and* wonderful love with which He loved us,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Satan Is Under Your Feet

Jesus is seated in the heavenly places (see Eph. 1:20), and we are seated with Him by virtue of our faith in Him. Where He is, we are. Jesus is Lord over all, and He has put all things under His feet (see Eph. 1:21—22). Since we are in Him, the only place Satan has in our lives is under our feet. Therefore, the enemy has no real power or authority over us except what we give him and what he gains through deception.

One of the enemy's major goals is to deceive us. After all, he is a liar and the father of lies (see John 8:44). He hopes we will believe his lies, because if we do, he has succeeded in deceiving us. That means we believe things that are not true in reality; they only become true for us if we believe them. Every time we allow ourselves to be deceived, we open a door for the devil in our lives. Satan may attack us but will not ultimately defeat us because we have the truth of God's Word available to help us know the truth and no longer believe the lies of Satan. I urge you to be careful about your thoughts and always make sure that what you believe agrees with God's Word.

POWERPOINT

Jesus came from the highest heaven, has been to the earth, and has descended under the earth. He has also risen from the dead, and now is seated again at the right hand of the Father. He has made a full circle; therefore, He has filled everything and everywhere with Himself. He is seated above everything else and has a name above every other name. His name is the highest name, the most powerful name (see Eph. 1:20-23). We have been given the awesome privilege to use the name of Jesus, the most powerful name in heaven and earth, when we pray. Let's depend on the power of His name to assure us that our prayers are heard and answered.



⁵even when we were [spiritually] dead *and* separated from Him because of our sins, He made us [spiritually] alive together with Christ (for by His grace—His undeserved favor and mercy—you have been saved from God’s judgment). [Rom 6:1–10]

⁶And He raised us up together with Him [when we believed], and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places*, [because we are] in Christ Jesus,

⁷[and He did this] so that in the ages to come He might [clearly] show the immeasurable *and* unsurpassed riches of His grace in [His] kindness toward us in Christ Jesus [by providing for our redemption].

⁸For it is by grace [God’s remarkable compassion and favor drawing you to Christ] that you have been saved [actually delivered from judgment and given eternal life] through faith. And this [salvation] is not of yourselves [not through your own effort], but it is the [undeserved, gracious] gift of God;

⁹not as a result of [your] works [nor your attempts to keep the Law], so that no one will [be able to] boast *or* take credit in any way [for his salvation].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God's Intense Love

I encourage you to read Ephesians 2:4–5 slowly and to think sincerely about the beauty of these words and what they mean to you. God had to do what He did for us in order to satisfy His intense love for us. I have had occasions when love for one of my children has welled up in me with such intensity that I simply had to do something for them. You have probably experienced the same dynamic toward someone you love. If we can feel this way as flawed human beings, just try to imagine what God feels in His perfect love for us. He absolutely cannot leave us trapped in sin without providing an answer. He doesn't wait for us to deserve any benefit; He rushes to our rescue because He cannot help Himself.

The apostle Paul wrote that in love God chose us, made us holy, consecrated us, made us blameless in His sight, and allows us to live before Him without any reproach (any sense of guilt or shame). He does it for one reason only: because He wants to. It is His will to do so because it pleased Him and was His kind intention. Amazing!

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

The Importance of Changing Your Mind

In Ephesians 2:2, Paul described those outside of Christ. He wrote that unbelievers follow the prince of the power of the air, who is Satan, and they follow the way their master leads. In verse 1, he pointed out that all were once dead through their sins, but believers are now alive in Jesus Christ. He tells us we no longer need to be governed or led by our sinful nature or the impulses of the flesh. Jesus purchased our freedom with His death on the cross.

Many Christians don't enjoy the freedom Christ died to give them because they haven't learned to control their thoughts. A lady once told me, "It simply didn't occur to me that I needed to direct my mind and keep it healthy and positive. One day, however, I read an article about the power of thoughts, and God convicted me. I knew I needed to change my thinking."

Later, as she drove down a city street, she spotted a sign

advertising oil changes. As she passed by, she thought, *I need a mind change. I don't like being the way I am, letting my mind go wherever it wants. Part of my responsibility as a child of God is to keep my thoughts healthy and strong.*

The lady had gone to church for years, knew a lot of Scripture, but couldn't control her thoughts. She said, "Rather than being able to concentrate on Scripture, my mind jumped from subject to subject. I wasn't thinking the right things, my mind was a mess, and I didn't know what to do about it." She needed to let the Holy Spirit, instead of the devil, direct her thoughts. As she prayed, she felt confident there would be a positive change.

She realized that if she didn't make lifestyle changes, the devil would soon make her new way of thinking as frustrating as her old way of thinking. For the next several days, she looked up the scriptures including words *study* or *meditate* and scriptures about the mind or thoughts. She wrote them down and pondered them.

The more she meditated on the right things, the less trouble she had with Satan trying to control her thoughts. That's how it works for us all: The more we focus on God, the less often the devil can defeat us.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Thank You, great God, for giving me a mind change. Help me always to be free to serve You with my heart, my soul, and my mind. In the mighty name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.

POWERPOINT

Salvation is a gift; it cannot be earned, paid for, or deserved. It comes by God's amazing grace and is received through faith (see Eph. 2:8)—simple trust in and reliance on God. As a believer in Jesus, salvation has been freely given to you. Receive and enjoy the gift of salvation with thanksgiving!



¹⁰For we are His workmanship [His own master work, a work of art], created in Christ Jesus [reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, ready to be used] for good works, which God prepared [for us] beforehand [taking paths which He set], so that we would walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us]. [Rom 1:20]

¹¹Therefore, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, who are called “Uncircumcision” by those who called themselves “Circumcision,” [itself a mere mark] *which is* made in the flesh by human hands—

¹²*remember* that at that time you were separated from Christ [excluded from any relationship with Him], alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise [with no share in the sacred Messianic promise and without knowledge of God's agreements], having no hope [in His promise] and [living] in the world without God.

¹³But now [at this very moment] in Christ Jesus you who once were [so very] far away [from God] have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴For He Himself is our peace *and* our bond of unity. He who made both *groups*—[Jews and Gentiles]—*into* one body and broke down the barrier, the dividing wall [of spiritual antagonism between us],

¹⁵by abolishing in His [own crucified] flesh the hostility *caused by* the Law with its commandments *contained* in ordinances [which He satisfied]; so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thereby establishing peace.

¹⁶And [that He] might reconcile them both [Jew and Gentile, united] in one body to God through the cross, thereby putting to death the hostility.

¹⁷AND HE CAME AND PREACHED THE GOOD NEWS OF PEACE TO YOU [Gentiles] WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE [Jews] WHO WERE NEAR. [Is 57:19]

¹⁸For it is through Him that we both have a [direct] way of approach in one Spirit to the Father.

¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens [outsiders without rights of citizenship], but you are fellow citizens with the saints (God's people), and are [members] of God's household,

²⁰having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the [chief] Cornerstone,

²¹in whom the whole structure is joined together, and it continues [to increase] growing into a holy temple in the Lord [a sanctuary dedicated, set apart, and sacred to the presence of the Lord].

²²In Him [and in fellowship with one another] you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

3 FOR THIS reason [because I preach that you and believing Jews are joint heirs] I, Paul, am the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—

²assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was entrusted to me [to share with you] for your benefit;

³and that by [divine] revelation the mystery was made known to me, as I have already written in brief. [Eph 1:9]

⁴By referring to this, when you read it you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,

⁵which in other generations was not disclosed to mankind, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the [Holy] Spirit;

⁶[it is this:] that the Gentiles are now joint heirs [with the Jews] and members of the same body, and joint partakers [sharing] in the [same divine] promise in Christ Jesus through [their faith in] the good news [of salvation].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Superabundantly More

Ephesians 3:20 tells us that our God is able to do “superabundantly more” than anything that you and I could ever dare hope, ask, or even think. We need to pray, to do the asking in faith and in trust. But it is God Who does the work according to His power.

There was a time when I put unbelievable stress on myself as I tried to change. I was under tremendous condemnation, because every message I heard seemed to be telling me to change, yet I couldn't permanently change no matter how hard I tried, believed, or confessed. I struggled terribly, because I saw all the things about myself that needed to be changed, but I was powerless to bring about those changes. I had not yet learned to depend on God for everything, even for the changes I needed in myself!

The Lord is our source and our supply. He is the only One Who can bring about changes in our lives. I had to learn to say, “I know that the changes that are needed in my life are not going to happen unless Your power is at work within me.”

God promises to strengthen us in our weaknesses if we trust Him and turn to Him. God's grace will be sufficient in our need (see 2 Cor. 12:9).

⁷Of this [gospel] I was made a minister by the gift of God's

grace given me through the working of His power.

⁸To me, [though I am] the very least of all the saints (God's people), this grace [which is undeserved] was graciously given, to proclaim to the Gentiles the good news of the incomprehensible riches of Christ [that spiritual wealth which no one can fully understand],

⁹and to make plain [to everyone] the plan of the mystery [regarding the uniting of believing Jews and Gentiles into one body] which [until now] was kept hidden through the ages in [the mind of] God who created all things.

¹⁰So now through the church the multifaceted wisdom of God [in all its countless aspects] might now be made known [revealing the mystery] to the [angelic] rulers and authorities in the heavenly *places*.

¹¹*This is* in accordance with [the terms of] the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,

¹²in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him [that is, our faith gives us sufficient courage to freely and openly approach God through Christ].

¹³So I ask you not to lose heart at my sufferings on your behalf, for they are your glory *and* honor.

¹⁴For this reason [grasping the greatness of this plan by which Jews and Gentiles are joined together in Christ] I bow my knees [in reverence] before the Father [of our Lord Jesus Christ],

¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name [God—the first and ultimate Father].

¹⁶May He grant you out of the riches of His glory, to be strengthened *and* spiritually energized with power through His

Spirit in your inner self, [indwelling your innermost being and personality],

¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through your faith. And may you, having been [deeply] rooted and [securely] grounded in love,

¹⁸be fully capable of comprehending with all the saints (God's people) the width and length and height and depth of His love [fully experiencing that amazing, endless love];

¹⁹and [that you may come] to know [practically, through personal experience] the love of Christ which far surpasses [mere] knowledge [without experience], that you may be filled up [throughout your being] to all the fullness of God [so that you may have the richest experience of God's presence in your lives, completely filled and flooded with God Himself].

²⁰Now to Him who is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly more than all that we dare ask or think [infinitely beyond our greatest prayers, hopes, or dreams], according to His power that is at work within us,

²¹to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen.

4 SO I, the prisoner for the Lord, appeal to you to live a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called [that is, to live a life that exhibits godly character, moral courage, personal integrity, and mature behavior—a life that expresses gratitude to God for your salvation],

²with all humility [forsaking self-righteousness], and gentleness [maintaining self-control], with patience, bearing

with one another in [unselfish] love.

³Make every effort to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the bond of peace [each individual working together to make the whole successful].

⁴*There is* one body [of believers] and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when called [to salvation]—

⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

⁶one God and Father of us all who is [sovereign] over all and [working] through all and [living] in all.

⁷Yet grace [God's undeserved favor] was given to each one of us [not indiscriminately, but in different ways] in proportion to the measure of Christ's [rich and abundant] gift.

⁸Therefore it says,

“WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH,

HE LED CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE,

AND HE BESTOWED GIFTS ON MEN.” [Ps 68:18]

⁹(Now this *expression*, “He ascended,” what does it mean except that He also had *previously* descended [from the heights of heaven] into the lower parts of the earth?

¹⁰He who descended is the *very* same as He who also has ascended high above all the heavens, that He [His presence] might fill all things [that is, the whole universe]).

¹¹And [His gifts to the church were varied and] He Himself appointed some as apostles [special messengers, representatives], some as prophets [who speak a new message from God to the people], some as evangelists [who spread the good news of salvation], and some as pastors and teachers [to shepherd and guide and instruct],

¹²[and He did this] to fully equip *and* perfect the saints (God's people) for works of service, to build up the body of Christ [the church];

¹³until we all reach oneness in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, [growing spiritually] to become a mature believer, reaching to the measure of the fullness of Christ [manifesting His spiritual completeness and exercising our spiritual gifts in unity].

¹⁴So that we are no longer children [spiritually immature], tossed back and forth [like ships on a stormy sea] and carried about by every wind of [shifting] doctrine, by the cunning *and* trickery of [unscrupulous] men, by the deceitful scheming of people ready to do anything [for personal profit].

¹⁵But speaking the truth in love [in all things—both our speech and our lives expressing His truth], let us grow up in all *things* into Him [following His example] who is the Head—Christ.

¹⁶From Him the whole body [the church, in all its various parts], joined and knitted *firmly* together by what every joint supplies, when each part is working properly, causes the body to grow *and* mature, building itself up in [unselfish] love.

Speak God's Word

*By speaking the truth in love
in all things, I will grow up in
all things into Him who is the
Head—Christ.*

| *adapted from* EPHESIANS 4:15 |

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God's Order

In God's order, right thinking comes first, and right action follows. I like to use Ephesians 4:22–24 when teaching on this principle. Verse 22 basically tells us to stop acting improperly, and verse 24 tells us to begin acting properly. Verse 23 is what I call “the bridge scripture.” It tells us how to get from verse 22 (acting improperly) to verse 24 (acting properly): “And be continually renewed in the spirit of your mind [having a fresh, untarnished mental and spiritual attitude].” It is impossible to get from wrong behavior to right behavior without first changing your thoughts to line up with God's Word and will.

Think about yourself in the way that God thinks about you, and then with His help, you will soon start to see those changes come to pass.

¹⁷So this I say, and solemnly affirm together with the Lord [as in His presence], that you must no longer live as the [unbelieving] Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds [and in the foolishness and emptiness of their souls],

¹⁸for their [moral] understanding is darkened *and* their reasoning is clouded; [they are] alienated *and* self-banished from the life of God [with no share in it; this is] because of the [willful] ignorance *and* spiritual blindness that is [deep-seated]

within them, because of the hardness *and* insensitivity of their heart.

¹⁹And they, [the ungodly in their spiritual apathy], having become callous *and* unfeeling, have given themselves over [as prey] to unbridled sensuality, eagerly craving the practice of every kind of impurity [that their desires may demand].

²⁰But you did not learn Christ in this way!

²¹If in fact you have [really] heard Him and have been taught by Him, just as truth is in Jesus [revealed in His life and personified in Him],

²²that, regarding your previous way of life, you put off your old self [completely discard your former nature], which is being corrupted through deceitful desires,

²³and be *continually* renewed in the spirit of your mind [having a fresh, untarnished mental and spiritual attitude],

²⁴and put on the new self [the regenerated and renewed nature], created in God's image, [godlike] in the righteousness and holiness of the truth [living in a way that expresses to God your gratitude for your salvation].

²⁵Therefore, rejecting all falsehood [whether lying, defrauding, telling half-truths, spreading rumors, any such as these], SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are all parts of one another [and we are all parts of the body of Christ]. [Zech 8:16]

²⁶BE ANGRY [at sin—at immorality, at injustice, at ungodly behavior], YET DO NOT SIN; do not let your anger [cause you shame, nor allow it to] last until the sun goes down. [Ps 4:4]

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



I am continually renewed in the spirit of my mind, having a fresh, untarnished mental and spiritual attitude. I put on the new self—the regenerated and renewed nature—created in God's image, in the righteousness and holiness of the truth. I live in a way that expresses to God my gratitude for my salvation.

• adapted from Ephesians 4:23–24

POWERPOINT

Ephesians 4:26–27 tells us that when we become upset, we should not let the sun go down on our anger. If we do not deal with our anger by the end of each day, we will open a door for the enemy and give him opportunities to cause trouble in our lives. When we give him a foothold, it can become a stronghold. The best way to keep the door closed to the enemy when we become angry is to walk in love—because people who walk in love are quick to forgive. The enemy doesn't stand a chance against a believer who truly loves and forgives.



²⁷And do not give the devil an opportunity [to lead you into sin by holding a grudge, or nurturing anger, or harboring

resentment, or cultivating bitterness].

²⁸The thief [who has become a believer] must no longer steal, but instead he must work hard [making an honest living], producing that which is good with his own hands, so that he will have *something* to share with those in need.

²⁹Do not let unwholesome [foul, profane, worthless, vulgar] words ever come out of your mouth, but only such *speech* as is good for building up others, according to the need *and* the occasion, so that it will be a blessing to those who hear [you speak].

³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God [but seek to please Him], by whom you were sealed *and* marked [branded as God's own] for the day of redemption [the final deliverance from the consequences of sin]. [Eph 1:13, 14; Phil 3:20, 21]

³¹Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor [perpetual animosity, resentment, strife, fault-finding] and slander be put away from you, along with every kind of malice [all spitefulness, verbal abuse, malevolence].

³²Be kind *and* helpful to one another, tender-hearted [compassionate, understanding], forgiving one another [readily and freely], just as God in Christ also forgave you.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Speak and Act To Please the Holy Spirit

Anything we do that is not God's will for us and not in agreement with His Word saddens the Holy Spirit, because His purpose in our lives is to bring us into the fullness of what Jesus died to give us. He works with us to bring us into full maturity, to mold us into the image of Jesus Christ.

One way to measure our spiritual maturity is by examining our thoughts and words. Ephesians 4:29–31 teaches us plainly that certain types of words and behaviors grieve the Holy Spirit and we should avoid them. Words that grieve Him are unwholesome, foul, profane, worthless and vulgar, while words that please Him are those that build up and bless others. In addition, anger, bitterness, wrath, and slander also grieve the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our Helper, our Comforter, and our Teacher. Let's do our best to please Him, not to grieve Him.

5 THEREFORE BECOME imitators of God [copy Him and follow His example], as well-beloved children [imitate their father];

²and walk *continually* in love [that is, value one another—practice empathy and compassion, unselfishly seeking the best for others], just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up

for us, an offering and sacrifice to God [slain for you, so that it became] a sweet fragrance. [Ezek 20:41]

³But sexual immorality and all [moral] impurity [indecent, offensive behavior] or greed must not even be hinted at among you, as is proper among saints [for as believers our way of life, whether in public or in private, reflects the validity of our faith].

⁴Let there be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse [obscene or vulgar] joking, *because* such things are not appropriate [for believers]; but instead speak of your thankfulness [to God].

⁵For be sure of this: no immoral, impure, or greedy person—for that one is [in effect] an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God [for such a person places a higher value on something other than God].

⁶Let no one deceive you with empty arguments [that encourage you to sin], for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience [those who habitually sin]. [Lev 18:24, 25]

POWERPOINT

When we think about overcoming the enemy, we may consider rebuking him in Jesus' name, resisting him with God's

Word, or with prayer and fasting. Another powerful way to overcome him—one some people don't always remember—is with a good, healthy love walk. Ephesians 5:2 urges us to walk in love, which means to receive God's love for us and allow it to flow through us to others. Many times, especially when the enemy tries to cause problems in relationships, the most powerful weapon against him is love. I believe that showing love to others is effective spiritual warfare!



⁷So do not participate *or* even associate with them [in the

rebelliousness of sin].

⁸For once you were darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light [live as those who are native-born to the Light]

⁹(for the fruit [the effect, the result] of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth),

¹⁰trying to learn [by experience] what is pleasing to the Lord [and letting your lifestyles be examples of what is most acceptable to Him—your behavior expressing gratitude to God for your salvation].

¹¹Do not participate in the worthless *and* unproductive deeds of darkness, but instead expose them [by exemplifying personal integrity, moral courage, and godly character];

¹²for it is disgraceful even to mention the things that such people practice in secret.

¹³But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light [of God's precepts], for it is light that makes everything visible.

¹⁴For this reason He says,

“Awake, sleeper,

And arise from the dead,

And Christ will shine [as dawn] upon you *and* give you light.” [Is 26:19; 51:17; 52:1; 60:1, 2]

¹⁵Therefore see that you walk carefully [living life with honor, purpose, and courage; shunning those who tolerate and enable evil], not as the unwise, but as wise [sensible, intelligent, discerning people],

¹⁶making the very most of your time [on earth, recognizing

and taking advantage of each opportunity and using it with wisdom and diligence], because the days are [filled with] evil.

¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish *and* thoughtless, but understand *and* firmly grasp what the will of the Lord is.

¹⁸Do not get drunk with wine, for that is wickedness (corruption, stupidity), but be filled with the [Holy] Spirit *and* constantly guided by Him. [Prov 23:20]

¹⁹Speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, [offering praise by] singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

How To Keep Emotions from Controlling You

One way to stop allowing emotions to control you is by reminding yourself how deceptive and even dangerous emotions can be if not managed properly. You can talk yourself into feeling emotions, such as anger and jealousy, by meditating on the wrong things. You can also talk yourself out of negative emotions and into joy and thanksgiving.

For example, you can talk yourself into being angry when somebody mistreats you by focusing on the offense, thinking about it, and telling others what happened. You can also talk yourself out of being angry—just get away from what is upsetting you for a few minutes and start talking to yourself in a different way: Okay, just settle down. Don't give the devil an open door. Don't get mad, lose your temper, and say a lot of things you are going to be sorry for later. I can give thanks to God the Father for all things, including this (see Eph. 5:20).

²⁰always giving thanks to God the Father for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

²¹being subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.

²²Wives, be *subject* to your own husbands, as [a service] to the Lord.

²³For the husband is head of the wife, as Christ is head of the church, Himself *being* the Savior of the body.

²⁴But as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives should be subject to their husbands in everything [respecting both their position as protector and their responsibility to God as head of the house].

²⁵Husbands, love your wives [seek the highest good for her and surround her with a caring, unselfish love], just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,

²⁶so that He might sanctify the church, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word [of God],

²⁷so that [in turn] He might present the church to Himself in glorious splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy [set apart for God] and blameless.

²⁸Even so husbands should *and* are morally obligated to love their own wives as [being in a sense] their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself.

²⁹For no one ever hated his own body, but [instead] he nourishes *and* protects and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church,

³⁰because we are members (parts) of His body.

³¹FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND HIS MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED [and be faithfully devoted] TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. [Gen 2:24]

³²This mystery [of two becoming one] is great; but I am speaking with reference to [the relationship of] Christ and the church.

³³However, each man among you [without exception] is to love his wife as his very own self [with behavior worthy of respect and esteem, always seeking the best for her with an attitude of lovingkindness], and the wife [must see to it] that

she respects *and* delights in her husband [that she notices him and prefers him and treats him with loving concern, treasuring him, honoring him, and holding him dear]. [1 Pet 3:2]

6 CHILDREN, OBEY your parents in the Lord [that is, accept their guidance and discipline as His representatives], for this is right [for obedience teaches wisdom and self-discipline].

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

The Armor of God

The apostle Paul instructed us to “put on the full armor of God” so that we may be able to stand against the devil’s schemes and deceit (Eph. 6:11). This armor is supernatural, not made by human hands; it is the spiritual armor that God supplies to His people.

First, we are given the belt of truth, the Word of God. We are told to tighten our belt in battle. In other words, when the enemy comes against us, we are to cling more tightly than ever to the Word.

Second, we have the breastplate of righteousness. As our hearts are covered with the knowledge that we have been given right standing with God, Satan cannot condemn us and make us feel worthless or insecure. The breastplate protects our heart.

Third, we have been given shoes of peace. This simply means we are to walk in peace and remain in peace, no matter what kind of battle is raging. Satan sets us up to be upset, but if we stay at peace, his plan is frustrated and he loses his

power against us.

Fourth, God has given us the shield of faith to lift up. We should release our faith in every challenging situation. A good way to do that is to say, “I believe that God is working in these circumstances, right now.” The shield of faith will quench all the flaming arrows of the enemy (see Eph. 6:16).

Fifth, we have the helmet of salvation, which means to me that I need to think like someone who has been saved and delivered from sin and its effects. During battle, we should remember and say that we are God’s beloved children, that we are forgiven, and that God has a good plan for our lives.

Last, but certainly not least, we can wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. We are then instructed to cover everything in prayer with perseverance (see Eph. 6:18). Prayer offered in Jesus’ name and filled with God’s Word seals every victory and makes it sure. We can win every battle the enemy wages against us. We have the weapons of God’s Word, Jesus’ name, and Jesus’ blood to use against him. We also have the armor of God to protect us when he attacks.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Thank You, Lord, for the armor of God that You have given me to enable me to stand against the enemy. Help me to remember to put on the full armor every day, so I can live in victory. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The Real Enemy

I suppose we all have enemies. People who hurt us can be viewed as enemies, and even circumstances that don't go our way can feel like enemies. The truth is, we have one enemy, Satan, and of course, his demons, who do his bidding. We can never defeat our enemy until we know who he is.

I was a Christian for many years before I realized that the devil is real and that he was the source of the troubles in my life. In Ephesians 6:12, the apostle Paul clearly identifies that our enemy is the devil—an evil spiritual being—not anyone with flesh and blood.

Although Satan can work through people to wound us and use all kinds of situations to tempt and harass us, let's always remember that he is our true enemy—not the people and circumstances he uses.

²HONOR [esteem, value as precious] YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER [and be respectful to them]—this is the first commandment with a promise—

³SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY HAVE A LONG LIFE ON THE EARTH. [Ex 20:12]

⁴Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger [do not exasperate them to the point of resentment with demands that

are trivial or unreasonable or humiliating or abusive; nor by showing favoritism or indifference to any of them], but bring them up [tenderly, with lovingkindness] in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

⁵Slaves, be obedient to those who are your earthly masters, with respect for authority, and with a sincere heart [seeking to please them], as [service] to Christ—

⁶not in the way of eye-service [working only when someone is watching you and only] to please men, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart;

⁷rendering service with goodwill, as to the Lord, and not [only] to men,

⁸knowing that whatever good thing each one does, he will receive this back from the Lord, whether [he is] slave or free.

⁹You masters, do the same [showing goodwill] toward them, and give up threatening *and* abusive words, knowing that [He who is] both their true Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with Him [regardless of one's earthly status].

¹⁰In conclusion, be strong in the Lord [draw your strength from Him and be empowered through your union with Him] and in the power of His [boundless] might.

¹¹Put on the full armor of God [for His precepts are like the splendid armor of a heavily-armed soldier], so that you may be able to [successfully] stand up against all the schemes *and* the strategies *and* the deceptions of the devil.

¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood [contending only with physical opponents], but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this

[present] darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly (supernatural) *places*.

¹³Therefore, put on the complete armor of God, so that you will be able to [successfully] resist *and* stand your ground in the evil day [of danger], and having done everything [that the crisis demands], to stand firm [in your place, fully prepared, immovable, victorious].

¹⁴So stand firm *and* hold your ground, HAVING TIGHTENED THE WIDE BAND OF TRUTH (personal integrity, moral courage) AROUND YOUR WAIST *and* HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (an upright heart), [Is 11:5]

¹⁵*and* having strapped on YOUR FEET THE GOSPEL OF PEACE IN PREPARATION [to face the enemy with firm-footed stability and the readiness produced by the good news]. [Is 52:7]

¹⁶Above all, lift up the [protective] shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*.

¹⁷And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. [Is 59:17]

¹⁸With all prayer and petition pray [with specific requests] at all times [on every occasion and in every season] in the Spirit, and with this in view, stay alert with all perseverance and petition [interceding in prayer] for all God's people.

¹⁹And *pray* for me, that words may be given to me when I open my mouth, to proclaim boldly the mystery of the good news [of salvation],

²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains. And *pray* that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly *and* courageously, as I should.

21 Now, so that you may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will tell you everything.

POWERPOINT

The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit (see Eph. 6:17). To live a victorious life, we need to know the Word, study the Word, and speak the Word.

The enemy is afraid of the Word of God, because he knows how much power is in it. A sword in its sheath won't do any good during an attack; God has given us the sword of His Word so we can use it. God's Word from a believer's mouth, with faith to back it up, is a powerfully effective weapon in the war against the enemy.



²²I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know how we are, and that he may comfort *and* encourage *and* strengthen your hearts.

²³Peace be to the brothers and sisters, and love joined with

faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁴Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with undying *and* incorruptible *love*.

Philippians

Author: | Paul
Date: | About AD
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Paul's letter to the Philippians is filled with encouragement and words of victory. It reminds us of Christ's love for us and affirms God's good plans for our lives. It also encourages us repeatedly to rejoice and to love one another. Philippians is an excellent book to read and study if you feel weak or discouraged, because it is full of joy and the joy of the Lord is our strength (see Nehemiah 8:10).

I am believing for your life what Paul wrote to the believers at Philippi: "I am convinced *and* confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will [continue to] perfect *and* complete it until the day of Christ Jesus [the time of His return]" (Philippians 1:6). I hope you will renew your mind with this truth, knowing that no matter what is happening in your life, God is doing a good work!

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM PHILIPPIANS:

Instead of complaining or murmuring, say, “God is working, and He will fulfill His purpose for me” (see Philippians 2:13–14).

If you’ll pray with thanksgiving in every situation, the peace of God will guard your mind and heart (see Philippians 4:6–7).

To be successful in life, think about what you are thinking about and choose right thoughts (see Philippians 4:8).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM PHILIPPIANS:

I do not consider that I have made it my own yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the [heavenly] prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. |
Philippians 3:13–14

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable and worthy of respect, whatever is right and confirmed by God's word, whatever is pure and wholesome, whatever is lovely and brings peace, whatever is admirable and of good repute; if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think continually on these things [center your mind on them, and implant them in your heart]. | Philippians 4:8

I can do all things [which He has called me to do] through Him who strengthens and empowers me [to fulfill His purpose—I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency; I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him who infuses me with inner strength and confident peace.] |
Philippians 4:13

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS

1 PAUL AND Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus (the Messiah, the Anointed),

To all the saints (God's people) in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, including the overseers and deacons:

²Grace to you and peace [inner calm and spiritual well-being] from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³I thank my God in every remembrance of you,

⁴always offering every prayer of mine with joy [and with specific requests] for all of you,

⁵[thanking God] for your participation *and* partnership [both your comforting fellowship and gracious contributions] in [advancing] the good news [regarding salvation] from the first day [you heard it] until now.

⁶I am convinced *and* confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will [continue to] perfect *and* complete it until the day of Christ Jesus [the time of His return]. [Rom 14:10]

POWERPOINT

In Philippians 1:6, Paul is saying: God is the One Who started a good work in you and He is the One Who will finish it.

This means we should allow God to do His work without trying to interfere. We need to be patient and rest in Him as He accomplishes what needs to be done instead of taking matters into our own hands when things are not happening as we would like. There are certain responsibilities we need to fulfill in our lives, and there are certain things only God can do. We are to do our part and let Him do His. This takes the pressure off us and relieves the worry and anxiety of trying to build our own lives.



Speak God's Word

*I choose those things that are
excellent. I identify the best,
that I may be pure and
blameless until the day of
Christ, actually living a life
that leads others away from
sin.*

| adapted from PHILIPPIANS
1:10 |

⁷It is right for me to feel this way about you, because [you have me in your heart as] I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the good news [regarding salvation], all of you share in [His matchless] grace with me.

⁸For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus [whose great love fills me].

⁹And this I pray, that your love may abound more and more [displaying itself in greater depth] in real knowledge and in practical insight,

¹⁰so that you may learn to recognize *and* treasure what is excellent [identifying the best, and distinguishing moral differences], and that you may be pure and blameless until the

day of Christ [actually living lives that lead others away from sin];

¹¹filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God [so that His glory may be both revealed and recognized].

¹²Now I want you to know, believers, that what has happened to me [this imprisonment that was meant to stop me] has actually served to advance [the spread of] the good news [regarding salvation].

¹³My imprisonment in [the cause of] Christ has become common knowledge throughout the whole praetorian (imperial) guard and to everyone else.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God's Perfect Plan

Sometimes we confuse the fact that God will perfect His good work in us (see Phil. 1:6) with the idea that we have to somehow be perfect or work to make sure the plan turns out perfectly. That kind of thinking is a deception of Satan. The plan isn't perfect because we're perfect; the plan is perfect because God is perfect. Let's say it this way: God has a special plan for each of our lives, and He is the One Who will perfect it.

God gives us directions for a full, satisfying life. Our role is to align ourselves with that plan through obedience and service from a sincere heart to Him. We are to keep our eyes on Jesus and on His ability, not on ourselves or on what we think we can do apart from Him.

As soon as we think we have to be the ones to perfect and complete what God wants to do in us, we have allowed Satan to distract us with wrong thinking. Let's believe Philippians 1:6, which promises that God has begun His good work in us; and He is the One Who will finish and bring it to completion. Remembering this will encourage us when things seem to be taking a long time or when we make mistakes and become discouraged with ourselves.

¹⁴Because of my chains [seeing that I am doing well and

that God is accomplishing great things], most of the brothers have renewed confidence in the Lord, and have far more courage to speak the word of God [concerning salvation] without fear [of the consequences, seeing that God can work His good in all circumstances].

¹⁵Some, it is true, are [actually] preaching Christ out of envy and rivalry [toward me—for no better reason than a competitive spirit or misguided ambition], but others out of goodwill *and* a loyal spirit [toward me].

¹⁶The latter [preach Christ] out of love, because they know that I have been put here [by God on purpose] for the defense of the gospel;

¹⁷but the former preach Christ [insincerely] out of selfish ambition [just self-promotion], thinking that they are causing me distress in my imprisonment.

¹⁸What then [does it matter]? So long as in every way, whether in pretense [for self-promotion] or in all honesty [to spread the truth], Christ is being preached; and in this I rejoice.

Yes, and I will rejoice [later as well],

¹⁹for I know [with confidence] that this will turn out for my deliverance *and* spiritual well-being, through your prayers and the [superabundant] supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ [which upholds me].

²⁰It is my own eager expectation and hope, that [looking toward the future] I will not disgrace myself *nor* be ashamed in anything, but that with courage *and* the utmost freedom of speech, even now as always, Christ will be magnified *and* exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

²¹For to me, to live is Christ [He is my source of joy, my

reason to live] and to die is gain [for I will be with Him in eternity].

²²If, however, it is to be life here *and* I am to go on living, this *will mean* useful *and* productive service for me; so I do not know which to choose [if I am given that choice].

²³But I am hard-pressed between the two. I have the desire to leave [this world] and be with Christ, for that is far, far better;

²⁴yet to remain in my body is more necessary *and* essential for your sake.

²⁵Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith,

²⁶so that your rejoicing for me may overflow in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.

²⁷Only [be sure to] lead your lives in a manner [that will be] worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I do come and see you or remain absent, I will hear about you that you are standing firm in one spirit [and one purpose], with one mind striving side by side [as if in combat] for the faith of the gospel.

²⁸And in no way be alarmed *or* intimidated [in anything] by your opponents, for such [constancy and fearlessness on your part] is a [clear] sign [a proof and a seal] for them of [their impending] destruction, but [a clear sign] for you of deliverance *and* salvation, and that *too*, from God.

²⁹For you have been granted [the privilege] for Christ's sake, not only to believe *and* confidently trust in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

POWERPOINT

When facing opposition, if you are determined to remain stable, the enemy will see it as a clear sign that he is defeated (see Phil. 1:28), and God will see it as a signal to bring deliverance in your life. When you have a problem, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord (see 2 Chr. 20:17). Remain stable and do the right thing even while the wrong thing is happening to you. As you remain stable and wait for God's deliverance, you may go through some suffering (see Phil. 1:29), but the hard things you deal with will bring victory into your life.



Speak God's Word

I do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with an attitude of humility, being neither arrogant nor self-righteous, I regard others as more important than myself. I do not merely look out for my own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

| adapted from PHILIPPIANS
2:3-4 |

³⁰[and so you are] experiencing the same [kind of] conflict which you saw me endure, and which you hear to be mine now.

2 THEREFORE IF there is any encouragement *and* comfort in Christ [as there certainly is in abundance], if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship [that we share] in the Spirit, if [there is] any [great depth of] affection and compassion,

²make my joy complete by being of the same mind, having

the same love [toward one another], knit together in spirit, intent on one purpose [and living a life that reflects your faith and spreads the gospel—the good news regarding salvation through faith in Christ].

³Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit [through factional motives, or strife], but with [an attitude of] humility [being neither arrogant nor self-righteous], regard others as more important than yourselves.

⁴Do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

⁵Have this same attitude in yourselves which was in Christ Jesus [look to Him as your example in selfless humility],

⁶who, although He existed in the form *and* unchanging essence of God [as One with Him, possessing the fullness of all the divine attributes—the entire nature of deity], did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped *or* asserted [as if He did not already possess it, or was afraid of losing it];

⁷but emptied Himself [without renouncing or diminishing His deity, but only temporarily giving up the outward expression of divine equality and His rightful dignity] by assuming the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men [He became completely human but was without sin, being fully God and fully man].

POWERPOINT

Some versions of Philippians 2:7 say that Jesus “made Himself of no reputation.” This tells us that He was not concerned about making a name for Himself or about what people thought of Him, and we need to follow His example. If we are faithful to God and humble before Him as we go about our lives, He will make sure the right people know who we are, and He will open the doors that need to be opened for us. If our goal is to build a great reputation for ourselves, we will live as people-pleasers who fear the opinions of others, rather than as people who truly fear the Lord.



⁸After He was found in [terms of His] outward appearance

as a man [for a divinely-appointed time], He humbled Himself [still further] by becoming obedient [to the Father] to the point of death, even death on a cross.

⁹For this reason also [because He obeyed and so completely humbled Himself], God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW [in submission], of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [Is 45:23]

¹¹and that every tongue will confess *and* openly acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord (sovereign God), to the glory of God the Father.

¹²So then, my dear ones, just as you have always obeyed [my instructions with enthusiasm], not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, continue to work out your salvation [that is, cultivate it, bring it to full effect, actively pursue spiritual maturity] with awe-inspired fear and trembling [using serious caution and critical self-evaluation to avoid anything that might offend God or discredit the name of Christ].

¹³For it is [not your strength, but it is] God who is effectively at work in you, both to will and to work [that is, strengthening, energizing, and creating in you the longing and the ability to fulfill your purpose] for His good pleasure.

¹⁴Do everything without murmuring or questioning [the providence of God],

¹⁵so that you may prove yourselves to be blameless *and* guileless, innocent *and* uncontaminated, children of God without blemish in the midst of a [morally] crooked and

[spiritually] perverted generation, among whom you are seen as bright lights [beacons shining out clearly] in the world [of darkness],

¹⁶holding out *and* offering to everyone the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to rejoice greatly because I did not run [my race] in vain nor labor without result.

¹⁷But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith [for preaching the message of salvation], still I rejoice and share my joy with you all. [Num 28:7; 2 Tim 4:6]

¹⁸You too, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.

POWERPOINT

God has given us what we need to defeat Satan. One of those gifts is the name of Jesus.

There is power in that name, and at the very mention of it, every knee must bow (see Phil. 2:9–10). In other words, everyone and everything must submit to Him. Jesus gave us both instructions and permission to pray in His name, and when we pray this way, it is as though He Himself is praying. His name represents all that He is and all that He has done. When Jesus gave us His name, He gave us an amazingly powerful gift that we should always appreciate.



¹⁹But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may also be encouraged by learning news about

you.

²⁰For I have no one else [like him who is] so kindred a spirit who will be genuinely concerned for your [spiritual] welfare.

²¹For the others [who deserted me after my arrest] all seek [to advance] their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

²²But you know of Timothy's tested worth *and* his proven character, that he has served with me to advance the gospel like a son *serving* with his father.

²³Therefore, I hope [that it is His will] to send him immediately, just as soon as I see how my case turns out;

²⁴and I trust [confidently] in the Lord that soon I also will be coming *to you*.

²⁵However, I thought it necessary to send *back* to you Epaphroditus, [who has been] my brother and companion and fellow soldier, who was also *sent as* your messenger to take care of my needs.

²⁶For he has been longing for all of you and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.

²⁷He certainly was sick and close to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow.

²⁸So I have sent him all the more eagerly so that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned *about you*.

²⁹Welcome him *home* in the Lord with great joy, and appreciate *and* honor men like him;

³⁰because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me [which distance prevented you from rendering personally].

3 FINALLY, MY fellow believers, continue to rejoice *and* delight in the LORD. To write the same things again is no trouble for me, and it is a safeguard for you.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Where's Your Confidence?

In Philippians 3:3, Paul writes strong words about not putting our confidence in the flesh. The flesh will always fail us, but the Lord will always be with us and see us through any situation to victory. Apart from Him we can do nothing (see John 15:5), but in Him we can do all things (see Phil. 4:13).

When you no longer place your confidence in the flesh, you begin to feel stronger and more secure. Before your confidence can be in Him, it needs to be removed from other people and other things.

Is God dealing with you about where you have placed your confidence? Is it in the government? A college degree? Your job? Your spouse? Your children? Your own ability?

As we place our confidence in Christ, we will enjoy life much more. Things and people may disappoint and fail us, but Jesus never fails. He is faithful and can be depended on.

It is vital that you come to the place where your confidence is not in the flesh but in Christ Jesus. Learn to trust Him: "Commit your way to the LORD; trust in Him also and He will do it" (Ps. 37:5).

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Let Go and Press On

We all face and deal with disappointment at times. No one has everything in life happen the way they want or expect.

When things don't prosper or succeed according to our plan, the first emotion we feel is disappointment. This is normal. There is nothing wrong with feeling disappointed, but we must know what to do with that feeling or it will become something more serious, such as depression. In the world, we cannot live without experiencing disappointment, but in Jesus we can always be given re-appointment! We can have a new beginning.

The apostle Paul stated that one important lesson he had learned in life was to let go of what lay behind and press toward all that lay ahead (see Phil. 3:13). When we are disappointed, then immediately get re-appointed, that's exactly what we're doing. We're letting go of the causes of the disappointment and pressing toward what God has for us. We get a new vision, plan, or idea—a fresh outlook, a new mindset, and we change our focus to that. We decide to go on!

Every day is a brand-new start. We can let go of yesterday's disappointments and give God a chance to do something wonderful for us today.

²Look out for the dogs [the Judaizers, the legalists], look

out for the troublemakers, look out for the false circumcision [those who claim circumcision is necessary for salvation];

³for we [who are born-again have been reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, set apart for His purpose and] are the *true* circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory *and* take pride *and* exult in Christ Jesus and place no confidence [in what we have or who we are] in the flesh—

⁴though I myself might have [some grounds for] confidence in the flesh [if I were pursuing salvation by works]. If anyone else thinks that he has reason to be confident in the flesh [that is, in his own efforts to achieve salvation], I *have* far more:

⁵circumcised when I was eight days old, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews [an exemplary Hebrew]; as to the [observance of the] Law, a Pharisee;

⁶as to my zeal [for Jewish tradition], a persecutor of the church; and as to righteousness [supposed right living] which [my fellow Jews believe] is in the Law, I proved myself blameless.

⁷But whatever *former* things were gains to me [as I thought then], these things [once regarded as advancements in merit] I have come to consider as loss [absolutely worthless] for the sake of Christ [and the purpose which He has given my life].

⁸But more than that, I count everything as loss compared to the priceless privilege *and* supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord [and of growing more deeply and thoroughly acquainted with Him—a joy unequaled]. For His sake I have lost everything, and I consider it all garbage, so that I may gain Christ,

⁹and may be found in Him [believing and relying on Him], not having any righteousness of my own derived from [my obedience to] the Law *and* its rituals, but [possessing] that [genuine righteousness] which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.

¹⁰*And this, so* that I may know Him [experientially, becoming more thoroughly acquainted with Him, understanding the remarkable wonders of His Person more completely] and [in that same way experience] the power of His resurrection [which overflows and is active in believers], and [that I may share] the fellowship of His sufferings, by being *continually* conformed [inwardly into His likeness even] to His death [dying as He did];

¹¹so that I may attain to the resurrection [that will raise me] from the dead.

¹²Not that I have already obtained it [this goal of being Christlike] or have already been made perfect, but I actively press on so that I may take hold of that [perfection] for which Christ Jesus took hold of me *and* made me His own. [1 Cor 9:24; 1 Tim 6:12]

¹³Brothers and sisters, I do not consider that I have made it my own yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead,

¹⁴I press on toward the goal to win the [heavenly] prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

¹⁵All of us who are mature [pursuing spiritual perfection] should have this attitude. And if in any respect you have a different attitude, that too God will make clear to you.

¹⁶Only let us stay true to what we have already attained.

¹⁷Brothers and sisters, together follow my example and observe those who live by the pattern we gave you.

¹⁸For there are many, of whom I have often told you, and now tell you even with tears, who live as enemies of the cross of Christ [rejecting and opposing His way of salvation],

¹⁹whose fate is destruction, whose god is *their* belly [their worldly appetite, their sensuality, their vanity], and *whose* glory is in their shame—who focus their mind on earthly *and* temporal things.

²⁰But [we are different, because] our citizenship is in heaven. And from there we eagerly await [the coming of] the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

²¹who, by exerting that power which enables Him even to subject everything to Himself, will [not only] transform [but completely refashion] our *earthly* bodies so that they will be like His glorious *resurrected* body.

Speak God's Word

*I will rejoice in the Lord
always. I will delight and
take pleasure in Him. Again I
say, I will rejoice!*

| adapted from PHILIPPIANS 4:4

|

4 THEREFORE, MY fellow believers, whom I love and long for, my delight and crown [my wreath of victory], in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.

²I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to agree *and* to work in harmony in the Lord.

³Indeed, I ask you too, my true companion, to help these women [to keep on cooperating], for they have shared my struggle in the [cause of the] gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life. [Dan 12:1; Mal 3:16, 17; Rev 3:5; 21:27]

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always [delight, take pleasure in Him]; again I will say, rejoice! [Ps 37:4]

⁵Let your gentle *spirit* [your graciousness, unselfishness, mercy, tolerance, and patience] be known to all people. The

Lord is near.

⁶Do not be anxious *or* worried about anything, but in everything [every circumstance and situation] by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, continue to make your [specific] requests known to God.

⁷And the peace of God [that peace which reassures the heart, that peace] which transcends all understanding, [that peace which] stands guard over your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus [is yours]. [John 14:27]

Speak God's Word

*I am not anxious or worried
about anything, but in every
circumstance and situation
by prayer and petition with
thanksgiving, I continue to
make my requests known to
God. And the peace of God,
which reassures the heart,
transcends all
understanding, and stands
guard over my heart and my
mind in Christ Jesus is mine.*

| *adapted from* PHILIPPIANS
4:6–7 |

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Don't Worry, Pray

In Philippians 4:6–7, the apostle Paul does not say, “Pray and worry.” Rather, he says, “Do not be anxious or worried about anything, but in everything [every circumstance and situation] by prayer and petition... make your [specific] requests known to God.” Why are we to pray and not worry or be anxious? Because prayer is the way we cast our cares upon the Lord (see 1 Pet. 5:7).

When the enemy tries to burden us with cares, we can turn and give those cares to God. That's what prayer is—acknowledging to the Lord that we cannot carry our burden of cares, and that we need His help. If we pray about something and then keep on worrying about it, we are mixing a positive and a negative. The two cancel out each other so that we end up right back where we started.

Prayer is a positive force; worry is a negative force. The reason many people operate at zero power level spiritually is that they cancel their positive prayer power by giving in to the negative power of worry.

As long as we are worrying, we are not trusting God. It is only by trusting, by having faith and confidence in the Lord, that we are able to enter into His rest and enjoy the peace that transcends all understanding.

Make a decision now to pray instead of worry, and begin to

watch Him take care of you.

⁸Finally, believers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable *and* worthy of respect, whatever is right *and* confirmed by God's word, whatever is pure *and* wholesome, whatever is lovely *and* brings peace, whatever is admirable *and* of good repute; if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think *continually* on these things [center your mind on them, and implant them in your heart].

⁹The things which you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things [in daily life], and the God [who is the source] of peace *and* well-being will be with you.

¹⁰I rejoiced greatly in the Lord, that now at last you have renewed your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned about me *before*, but you had no opportunity to show it.

¹¹Not that I speak from [any personal] need, for I have learned to be content [and self-sufficient through Christ, satisfied to the point where I am not disturbed or uneasy] regardless of my circumstances.

¹²I know how to get along and live humbly [in difficult times], and I also know how to enjoy abundance *and* live in prosperity. In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret [of facing life], whether well-fed or going hungry, whether having an abundance or being in need.

Speak God's Word

*I have learned to be content
and self-sufficient through
Christ, satisfied to the point
where I am not disturbed or
uneasy, regardless of my
circumstances.*

| *adapted from* PHILIPPIANS

4:11 |

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Think About What You're Thinking About

I will never forget the day God impressed on my heart: “Think about what you’re thinking about.” These are some of the most life-changing words I have ever heard and words I have used for years to encourage people and help them gain victory on the battlefield of the mind. When I first heard these words, I wasn’t sure what they meant. How could I think about what I was thinking about?

I learned to take an inventory of my thoughts, and only by doing so could I realize how many of those thoughts were useless, vain, and not in agreement with God’s Word. My mind was undisciplined, racing from one thought to another, and my thoughts centered on myself and how others needed to change to make me happy.

As I pondered my thoughts, I looked at Philippians 4:8, where Paul presented a list of the kinds of things we need to focus on. If God did not want me to think about the things I

was thinking about, I needed to know what I *should* think about—“whatever is true... honorable *and* worthy of respect... right *and* confirmed by God’s word... pure *and* wholesome... lovely *and* brings peace... admirable *and* of good repute; if there is any excellence... anything worthy of praise.” It is not enough to know what *not* to think, we also need to know what *to* think!

I also realized how my thoughts affected my attitude. God tells us to do things that are for our good. He wants us to be happy and fulfilled—His way. When we’re full of wrong thoughts, we’re miserable, and we make those around us miserable, too.

Over the years, I’ve made a practice of taking a regular inventory of my thoughts. I do this especially when I am upset or unhappy. I have found that my condition during those times is not really due to circumstances I don’t like, but to how I think about my circumstances. We can improve our quality of life and enjoy it much more if we will think wholesome and godly thoughts. Thankfully, we can cast down wrong thoughts and replace them with good ones.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord Jesus, I ask You to give me greater victory in life as I learn to think about what I’m thinking about through the help of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Speak God's Word

*I can do all the things God
has called me to do through
Him who strengthens and
empowers me to fulfill His
purpose—I am self-sufficient
in Christ's sufficiency; I am
ready for anything and equal
to anything through Him who
infuses me with inner strength
and confident peace.*

| adapted from PHILIPPIANS

4:13 |

¹³I can do all things [which He has called me to do] through Him who strengthens *and* empowers me [to fulfill His purpose—I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency; I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him who infuses me with inner strength and confident peace.]

¹⁴Nevertheless, it was right of you to share [with me] in my difficulties.

¹⁵And you Philippians know that in the early days of preaching the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you alone;

¹⁶for even in Thessalonica you sent *a gift* more than once for my needs.

¹⁷Not that I seek the gift itself, but I do seek the profit which increases to your [heavenly] account [the blessing which is accumulating for you].

¹⁸But I have received everything in full and more; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent me. They are the fragrant aroma of an offering, an acceptable sacrifice which God welcomes *and* in which He delights.

¹⁹And my God will liberally supply (fill until full) your every need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

²⁰To our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

²¹Remember me to every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you.

²²All God's people wish to be remembered to you, especially those of Caesar's household.

²³The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, that You
liberally supply and meet my
need. You fill my life until it is
full of good things, according
to Your riches in glory in
Christ Jesus.*

• adapted from Philippians 4:19

Colossians

Author: | Paul
Date: | About AD
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One reason Colossians is such a powerful book of the Bible is that it focuses intensely on Jesus and encourages us to give Him first place in our lives. Paul wrote this book to Christians in Colossae, who had been exposed to a false teaching that cast doubt on Jesus' lordship. This is why, throughout Colossians, Paul exalts Jesus over everything—worldly thinking, legalistic living, and carnality—and urges his readers to do the same. When we keep Jesus first, we can live a joyful, peaceful, blessed life.

One of many important verses in Colossians is Colossians 2:3, which says that in Christ “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge [regarding the word and purposes of God].” Do you want wisdom and knowledge, meaning the right ways of thinking and understanding? You will find them when you search for them in Christ!

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM COLOSSIANS:

Because of Christ's triumph on the cross, we can overcome spiritual darkness (see Colossians 2:15).

Set your mind and keep it set on heavenly things, things that have eternal value (see Colossians 3:2).

You can be free from bad behavior and wrong words by putting on your spiritual, renewed self (see Colossians 3:8–10).

Allow the spoken word of Christ to dwell in your mind and influence every aspect of your life (see Colossians 3:16).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM COLOSSIANS:

[Be] strengthened and invigorated with all power, according to His glorious might. | Colossians 1:11

He has rescued us and has drawn us to Himself from the dominion of darkness, and has transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son. | Colossians 1:13

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception [pseudo-intellectual babble], according to the tradition [and musings] of mere men, ... rather than following [the truth—the teachings of] Christ. | Colossians 2:8

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS

1 PAUL, AN apostle (special messenger, personally chosen representative) of Christ Jesus (the Messiah, the Anointed) by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

²To the saints and faithful believers in Christ [who are] at Colossae: Grace to you and peace [inner calm and spiritual well-being] from God our Father.

³We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we pray always for you,

⁴for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus [how you lean on Him with absolute confidence in His power, wisdom, and goodness], and of the [unselfish] love which you have for all the saints (God's people);

⁵because of the [confident] hope [of experiencing that] which is reserved *and* waiting for you in heaven. You previously heard of this *hope* in the message of truth, the gospel [regarding salvation]

⁶which has come to you. Indeed, just as in the whole world *the gospel* is constantly bearing fruit and spreading [by God's power], just as *it has been doing* among you ever since the day you first heard *of it* and understood the grace of God in

truth [becoming thoroughly and deeply acquainted with it].

⁷You learned it from [our representative] Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf

⁸and he also has told us of your love [well-grounded and nurtured] in the [Holy] Spirit.

⁹For this reason, since the day we heard about it, we have not stopped praying for you, asking [specifically] that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom [with insight into His purposes], and in understanding [of spiritual things],

¹⁰so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord [displaying admirable character, moral courage, and personal integrity], to [fully] please *Him* in all things, bearing fruit in every good work and steadily growing in the knowledge of God [with deeper faith, clearer insight and fervent love for His precepts];

KEYS to a Victorious Life

What Faith Is

Colossians 1:4 offers great insight into what faith is: "For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus [how you lean on Him with absolute confidence in His power, wisdom, and goodness], and of the [unselfish] love which you have for all the saints (God's people)." As believers, we act on what God tells us to do in faith instead of trying to figure out on our own how to solve our problems or how to reach our goals.

We need to rely completely on the Lord instead of on our flesh, other people, or on anything the world offers us. To have faith in the Lord means we lean all of ourselves on Him, believing that only He has the ability to do for us what needs to be done in us. Our job is to abide in Him, to depend on Him totally and completely, and to place our faith and confidence in Him. That kind of faith leads us to peace and blessings.

POWERPOINT

The Amplified Bible's definition of faith in Colossians 1:4 teaches us to lean everything about ourselves on God with trust and confidence in three specific attributes of His character: His power, His wisdom, and His goodness. Whatever we cannot do, God can do because of His power. Whatever we do not know, God does know because of His wisdom. And whatever God does in our life, we can trust that it is for our benefit because of His goodness.



¹¹[we pray that you may be] strengthened *and* invigorated with all power, according to His glorious might, to attain every kind of endurance and patience with joy;

¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share

in the inheritance of the saints (God's people) in the Light.

¹³For He has rescued us *and* has drawn us to Himself from the dominion of darkness, and has transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,

¹⁴in whom we have redemption [because of His sacrifice, resulting in] the forgiveness of our sins [and the cancellation of sins' penalty].

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Help me, Lord, to walk in a manner worthy of You, displaying admirable character, moral courage, and personal integrity. Help me also to fully please You in all things, bearing fruit in every good work and steadily growing in the knowledge of You with deeper faith, clearer insight, and fervent love for Your precepts.

¹⁵He is the exact living image [the essential manifestation] of the unseen God [the visible representation of the invisible], the firstborn [the preeminent one, the sovereign, and the originator] of all creation.

¹⁶For by Him all things were created in heaven and on earth, [things] visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities; all things were created *and* exist through Him [that is, by His activity] and for Him.

¹⁷And He Himself existed *and* is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. [His is the controlling, cohesive force of the universe.] [Prov 8:22–31]

¹⁸He is also the head [the life-source and leader] of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will occupy the first place [He will stand supreme and be preeminent] in everything. [1 Cor 15:20]

¹⁹For it pleased the *Father* for all the fullness [of deity—the sum total of His essence, all His perfection, powers, and attributes] to dwell [permanently] in Him (the Son),

²⁰and through [the intervention of] the Son to reconcile all things to Himself, making peace [with believers] through the blood of His cross; through Him, [I say,] whether things on earth or things in heaven.

²¹And although you were at one time estranged *and* alienated and hostile-minded [toward Him], *participating* in evil things,

²²yet Christ has now reconciled you [to God] in His

physical body through death, in order to present you before the Father holy and blameless and beyond reproach—

²³[and He will do this] if you continue in the faith, well-grounded and steadfast, and not shifting away from the [confident] hope [that is a result] of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which [gospel] I, Paul, was made a minister.

²⁴Now I rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf. And with my own body I supplement whatever is lacking [on our part] of Christ's afflictions, on behalf of His body, which is the church.

²⁵In *this church* I was made a minister according to the stewardship which God entrusted to me for your sake, so that I might make the word of God fully known [among you]—

POWERPOINT

You and I can only realize and experience the glory of God in our lives because of Christ in us (see Col. 1:27). He is our hope of seeing better things. When we look at ourselves and at our own ability, we feel defeated, but remembering that Christ lives in us is our hope of realizing the glory, or manifest excellence, of God. It keeps us encouraged to press on toward better things. We limit ourselves when we look to ourselves alone and fail to see Jesus. God's glory can be manifested in us and through us, as we believe it is possible.



²⁶*that is*, the mystery which was hidden [from angels and mankind] for ages and generations, but has now been revealed to His saints (God's people).

²⁷God [in His eternal plan] chose to make known to them how great for the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in *and* among you, the hope *and* guarantee of [realizing the] glory.

²⁸We proclaim Him, warning and instructing everyone in all wisdom [that is, with comprehensive insight into the word and purposes of God], so that we may present every person complete in Christ [mature, fully trained, and perfect in Him—the Anointed].

²⁹For this I labor [often to the point of exhaustion], striving with His power *and* energy, which so greatly works within me.

2 FOR I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those [believers] at Laodicea, and for all who [like yourselves] have never seen me face to face.

²[For my hope is] that their hearts may be encouraged as they are knit together in [unselfish] love, so that they may have all the riches that come from the full assurance of understanding [the joy of salvation], resulting in a true [and more intimate] knowledge of the mystery of God, *that is*, Christ,

³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge [regarding the word and purposes of God].

⁴I say this so that no one will deceive you with persuasive [but thoroughly deceptive] arguments.

⁵For even though I am absent [from you] in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, delighted to see your good discipline [as you stand shoulder to shoulder and form a solid front] and to see the stability of your faith in Christ [your

steadfast reliance on Him and your unwavering confidence in His power, wisdom, and goodness].

⁶Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in [union with] Him [reflecting His character in the things you do and say—living lives that lead others away from sin],

⁷having been deeply rooted [in Him] and *now* being *continually* built up in Him and [becoming increasingly more] established ^{*}in your faith, just as you were taught, and overflowing in it with gratitude.

POWERPOINT

God does not want us to limit our faith to our salvation experience. We see this in Colossians 2:6. Once we receive Christ by faith, we are supposed to then live our entire lives by faith. We should not decide to trust God in certain situations and try to handle others by ourselves. God wants to help us with the major issues in our lives and with the less significant ones. He wants to be there for us when we are desperate and when we are not. Living every day and every circumstance in total dependence on God is how we live by faith.



KEYS to a Victorious Life

Forgiven Forever

God's forgiveness is forever—ongoing for the duration of our lives; it is for every day. When Jesus died on the cross, He not only forgave everything we had done in our past, He also committed Himself to forgive and forget every sin we would commit in the future. In the words of the apostle Paul, “God made you alive together with Christ, having [freely] forgiven us all our sins” (Col. 2:13, emphasis mine).

He knows our thoughts before we think them; He knows our words before they come out of our mouths; He knows every wrong decision we will ever make—and they're all covered. All we have to do is stay in relationship with Him. After all, what He wants from us, more than anything else, is not perfect performance, or perfect behavior, or perfect attitudes, but hearts that truly love Him.

⁸See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception [pseudo-intellectual babble], according to the tradition [and musings] of mere men, following the elementary principles of this world, rather than following [the truth—the teachings of] Christ.

⁹For in Him all the fullness of Deity (the Godhead) dwells in bodily form [completely expressing the divine essence of God].

¹⁰And in Him you have been made complete [achieving

spiritual stature through Christ], and He is the head over all rule and authority [of every angelic and earthly power].

¹¹In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, but by the [spiritual] circumcision of Christ in the stripping off of the body of the flesh [the sinful carnal nature],

¹²having been buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him [to a new life] through [your] faith in the working of God, [as displayed] when He raised Christ from the dead.

¹³When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh (worldliness, manner of life), God made you alive together with Christ, having [freely] forgiven us all our sins,

¹⁴having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of legal demands [which were in force] against us and which were hostile to us. And this certificate He has set aside *and* completely removed by nailing it to the cross.

¹⁵When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities [those supernatural forces of evil operating against us], He made a public example of them [exhibiting them as captives in His triumphal procession], having triumphed over them through the cross.

¹⁶Therefore let no one judge you in regard to food and drink or in regard to [the observance of] a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day.

¹⁷Such things are only a shadow of what is to come *and* they have only symbolic value; but the substance [the reality of what is foreshadowed] belongs to Christ.

¹⁸Let no one defraud you of your prize [your freedom in

Christ and your salvation] by insisting on mock humility and the worship of angels, going into detail about *visions* [he claims] he has seen [to justify his authority], puffed up [in conceit] by his unspiritual mind,

¹⁹and not holding fast to the head [of the body, Jesus Christ], from whom the entire body, supplied and knit together by its joints and ligaments, grows with the growth [that can come only] from God.

²⁰If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were still living in the world, do you submit to rules *and* regulations, such as,

²¹“Do not handle [this], do not taste [that], do not [even] touch!”?

²²(these things all perish with use)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men. [Is 29:13]

²³These practices indeed have the appearance [that popularly passes as that] of wisdom in self-made religion and mock humility and severe treatment of the body (asceticism), but are of no value against sinful indulgence [because they do not honor God].

3 THEREFORE IF you have been raised with Christ [to a new life, sharing in His resurrection from the dead], keep seeking the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. [Ps 110:1]

²Set your mind *and* keep focused *habitually* on the things above [the heavenly things], not on things that are on the earth [which have only temporal value].

³For you died [to this world], and your [new, real] life is hidden with Christ in God.

⁴When Christ, who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

⁵So put to death *and* deprive of power the evil longings of your earthly body [with its sensual, self-centered instincts] immorality, impurity, *sinful* passion, evil desire, and greed, which is [a kind of] idolatry [because it replaces your devotion to God].

⁶Because of these [sinful] things the [divine] wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience [those who fail to listen and who routinely and obstinately disregard God's precepts],

⁷and in these [sinful things] you also once walked, when you were *habitually* living in them [without the knowledge of Christ].

Speak God's Word

*I have been raised with
Christ to a new life, sharing
in His resurrection from the
dead. I keep seeking the
things that are above, where
Christ is, seated at the right
hand of God.*

| *adapted from* COLOSSIANS 3:1 |

POWERPOINT

To “set your mind on things above” (see Col. 3:2) doesn’t merely mean to sit and think about heaven. It means to focus your mind on God’s will and on the most excellent way to live. I have said many times, “Where the mind goes, the man follows.” You can set your mind for the day with on-purpose thinking early in the morning. You can decide ahead of time what you want to think about that day and set your mind to do it. You can also set your mind to show love to everyone you meet that day.



⁸But now rid yourselves [completely] of all these things: anger, rage, malice, slander, and obscene (abusive, filthy, vulgar) language from your mouth.

⁹Do not lie to one another, for you have stripped off the old self with its *evil* practices,

¹⁰and have put on the new [spiritual] self who is being *continually* renewed in true knowledge in the image of Him who created the new self—[Gen 1:26]

¹¹*a renewal* in which there is no [distinction between] Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, [nor between nations whether] barbarian or Scythian, [nor in status whether] slave or free, but Christ is all, and in all [so believers are equal in Christ, without distinction].

¹²So, as God's own chosen people, who are holy [set apart, sanctified for His purpose] and well-beloved [by God Himself], put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience [which has the power to endure whatever injustice or unpleasantness comes, with good temper];

¹³bearing graciously with one another, and willingly forgiving each other if one has a cause for complaint against another; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so should you forgive.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

A Set and Disciplined Mind

God's Word frequently mentions the need to focus. The apostle Paul set a goal, and he knew that he had to keep pressing toward it. I am sure he had many requests and many expectations placed on him, but in the midst of it, he managed to focus on his main goal, which was spiritual maturity (see Phil. 3:10–14). Paul wanted to be what God wanted him to be.

Paul wrote: “Set your mind *and* keep focused *habitually* on the things above [the heavenly things], not on things that are on the earth [which have only temporal value]” (Col. 3:2). We have to set our mind in the right direction before we can move in the right direction. Focus requires that we set our mind and keep it set on what is important at any given time. Distractions are abundant, and the devil uses them to keep us from being productive and fulfilled. But with God's help and some determination, we can focus.

Don't be discouraged if you find that you have allowed your priorities to get out of line—just refocus and get back on track. Be determined to finish what you start and give yourself

to what you truly want to do.

God has given us a sound mind (see 2 Tim. 1:7), a mind of discipline and self-control. I am glad to know that I have a sound mind, and as is true for most of us, it is still being developed. I find that giving myself to whatever I am currently doing can be challenging at times, and I pray daily that God will help me to focus. I have experienced the power of focus, and I also know the misery of being distracted. I am not going to settle for anything less than focused thinking. The greatest moment in our lives is the present moment. We need to live it fully and enjoy it completely.

Discipline is the tool that God gives us to help us be who we say we want to be and do what we say we want to do. Discipline is our friend, not our enemy. Learn to discipline your mind and practice focusing. It may take time and effort, but once you gain a measure of success, you will find life much easier and more fulfilling.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Heavenly Father, an endless stream of distractions seems to keep me from the priorities I believe You have given me. Help me to set my mind and keep it focused on what You truly want me to do. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Speak God's Word

*I bear graciously with others
and willingly forgive others if
I have a cause for complaint
against them; just as the Lord
has forgiven me, so I should
forgive.*

| adapted from COLOSSIANS 3:13

|

¹⁴Beyond all these things put on *and* wrap yourselves in [unselfish] love, which is the perfect bond of unity [for everything is bound together in agreement when each one seeks the best for others].

¹⁵Let the peace of Christ [the inner calm of one who walks daily with Him] be the controlling factor in your hearts [deciding and settling questions that arise]. To this *peace* indeed you were called as members in one body [of believers]. And be thankful [to God always].

¹⁶Let the [spoken] word of Christ have its home within you [dwelling in your heart and mind—permeating every aspect of your being] as you teach [spiritual things] and admonish *and* train one another with all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

POWERPOINT

Peace is to be ardently sought after in our lives. It should guide us as we make decisions (see Col. 3:2). If we let peace be the umpire in our lives, we will live a life we can enjoy and one that is fruitful. We have all done things we did not have peace about doing at different times in our lives, and if we are honest, we would have to admit that those things did not end well. We often like to blame our problems on other people, circumstances, or the devil, but we should consider that many of our hardships could have been avoided had we followed peace.



¹⁷Whatever you do [no matter what it is] in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus [and in

dependence on Him], giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

¹⁸Wives, be subject to your husbands [out of respect for their position as protector, and their accountability to God], as is proper *and* fitting in the Lord.

¹⁹Husbands, love your wives [with an affectionate, sympathetic, selfless love that always seeks the best for them] and do not be embittered *or* resentful toward them [because of the responsibilities of marriage].

²⁰Children, obey your parents [as God's representatives] in all things, for this [attitude of respect and obedience] is well-pleasing to the Lord [and will bring you God's promised blessings].

²¹Fathers, do not provoke *or* irritate *or* exasperate your children [with demands that are trivial or unreasonable or humiliating or abusive; nor by favoritism or indifference; treat them tenderly with lovingkindness], so they will not lose heart *and* become discouraged *or* unmotivated [with their spirits broken].

²²Servants, in everything obey those who are your masters on earth, not only with external service, as those who merely please people, but with sincerity of heart because of your fear of the Lord.

²³Whatever you do [whatever your task may be], work from the soul [that is, put in your very best effort], as [something done] for the Lord and not for men,

²⁴knowing [with all certainty] that it is from the Lord [not from men] that you will receive the inheritance which is your [greatest] reward. It is the Lord Christ whom you [actually]

serve.

Speak God's Word

*Whatever I do and whatever
my task may be, I will put in
my very best effort, as though
I am working for the Lord
and not for other people.*

| *adapted from* COLOSSIANS 3:23

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KEYS to a Victorious Life

Persistence Pays Off

The Holy Spirit enables us to consistently choose right thinking, right words, and right actions. It's not what you choose to do right one time that's going to change your life. It's doing it over and over and over, such as being persistent and diligent in prayer (see Col. 4:2). I frequently tell people, "Keep on doing what is right even if you are not getting a right result yet." Persistence always pays off, and the Bible says that the diligent person will be successful (see 2 Pet. 1:10). Don't ever give up!

If you're the kind of person who refuses to give up, I can assure you that you will get your breakthrough and enjoy much victory in your life.

²⁵For he who does wrong will be punished for his wrongdoing, and [with God] there is no partiality [no special treatment based on a person's position in life].

4 MASTERS, [ON your part] deal with your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. [Lev 25:43, 53]

²Be persistent *and* devoted to prayer, being alert *and* focused in your prayer life with *an attitude of* thanksgiving.

³At the same time pray for us, too, that God will open a door [of opportunity] to us for the word, to proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I have been imprisoned;

⁴that I may make it clear [and speak boldly and unfold the mystery] in the way I should.

⁵Conduct yourself with wisdom in your interactions with outsiders (non-believers), make the most of each opportunity [treating it as something precious].

⁶Let your speech at all times be gracious *and* pleasant, seasoned with salt, so that you will know how to answer each one [who questions you].

⁷As to all my affairs, Tychicus, who is a much-loved brother and faithful assistant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will give you all the information. [Eph 6:21]

⁸I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are doing and that he may encourage your hearts;

⁹and with him is Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will let you know everything about the situation here [in Rome].

¹⁰Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, wishes to be remembered to you; as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him);

¹¹and from Jesus, who is called Justus. These are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision (Jewish Christians), and they have proved to be an encouragement *and* a comfort to me.

¹²Epaphras, who is one of you and a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. [He is] always striving for

you in his prayers, praying with genuine concern, [pleading] that you may [as people of character and courage] stand firm, [spiritually mature] and fully assured in all the will of God.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, I pray that my speech
will at all times be gracious
and pleasant, seasoned with
salt, so that I will know how
to answer each one who
questions me.*

*•adapted from
Colossians 4:6*

¹³For I testify for him that he has worked strenuously for you and for the believers in Laodicea and those in Hierapolis.

¹⁴Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you.

¹⁵Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church that meets in her house.

¹⁶When this letter has been read among you, see that it is

read in the church of the Laodiceans; and also that you in turn read my letter [that is coming to you] from Laodicea.

¹⁷And say to Archippus, “See to it that you fulfill [carefully the duties of] the ministry which you have received in the Lord.”

¹⁸I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. May grace (God’s unmerited favor and blessing) be with you.

1 Thessalonians

Author: | Paul
Date: | Probably
AD 51

The primary theme of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonian believers is the second coming of Jesus Christ. In fact, this event is referenced in every chapter of the book. To have the right mind-set toward His return, we should avoid the temptation to try to reason or figure out when it will happen. Instead, every day and in every situation, we should be mindful that Christ *will* come again—at a time we cannot specifically predict—and we should live the way we would want Him to find us living when He returns to earth.

As you read 1 Thessalonians, I encourage you to ask yourself, “Am I thinking the thoughts and living the kind of life the way I would want to be thinking and living when Christ comes back?” If we live every day the way He would have us live, we will be ready for His return.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM 1 THESSALONIANS:

We need not fear the Lord's return; rather, we can be comforted by knowing we will always be with Him (see 1 Thessalonians 4:1–18).

Fight passivity in your mind by being alert, self-controlled, calm, and wise (see 1 Thessalonians 5:6).

Close the door on complaining and give thanks to God in every circumstance (see 1 Thessalonians 5:18).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM 1 THESSALONIANS:

And may the Lord cause you to increase and excel and overflow in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you. | 1 Thessalonians 3:12

Always seek that which is good for one another and for all people. Rejoice always and delight in your faith; be unceasing and persistent in prayer. | 1 Thessalonians 5:15–17

In every situation [no matter what the circumstances] be thankful and continually give thanks to God; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. | 1 Thessalonians 5:18

THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

1 PAUL, SILVANUS (Silas), and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace [inner calm and spiritual well-being from God].

²We give thanks to God always for all of you, *continually* mentioning you in our prayers;

³recalling unceasingly before our God and Father your work energized by faith, and your service motivated by love and unwavering hope in [the return of] our Lord Jesus Christ. [1 Thess 1:10]

⁴Brothers and sisters beloved by God, we know that He has chosen you;

⁵for our good news [regarding salvation] came to you not only in word, but also in [its inherent] power and in the Holy Spirit and with great conviction [on our part]. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your benefit.

⁶You became imitators of us and [through us] of the Lord, after you welcomed our message in [a time of] great trouble with the joy supplied by the Holy Spirit;

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Jesus, for
personally rescuing me from
wrath and drawing me to
Yourself, with all the
privileges and rewards of a
new life with You.*

*• adapted from 1 Thessalonians
1:10*

⁷so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

⁸For the word of the Lord has resounded from you *and* has echoed [like thunder], not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place [the news of] your [great] faith in God has spread, so that we never need to say anything about it.

⁹For they themselves report about us, *telling* what kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Active Faith

God's Word encourages us to have an active faith. That means we are to be productive and bear good fruit. As we work with the Holy Spirit, we shut the door to laziness, procrastination, and passivity (see 1 Thess. 1:3). God's power is in us, and it will accomplish great things through us as we step out in faith and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

When we are actively doing good things, it helps us to resist the temptation to do bad things. There is a great deal of good that we can do each and every day, and we are told that good overcomes evil (see Rom. 12:21).

Stay active, follow God, and live a life of victory.

¹⁰and to [look forward and confidently] wait for [the coming of] His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead—Jesus, who [personally] rescues us from the coming wrath [and draws us to Himself, granting us all the privileges and rewards of a new life with Him].

2 FOR YOU know, brothers and sisters, that our coming to you has not been ineffective (fruitless, in vain),

²but after we had already suffered and been outrageously treated in Philippi, as you know, yet in [the strength of] our

God we summoned the courage to proclaim boldly to you the good news of God [regarding salvation] amid great opposition.

³For our appeal does not *come* from delusion or impure motives, nor [is it motivated] by deceit [our message is complete, accurate, and based on the truth—it does not change].

⁴But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel [that tells the good news of salvation through faith in Christ], so we speak, not as [if we were trying] to please people [to gain power and popularity], but *to please* God who examines our hearts [expecting our best].

⁵For as you well know, we never came with words of flattery nor with a pretext for greed—God is our witness—

⁶nor did we seek glory *and* honor from people, neither from you nor from anyone else, though as apostles of Christ we had the power to assert our authority.

⁷But we behaved gently when we were among you, like a devoted *mother* tenderly caring for her own children.

⁸Having such a deep affection for you, we were delighted to share with you not only God's good news but also our own lives, because you had become so very dear to us.

⁹For you remember, believers, our labor and hardship. We worked night and day [practicing our trade] in order not to be a [financial] burden to any of you while we proclaimed the gospel of God to you.

¹⁰You are witnesses, and so is God, how unworldly and just and blameless was our behavior toward you who believe [in our Lord Jesus Christ].

¹¹For you know how we were exhorting and encouraging

and imploring each one of you just as a father does [in dealing with] his own children, [guiding you]

Speak God's Word

*I thank God continually for
His Word, which is effectually
at work in me because I
believe. It exercises its
inherent, supernatural power
in those who have faith.*

| adapted from 1
THESSALONIANS 2:13 |

¹²to live lives [of honor, moral courage, and personal integrity] worthy of the God who [saves you and] calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

¹³And we also thank God continually for this, that when you received the word of God [concerning salvation] which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of [mere] men, but as it truly is, the word of God, which is effectually at work in you who believe [exercising its inherent, supernatural power in those of faith].

¹⁴For you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, because you too suffered the same [kind of] persecution from your own countrymen, as they did from the Jews,

¹⁵who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and

harassed *and* drove us out; and [they] continue to be highly displeasing to God and [to show themselves] hostile to all people,

¹⁶forbidding us from speaking to the Gentiles (non-Jews) so that they may be saved. So, as always, they fill up [to the brim] the measure of their sins [allotted to them by God]. But [God's] wrath has come upon them at last [completely and forever]. [Gen 15:16]

¹⁷But since we were taken away from you, believers, for a little while—in person, but not in heart—we endeavored, with great longing to see you face to face.

¹⁸For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again [wanted to come], but Satan hindered us.

¹⁹For who is [the object of] our hope or joy or our victor's wreath of triumphant celebration [when we stand] in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? Is it not you?

²⁰For you are [indeed] our glory and our joy!

3 THEREFORE, WHEN we could no longer endure our separation [from you], we thought it best to be left behind, alone at Athens,

²and so we sent Timothy, our brother and God's servant in [spreading] the good news of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you [exhorting, comforting, and establishing you] in regard to your faith,

³so that no one would be unsettled by these difficulties [to which I have referred]. For you know that we have been destined for this [as something unavoidable in our position].

⁴For even when we were with you, we warned you plainly in advance that we were going to experience persecution; and so, as you know, it has come to pass.

⁵For this reason, when I could no longer endure the suspense, I sent *someone* to find out about your faith [how you were holding up under pressure], for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our work [among you] would prove to be ineffective.

⁶But now that Timothy has come back to us from [his visit with] you, and has brought us good news of your [steadfast] faith and [the warmth of your] love, and [reported] that you always think kindly of us *and* treasure your memories of us, longing to see us just as we long to see you,

⁷for this reason, brothers and sisters, during all our distress and suffering we have been comforted *and* greatly encouraged about you because of your faith [your unwavering trust in God—placing yourselves completely in His loving hands];

POWERPOINT

Any Christian can make a commitment to encourage other people in their faith (see 1 Thess. 3:2). Ask God to help you to see people the way He does and to say good things to them and about them. People are encouraged anytime we give them a compliment, and that is something we can do everywhere we go. It doesn't take much effort, but it has a huge positive effect. Form the habit of being an encourager and you will feel joy as you make others happy.



⁸because now we *really* live [in spite of everything], if you stand firm in the Lord.

⁹For what [adequate] thanks can we offer to God for you in return for all the joy *and* delight we have before our God on

your account?

¹⁰We continue to pray night and day most earnestly that we may see you face to face, and may complete whatever may be imperfect *and* lacking in your faith.

¹¹Now may our God and Father Himself, and Jesus our Lord guide our steps to you [by removing the obstacles that stand in our way].

¹²And may the Lord cause you to increase and excel *and* overflow in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you;

¹³so that He may strengthen *and* establish your hearts without blame in holiness in the sight of our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints (God's people).

4 FINALLY, BELIEVERS, we ask and admonish you in the Lord Jesus, that you follow the *instruction* that you received from us about how you ought to walk and please God (just as you are actually doing) and that you excel even more and more [pursuing a life of purpose and living in a way that expresses gratitude to God for your salvation].

²For you know what commandments *and* precepts we gave you by the *authority of* the Lord Jesus.

³For this is the will of God, that you be sanctified [separated and set apart from sin]: that you abstain *and* back away from sexual immorality;

⁴that each of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor [being available for God's purpose and separated from things profane],

⁵not [to be used] in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God *and* are ignorant of His will;

⁶and that [in this matter of sexual misconduct] no man *shall* transgress and defraud his brother because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we have told you before and solemnly warned you.

Speak God's Word

*God has not called me to
impurity but to holiness, to
be dedicated and set apart by
behavior that pleases Him,
whether in public or in
private.*

| adapted from 1
THESSALONIANS 4:7 |

⁷For God has not called us to impurity, but to holiness [to be dedicated, and set apart by behavior that pleases Him, whether in public or in private].

⁸So whoever rejects *and* disregards this is not [merely] rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you [to dwell in you and empower you to overcome temptation].

⁹Now concerning brotherly love, you have no need for *anyone* to write you, for you have been [personally] taught by God to love one another [that is, to have an unselfish concern for others and to do things for their benefit]. [Lev 19:18; John 13:34]

¹⁰For indeed you already do practice it toward all the believers throughout Macedonia [by actively displaying your love and concern for them]. But we urge you, brothers and

sisters, that you excel [in this matter] more and more,

POWERPOINT

First Thessalonians 4:11 is a great scriptural instruction to mind our own business. For example, you don't have to be concerned about what your neighbor wears or how much she talks on the phone, because you don't buy her clothes or pay her phone bill.

Some people really enjoy meddling in other people's affairs, and we can all be tempted to form opinions about matters that simply do not concern us. The Bible clearly tells to live quietly and to be attentive to our own business.



¹¹and to make it your ambition to live quietly *and* peacefully, and to mind your own affairs and work with your hands, just as we directed you,

¹²so that you will behave properly toward outsiders [exhibiting good character, personal integrity, and moral courage worthy of the respect of the outside world], and be dependent on no one *and* in need of nothing [be self-supporting].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Be an Encourager

Some people are naturally gifted as encouragers. They are amazing people who make everyone around them feel good whenever they are in their presence. I was not naturally gifted in that way, but I have learned and am still learning to encourage others. We may not all be born with the gift of encouragement, but God's Word instructs us to encourage others and commands us not to discourage them through faultfinding and criticism.

We can see how much emphasis the apostle Paul placed on encouraging one another by the way he wrote to the Thessalonian church in 1 Thessalonians 5:11, 14. He was aware of the difficult times in which they lived, and he knew that many of them would be tempted to give up and not complete their journey of faith if they had no encouragement. Let's follow his advice and do likewise!

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Unceasing Prayer

One of the phrases I like to use when teaching on prayer is “Pray your way through the day.” This is certainly good advice to follow if we want to stay close to God, stay on guard against the enemy, and enjoy our lives each day. As we go about our daily lives, we can pray anytime, anywhere. Ephesians 6:18 instructs us to pray “at all times [on every occasion and in every season] in the Spirit,” and 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says to “be unceasing and persistent in prayer.” In other words, we need to keep the lines of communication open with God. We can stay in constant fellowship with Him through prayer, all day long.

While there are times when we need to be very diligent, focused, and set apart as we pray, we do not have to wait until we are in church or some other designated place, or until we have a certain amount of time, to pray. The best way I know to be unceasing in prayer is to live as though God is constantly paying attention to us, because He is.

¹³Now we do not want you to be uninformed, believers, about those who are asleep [in death], so that you will not grieve [for them] as the others do who have no hope [beyond this present life].

¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again [as in fact

He did], even so God [in this same way—by raising them from the dead] will bring with Him those [believers] who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

¹⁵For we say this to you by the Lord's [own] word, that we who are still alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will in no way precede [into His presence] those [believers] who have fallen asleep [in death].

¹⁶For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel and with the [blast of the] trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

¹⁷Then we who are alive and remain [on the earth] will *simultaneously* be caught up (raptured) together with them [the resurrected ones] in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord! [John 14:3; 1 Cor 15:52; 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23; Col 3:4]

¹⁸Therefore comfort *and* encourage one another with these words [concerning our reunion with believers who have died].

5 NOW AS to the times and dates, brothers and sisters, you have no need for anything to be written to you.

²For you yourselves know perfectly well that the day of the [return of the] Lord is coming just as a thief [comes unexpectedly and suddenly] in the night.

³While they are saying, "Peace and safety [all is well and secure!]" then [in a moment unforeseen] destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains on a woman with child, and they will absolutely not escape [for there will be no way to

escape the judgment of the Lord].

⁴But you, believers, [all you who believe in Christ as Savior and acknowledge Him as God's Son] are not in *spiritual* darkness [nor held by its power], that the day [of judgment] would overtake you [by surprise] like a thief;

⁵for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We do not belong to the night nor to darkness.

⁶So then let us not sleep [in spiritual indifference] as the rest [of the world does], but let us keep wide awake [alert and cautious] and let us be sober [self-controlled, calm, and wise].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Test and Prove Your Thoughts

First Thessalonians 5:21 encourages us to test and prove things and then to hold on to the ones that are good. If we apply that principle to our thoughts and words, it can help us make the best choices about what we allow and what we reject. We do not have to keep every thought that drops into our mind, and we don't have to speak everything we think about saying.

Let's slow down a little and take time to examine our thoughts and words and only choose to keep the ones that are good. The more we practice doing this the easier it will become.

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you recognize thoughts and words that will not be beneficial to you or anyone else, and then to exchange them for thoughts and words that are wholesome and filled with God's power.

⁷For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night.

⁸But since we [believers] belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope *and* confident assurance of salvation.

⁹For God has not destined us to [incur His] wrath [that is, He did not select us to condemn us], but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

¹⁰who died [willingly] for us, so that whether we are awake (alive) or asleep (dead) [at Christ's appearing], we will live together with Him [sharing eternal life].

¹¹Therefore encourage *and* comfort one another and build up one another, just as you are doing.

¹²Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to appreciate those who diligently work among you [recognize, acknowledge, and respect your leaders], who are in charge over you in the Lord and who give you instruction,

¹³and [we ask that you appreciate them and] hold them in the highest esteem in love because of their work [on your behalf]. Live in peace with one another.

¹⁴We [earnestly] urge you, believers, admonish those who are out of line [the undisciplined, the unruly, the disorderly], encourage the timid [who lack spiritual courage], help the [spiritually] weak, be very patient with everyone [always controlling your temper]. [Is 35:4]

¹⁵See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek that which is good for one another and for all people.

¹⁶Rejoice always *and* delight in your faith;

¹⁷be unceasing *and* persistent in prayer;

¹⁸in every situation [no matter what the circumstances] be thankful *and* continually give thanks *to God*; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.

¹⁹Do not quench [subdue, or be unresponsive to the working and guidance of] the [Holy] Spirit.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*I pray, Lord, that I will be
unceasing and persistent in
prayer in every situation, no
matter what the
circumstances. Help me
always to be thankful and
continually give thanks to
You; for this is Your will for
me in Christ Jesus.*

• adapted from 1 Thessalonians
5:17–18

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

The Weapons of Praise and Thanksgiving

If we are going to live in victory, praise and thanksgiving will be two of our major weapons. When our minds flow with thanksgiving and praise, we develop immunity to the devil's infectious ways. If we complain or grumble, the opposite is true. The more we complain, the worse life gets, the more victorious the devil becomes, and the more defeated we feel.

When God answers our prayers and delivers us from problems, it's easy to lift our praise. But it's not always as easy when things go wrong. Job's wife was so shaken by tragedy that she told Job, "Curse God and die!" (Job 2:9). Job answered with great wisdom: "Shall we indeed accept [only] good from God and not [also] accept adversity?" (Job 2:10). Job understood that a righteous life doesn't mean that everything in our circumstances will be good all the time.

The Bible says, "in every situation [no matter what the circumstances] be thankful *and* continually give thanks *to*

God; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess. 5:18).

Satan wants us to murmur and complain continually, because that keeps us stuck in our problems. But praise can lift us out of our problems. The Israelites wandered for forty years in the wilderness, going around and around the same mountains, and one thing that kept them from making progress was that they complained so much. They also blamed Moses and God for their problems instead of recognizing that their behavior was wrong and changing it.

Whatever is going on our lives, we should always remain thankful. Even if we have a problem, or perhaps a few problems, there are still more good things than bad ones if we will only look for them. A thankful heart is a happy heart, so go ahead and make yourself happy by being the most thankful person on the earth!

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God, I'm thankful for Your love and Your presence. Forgive me for grumbling when things go wrong, and remind me of how many things go right in my life. Enable me to always rejoice in You. Amen.

²⁰Do not scorn *or* reject gifts of prophecy *or* prophecies [spoken revelations—words of instruction or exhortation or warning].

²¹But test all things carefully [so you can recognize what is good]. Hold firmly to that which is good.

²²Abstain from every form of evil [withdraw and keep away from it].

²³Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you through and through [that is, separate you from profane and vulgar things, make you pure and whole and undamaged—consecrated to Him—set apart for His purpose]; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept complete and [be found] blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁴Faithful *and* absolutely trustworthy is He who is calling you [to Himself for your salvation], and He will do it [He will fulfill His call by making you holy, guarding you, watching over you, and protecting you as His own].

²⁵Brothers and sisters, pray for us.

²⁶Greet all the believers with a holy kiss [as brothers and sisters in God's family].

²⁷I solemnly charge you by the Lord to have this letter read before all the *congregation.

²⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

2 Thessalonians

Author: | Paul
Date: | Probably
AD 51

As our minds mature in Christ, we sometimes need to hear again something we've already heard before. Maybe we did not fully understand it the first time, or perhaps we did not interpret it properly or apply it correctly to our lives. This happened to the believers in Thessalonica after they read Paul's first letter to them. Many of them overreacted to Paul's comments on Christ's second coming, so among other reasons, he wrote 2 Thessalonians to help them better understand what he was trying to say.

As you grow spiritually and become more mature in your thinking, don't ever be afraid to re-think something or to ask for an explanation. Just as the Thessalonians needed Paul to clarify some information for them, you may also need further clarity in spiritual matters. To change your mind does not mean you were wrong previously; it simply means you are growing in your level of understanding and the renewing of

your thinking.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM 2 THESSALONIANS:

I encourage you to ask God for His grace to help you glorify Him in everything you do and say (see 2 Thessalonians 1:12).

Do not give up; continue to do what is right and you will be blessed in the end (see 2 Thessalonians 3:13).

No matter what happens, trust the Lord of peace to give you peace of mind at all times, in every way (see 2 Thessalonians 3:16).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM 2 THESSALONIANS:

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting comfort and encouragement and the good [well-founded] hope [of salvation] by His grace, comfort and encourage and strengthen your hearts [keeping them steadfast and on course] in every good work and word. | 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

The Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen you [setting you on a firm foundation] and will protect and guard you from the evil one. | 2 Thessalonians 3:3

THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

1 PAUL, SILVANUS (Silas), and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

²Grace to you and peace [inner calm and spiritual well-being] from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³We ought always *and* indeed are morally obligated [as those in debt] to give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters, as is fitting, because your faith is growing ever greater, and the [unselfish] love of each one of you toward one another is continually increasing.

⁴Therefore, we speak of you with pride among the churches of God for your steadfastness [your unflinching endurance, and patience] and your firm faith in the midst of all the persecution and [crushing] distress which you endure.

⁵*This is* a positive proof of the righteous judgment of God [a sign of His fair verdict], so that you will be considered worthy of His kingdom, for which indeed you are suffering.

POWERPOINT

The apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church, “Your faith is growing ever greater, and the [unselfish] love of each one of you toward one another is continually increasing” (2 Thess. 1:3). Little faith can become great faith as you use it more often. When you take steps to trust God, you will experience His faithfulness, and, in turn, you’ll be encouraged to have even greater faith. As your faith develops and grows, your problems will have less power over you and you can overcome them more quickly and more effectively.



A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



God, I pray that You will count me worthy of my calling to faith and with Your power fulfill every desire for goodness, and complete every work of faith, so that the name of Jesus will be glorified in me, and I in Him, according to Your grace.

• adapted from 2 Thessalonians
1:11–12

⁶For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with distress those who distress you,

⁷and to *give* relief to you who are so distressed and to us as well when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in a flame of fire,

⁸dealing out [full and complete] vengeance to those who

do not [seek to] know God and to those who ignore *and* refuse to obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus [by choosing not to respond to Him].

⁹These people will pay the penalty *and* endure the punishment of everlasting destruction, banished from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

¹⁰when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day [that is, glorified through the changed lives of those who have accepted Him as Savior and have been set apart for His purpose], and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed *and* trusted [and confirmed in your lives].

¹¹With this in view, we constantly pray for you, that our God will count you worthy of your calling [to faith] and with [His] power fulfill every desire for goodness, and complete [your] every work of faith,

¹²so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you [by what you do], and you in Him, according to the [precious] grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

No Need To Be Upset

To *upset* is to make unhappy, disappointed, or worried. It is also characterized by words such as *unsettle*, *disquiet*, *perturb*, *bother*, *agitate*, *fluster*, *ruffle*, and *unnerve*. This describes the state of mind of the Thessalonian believers who had been told they had missed the second coming of the Lord (see 2 Thess. 2:2). One can easily understand why they were upset!

When we choose to worry, we will upset ourselves. Worry is meditating (thinking) about a problem over and over. While it may be wise to think through a situation and ponder whether we should take any action to make things better, it is unwise to let a problem sit on our mind for days at a time, interfering with good thoughts we could be thinking.

The more we worry, the more stress we experience and the more emotionally upset we feel. Our thoughts affect our emotions, and we can either upset ourselves or calm ourselves with what we choose to think about. People who think about the wrong things end up saying, “I feel like I am losing my

mind,” which is what they’ve done. They have given up the control of their thoughts to an enemy who is bent on killing, stealing, and destroying (see John 10:10).

For years, I had no idea what stress was doing to me, but I found out when I finally started having physical problems. I kept praying for peace and thinking that if people and circumstances in my life would just change, I could have it. I finally learned that I was the one who needed to change and that it really wasn’t “my life” that was stealing my peace; it was the fact that I was allowing myself to be upset through wrong thoughts and reactions.

Jesus said that when we are worn out and overburdened, we should come to Him (see Matt. 11:28–30)! Go to Jesus, talk openly with Him about the way you are feeling, and ask Him to reveal the changes you need to make in order to begin to heal. Prayer doesn’t always result in a miraculous delivery from our problems. More often than not, it results in God’s giving us wisdom and revealing what we need to do with His help to effect a positive change.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord Jesus, I can get upset by thinking and thinking about my problems. Thank You for calling me to come to You and find rest for my soul. Lord, I come and ask You to reveal to me the changes I need to make in order to walk in peace. Amen.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Chosen from the Beginning

God tells us in His Word that “[in His love] He chose us in Christ [actually selected us for Himself as His own] before the foundation of the world, so that we would be holy... and blameless in His sight” (Eph. 1:4). Even though He already knew every mistake we would ever make, He actually chose us for Himself. We read that we were chosen “from the beginning” (2 Thess. 2:13), but we have a difficult time receiving it.

After all, how could God, Who is perfect, choose us and be pleased with us in our imperfections? He can do this because He separates who we are from what we do. As believers in Jesus Christ, we are God’s children. We may not always act the way He wants us to act, but we never stop being His children and He never stops loving us.

2 NOW IN regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to *meet* Him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, [Mark 13:27; 1 Thess 2:19; 4:15–17]

²not to be quickly unsettled or alarmed either by a [so-called prophetic revelation of a] spirit or a message or a letter [alleged to be] from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has [already] come.

³Let no one in any way deceive *or* entrap you, for *that day*

will not come unless the apostasy comes first [that is, the great rebellion, the abandonment of the faith by professed Christians], and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction [the Antichrist, the one who is destined to be destroyed], [Dan 7:25; 8:25; 1 Tim 4:1]

⁴who opposes and exalts himself [so proudly and so insolently] above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he [actually enters and] takes his seat in the temple of God, publicly proclaiming that he himself is God. [Ezek 28:2; Dan 11:36, 37]

⁵Do you not remember that when I was still with you, I was telling you these things?

⁶And you know what restrains him now [from being revealed]; it is so that he will be revealed at his own [appointed] time.

⁷For the mystery of lawlessness [rebellion against divine authority and the coming reign of lawlessness] is already at work; [but it is restrained] only until he who now restrains it is taken out of the way.

⁸Then the lawless one [the Antichrist] will be revealed and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of His mouth and bring him to an end by the appearance of His coming. [Is 11:4]

⁹The coming of the [Antichrist, the lawless] one is through the activity of Satan, [attended] with great power [all kinds of counterfeit miracles] and [deceptive] signs and false wonders [all of them lies],

¹⁰and by unlimited seduction to evil *and* with all the deception of wickedness for those who are perishing, because they did not welcome the love of the truth [of the gospel] so as

to be saved [they were spiritually blind, and rejected the truth that would have saved them].

¹¹Because of this God will send upon them a misleading influence, [an activity of error and deception] so they will believe the lie,

¹²in order that all may be judged *and* condemned who did not believe the truth [about their sin, and the need for salvation through Christ], but *instead* took pleasure in unrighteousness.

¹³But we should *and* are [morally] obligated [as debtors] always to give thanks to God for you, believers beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through the sanctifying work of the Spirit [that sets you apart for God's purpose] and by your faith in the truth [of God's word that leads you to spiritual maturity].

¹⁴It was to this end that He called you through our gospel [the good news of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection], so that you may obtain *and* share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹⁵So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold [tightly] to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us.

¹⁶Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting comfort *and* encouragement and the good [well-founded] hope [of salvation] by *His* grace,

¹⁷comfort *and* encourage and strengthen your hearts [keeping them steadfast and on course] in every good work and word.

3 FINALLY, BROTHERS and sisters, pray *continually* for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be honored [triumphantly celebrated and glorified], just as it was with you;

²and [pray] that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not everyone has the faith.

³But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen you [setting you on a firm foundation] and will protect *and* guard you from the evil *one*.

⁴We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will *continue* to do the things [which] we command.

⁵May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness *and* patience of Christ.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Thank You, Lord, for being faithful. I pray that You will strengthen me and will protect me and guard me from the evil one.

- *adapted from 2 Thessalonians*
3:3

Speak God's Word

*I will not grow tired or lose
heart in doing good; I will
continue doing what is right
without weakening.*

| *adapted from 2*

THESSALONIANS 3:13 |

⁶Now we command you, believers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ *and* by His authority, that you withdraw *and* keep away from every brother or sister who leads an undisciplined life and does not live in accordance with the tradition *and* teaching that you have received from us.

⁷For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined *or* inappropriate manner when we were with you [we were never idle or lazy, nor did we avoid our duties],

⁸nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we worked night and day [to pay our own way] so that we would not be a *financial* burden on any of you [for our support];

⁹not because we do not have a right *to such support*, but [we provided our own financial support] to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example.

¹⁰For even while we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.

¹¹Indeed, we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined *and* inappropriate life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies [meddling in other people's business].

¹²Now such people we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down *and* work quietly and earn their own food *and* other necessities [supporting themselves instead of depending on the hospitality of others].

¹³And as for [the rest of] you, believers, do not grow tired *or* lose heart in doing good [but continue doing what is right without weakening].

¹⁴Now if anyone [in the church] does not obey what we say in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be ashamed *and* repent.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The God of Peace Is with You

No matter what your emotional condition right now, with God's help you can become emotionally stable, and I encourage you to make that one of your goals. Don't be the kind of Christian who is up emotionally when you are getting your way and down when you're not; up when you receive the blessing you've been praying for and down when God hasn't brought it into your life yet. We have this wonderful promise from God: "Now may the Lord of peace Himself grant you His peace at all times and in every way [that peace and spiritual well-being that comes to those who walk with Him, regardless of life's circumstances]. The Lord be with you all" (2 Thess. 3:16).

Accept God's peace, which is beyond understanding, and be content regardless of your "earthly lot" (see Phil. 4:7). Learn to think, Even if I don't get my way, I will be happy. I will not let my circumstances control my moods. When you don't get your way, you can be just as happy as if you did. Let your joy be in Christ, not in good circumstances.

¹⁵Do not regard him as an enemy, but keep admonishing him as a [believing] brother.

¹⁶Now may the Lord of peace Himself grant you His peace at all times *and* in every way [that peace and spiritual well-

being that comes to those who walk with Him, regardless of life's circumstances]. The Lord be with you all. [John 14:27]

¹⁷I, Paul, write you this final greeting with my own hand. This is the distinguishing mark in every letter [of mine, that shows it is genuine]. It is the way I write [my handwriting and signature].

¹⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you.

! REMEMBER, when you
are in Christ, victory
belongs to you!

1 Timothy

Author: | Paul
Date: | Possibly
AD 63–65

Paul wrote two letters to his young minister friend Timothy, because he obviously cared about Timothy, believed in him, knew him well, and wanted him to succeed in ministry. This is a brief but wonderful book that offers us great advice in many areas and also teaches us how to think about leadership and about life in the church.

One of the verses we would be wise to meditate on and allow to influence our thinking is 1 Timothy 1:12: “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has granted me [the needed] strength *and* made me able for this, because He considered me faithful *and* trustworthy, putting me into service [for this ministry].” Whatever God has called you to do, and however He has equipped you to lead, always remember that He has given you the strength you need and made you able to do it!

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM 1 TIMOTHY:

People need someone who can show them how to speak good words, act with integrity, and balance strong faith with love. You can be that person (see 1 Timothy 4:12)!

It's so important not to neglect the gift the Holy Spirit has given you. I encourage you to work to develop it and use it to help others and serve God (see 1 Timothy 4:14–15).

Fight the good fight of faith by speaking the Word of God and fully embracing the eternal life Jesus died to give you (see 1 Timothy 6:12).

When you are tempted to speak empty words, stop yourself and replace them with words of life and truth (see 1 Timothy 6:20).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM 1 TIMOTHY:

Be an example and set a pattern for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in [moral] purity. | 1 Timothy 4:12

Fight the good fight of the faith [in the conflict with evil]; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and [for which] you made the good confession [of faith]. | 1 Timothy 6:12

THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO TIMOTHY

1 PAUL, AN apostle (special messenger, personally chosen representative) of Christ Jesus by the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus (the Messiah, the Anointed) our Hope [the fulfillment of our salvation],

²to Timothy, my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace [inner calm and spiritual well-being] from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

³As I urged you when I was on my way to Macedonia, stay on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain individuals not to teach any different doctrines,

⁴nor to pay attention to legends (fables, myths) and endless genealogies, which give rise to useless speculation *and* meaningless arguments rather than advancing God's program of *instruction* which is grounded in faith [and requires surrendering the entire self to God in absolute trust and confidence].

⁵But the goal of our instruction is love [which springs] from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

⁶Some individuals have wandered away from these things into empty arguments *and* useless discussions,

⁷wanting to be teachers of the Law [of Moses], even though they do not understand the terms they use or the subjects about which they make [such] confident declarations.

⁸Now we know [without any doubt] that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully *and* appropriately,

⁹understanding the fact that law is not enacted for the righteous person [the one in right standing with God], but for lawless and rebellious people, for the ungodly and sinful, for the irreverent and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers,

¹⁰for sexually immoral persons, for homosexuals, for kidnappers *and* slave traders, for liars, for perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine,

¹¹according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.

¹²I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has granted me [the needed] strength *and* made me able for this, because He considered me faithful *and* trustworthy, putting me into service [for this ministry],

¹³even though I was formerly a blasphemer [of our Lord] and a persecutor [of His church] and a shameful *and* outrageous *and* violent aggressor [toward believers]. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted out of ignorance in unbelief.

¹⁴The grace of our Lord [His amazing, unmerited favor and blessing] flowed out in superabundance [for me, together] with the faith and love which are [realized] in Christ Jesus.

¹⁵This is a faithful *and* trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance *and* approval, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost.

¹⁶Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost [of sinners], Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example *or* pattern for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.

¹⁷Now to the King of the ages [eternal], immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

¹⁸This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, so that [inspired and aided] by them you may fight the good fight [in contending with false teachers],

¹⁹keeping your faith [leaning completely on God with absolute trust and confidence in His guidance] and having a good conscience; for some [people] have rejected [their moral compass] and have made a shipwreck of their faith.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*You, God, are the King of the
ages, eternal, immortal,
invisible, the only God. To
You be honor and glory
forever and ever. Amen.*

• adapted from 1 Timothy 1:17

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, help me always to keep
my faith, leaning completely
on You with absolute trust
and confidence in Your
guidance.*

• adapted from 1 Timothy 1:19

²⁰Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be disciplined *and* taught not to blaspheme.

2 FIRST OF all, then, I urge that petitions (specific requests), prayers, intercessions (prayers for others) and thanksgivings be offered on behalf of all people,

²for kings and all who are in [positions of] high authority, so that we may live a peaceful and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

³This [kind of praying] is good and acceptable *and* pleasing in the sight of God our Savior,

⁴who wishes all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge *and* recognition of the [divine] truth.

⁵For there is [only] one God, and [only] one Mediator between God and mankind, the Man Christ Jesus,

POWERPOINT

First Timothy 2:1 encourages us, among other things, to intercede for others. To intercede is to stand in the gap for someone else, to plead their case to God. Praying for others is like sowing seed. If you sow a seed, you will reap a harvest. When you sow into someone else's life, God meets your needs. So by praying for others, you help them and you reap a harvest of blessings in your own life.



POWERPOINT

First Timothy 2:1–3 lists several types of prayer and says these ways of praying are “good and acceptable *and* pleasing” to God. We should exercise the various types of prayer on a regular basis. They are simple, can be prayed anywhere at any time, and are most effective when prayed from a believing heart. As believers, we have the spiritual authority to do God’s will on earth through prayer. He hears and responds to our prayers. That is what makes them so powerful and so effective.



⁶who gave Himself as a ransom [a substitutionary sacrifice to atone] for all, the testimony given at the right *and* proper time.

⁷And for this matter I was appointed a preacher and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying [when I say this]—a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

⁸Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without anger and disputing *or* quarreling *or* doubt [in their mind].

⁹Likewise, *I want* women to adorn themselves modestly *and* appropriately and discreetly in proper clothing, not with [elaborately] braided hair and gold or pearls or expensive clothes,

¹⁰but instead *adorned* by good deeds [helping others], as is proper for women who profess to worship God.

¹¹A woman must quietly receive instruction with all submissiveness.

¹²I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet [in the congregation].

¹³For Adam was formed first [by God from the earth], then Eve; [Gen 2:7, 21, 22]

¹⁴and it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman who was led astray and fell into sin. [Gen 3:1–6]

¹⁵But *women* will be preserved (saved) through [the pain and dangers of] the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and holiness with self-control *and* discretion.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Wants Us To Be Content

To live “free from the love of money [not greedy for wealth and its inherent power—financially ethical]” is very important to a person’s sense of contentment (see 1 Tim. 3:3; Heb. 13:5). God wants to bless us financially, but He doesn’t want us to focus on money and things. He wants us to be content!

Being content shows that we trust God to provide what He knows is right for us at the time that is right. Having a good attitude in lean times will help you get through them faster and with greater joy.

3 THIS IS a faithful *and* trustworthy saying: if any man [eagerly] seeks the office of overseer (bishop, superintendent), he desires an excellent task.

²Now an overseer must be blameless *and* beyond reproach, the husband of one wife, self-controlled, sensible, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

³not addicted to wine, not a bully *nor* quick-tempered *and* hot-headed, but gentle *and* considerate, free from the love of money [not greedy for wealth and its inherent power—financially ethical].

⁴*He must* manage his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity [keeping them respectful

and well-behaved]

⁵(for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?).

⁶and *He must* not be a new convert, so that he will not [behave stupidly and] become conceited [by appointment to this high office] and fall into the [same] condemnation incurred by the devil [for his arrogance and pride]. [Is 14:12–14]

⁷And he must have a good reputation *and* be well thought of by those outside *the church*, so that he will not be discredited and fall into the devil's trap.

⁸Deacons likewise *must be* men worthy of respect [honorable, financially ethical, of good character], not double-tongued [speakers of half-truths], not addicted to wine, not greedy for dishonest gain,

⁹but upholding *and* fully understanding the mystery [that is, the true doctrine] of the [Christian] faith with a clear conscience [resulting from behavior consistent with spiritual maturity].

¹⁰These men must first be tested; then if they are found to be blameless *and* beyond reproach [in their Christian lives], let them serve as deacons.

¹¹Women must likewise be worthy of respect, not malicious gossips, but self-controlled, [thoroughly] trustworthy in all things.

¹²Deacons must be husbands of *only* one wife, and good managers of *their* children and their own households.

¹³For those who have served well as deacons gain a high standing [having a good reputation among the congregation], and great confidence in the faith which is [founded on and

centered] in Christ Jesus.

¹⁴I hope to come to you before long, but I am writing these instructions to you

¹⁵in case I am delayed, so that you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

¹⁶And great, we confess, is the mystery [the hidden truth] of godliness:

He (Jesus Christ) who was revealed in human flesh,
Was justified *and* vindicated in the Spirit,
Seen by angels,
Preached among the nations,
Believed on in the world,
Taken up in glory.

4 BUT THE [Holy] Spirit explicitly *and* unmistakably declares that in later times some will turn away from the faith, paying attention instead to deceitful *and* seductive spirits and doctrines of demons,

²[misled] by the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared as with a branding iron [leaving them incapable of ethical functioning],

³who forbid marriage and *advocate* abstaining from [certain kinds of] foods which God has created to be gratefully shared by those who believe and have [a clear] knowledge of the truth.

⁴For everything God has created is good, and nothing is to

be rejected if it is received with gratitude;

⁵for it is sanctified [set apart, dedicated to God] by means of the word of God and prayer.

⁶If you point out these instructions to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, *constantly* nourished [through study] on the words of the faith and of the good [Christian] doctrine which you have closely followed.

Speak God's Word

I will have nothing to do with irreverent folklore and silly myths. I will discipline myself for the purpose of godliness, keeping myself spiritually fit.

| adapted from 1 TIMOTHY 4:7 |

⁷But have nothing to do with irreverent folklore *and* silly myths. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness [keeping yourself spiritually fit].

⁸For physical training is of some value, but godliness (spiritual training) is of value in everything *and* in every way, since it holds promise for the present life and for the life to come.

⁹This is a faithful *and* trustworthy saying worthy of full acceptance *and* approval.

¹⁰It is for this that we labor and strive [often called to account], because we have fixed our [confident] hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe [in Him, recognize Him as the Son of God, and accept Him as Savior and Lord].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Nourished on the Word

The Holy Spirit can help you remember a Bible verse or passage when you need it, if you have the Word of God in you (see John 14:26). For example, if you believe the devil's lie that you have to earn God's love, you will be extremely frustrated trying to do something you can't do. But if you have taken the time to learn the Word, meditate on the Word, and speak the Word, the Holy Spirit will bring to mind any number of Scriptures about God's free and unconditional love when you need them. He will remind you of God's life-giving principles and energize you to follow them.

Be "constantly nourished [through study] on the words of the faith" (1 Tim. 4:6) so you have a deep reservoir of Scripture in your heart.

Speak God's Word

I have fixed my confident hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe in Him, recognize Him as the Son of God, and accept Him as Savior and Lord.

| adapted from 1 TIMOTHY 4:10 |

¹¹Keep commanding and teaching these things.

¹²Let no one look down on [you because of] your youth, but be an example *and* set a pattern for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in [moral] purity.

¹³Until I come, devote yourself to public reading [of Scripture], to preaching and to teaching [the sound doctrine of God's word].

¹⁴Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, [that special endowment] which was intentionally bestowed on you [by the Holy Spirit] through prophetic utterance when the elders laid their hands on you [at your ordination].

¹⁵Practice *and* work hard on these things; be absorbed in them [completely occupied in your ministry], so that your progress will be evident to all.

¹⁶Pay close attention to yourself [concentrate on your personal development] and to your teaching; persevere in these things [hold to them], for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

POWERPOINT

The apostle Paul encouraged Timothy to “be an example *and* set a pattern for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in [moral] purity” (1 Tim. 4:12). Likewise, our lives should be a “pattern” for other believers. Let’s start by setting good examples with our thoughts and words, making sure to think and speak in agreement with God’s Word.



5 DO NOT sharply reprimand an older man, but appeal to him as [you would to] a father, to younger men as brothers,

²to older women as mothers, to younger women as sisters, in all purity [being careful to maintain appropriate relationships].

³Honor *and* help those widows who are truly widowed [alone, and without support].

⁴But if a widow has children or grandchildren [who are adults], see to it that these first learn to show great respect to their own family [as their religious duty and natural obligation], and to compensate their parents *or* grandparents [for their upbringing]; for this is acceptable *and* pleasing in the sight of God.

⁵Now a woman who is really a widow and has been left [entirely] alone [without adequate income] trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day.

⁶Whereas she who lives for pleasure *and* self-indulgence is *spiritually* dead even while she *still* lives.

⁷Keep instructing [the people to do] these things as well, so that they may be blameless *and* beyond reproach.

⁸If anyone fails to provide for his own, and especially for those of his own family, he has denied the faith [by disregarding its precepts] and is worse than an unbeliever [who fulfills his obligation in these matters].

⁹A widow is to be put on the list [to receive regular assistance] only if she is over sixty years of age, [having been] the wife of one man,

¹⁰and has a reputation for good deeds; [she is eligible] if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the feet of the saints (God's people), if she has assisted the distressed, and has devoted herself to doing good in every way.

¹¹But refuse [to enroll the] younger widows, for when they feel their natural desires in disregard of Christ, they wish to marry *again*,

¹²and so they incur condemnation for having set aside

their previous pledge.

¹³Now at the same time, they also learn to be idle as they go from house to house; and not only idle, but also gossips and busybodies [meddlers in things that do not concern them], talking about things they should not *mention*.

¹⁴So I want younger *widows* to get married, have children, manage their households, and not give opponents of the faith any occasion for slander.

¹⁵Some [widows] have already turned away [from the faith] to follow Satan.

¹⁶If any believing woman has [dependent] widows [in her household], she must assist them [according to her ability]; and the church must not be burdened [with them], so that it may assist those who are truly widows [those who are all alone and are dependent].

¹⁷The elders who perform their leadership duties well are to be considered worthy of double honor (financial support), especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching [the word of God concerning eternal salvation through Christ].

¹⁸For the Scripture says, “YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE IT IS TREADING OUT THE GRAIN [to keep it from eating],” and, “The worker is worthy of his wages [he deserves fair compensation].” [Deut 25:4; Luke 10:7]

¹⁹Do not accept an accusation against an elder unless it is based on [the testimony of at least] two or three witnesses. [Deut 19:15]

²⁰As for those [elders] who continue in sin, reprimand them in the presence of all [the congregation], so that the rest will be warned.

²¹I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels that you guard *and* keep these rules without bias, doing nothing out of favoritism.

²²Do not hurry to lay hands on anyone [ordaining and approving someone for ministry or an office in the church, or in reinstating expelled offenders], and thereby share in the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.

²³No longer continue drinking [only] water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.

²⁴The sins of some people are conspicuous, leading the way for them into judgment [so that they are clearly not qualified for ministry]; but the sins of others appear later [for they are hidden and follow behind them].

²⁵Likewise, good deeds are quite evident, and those which are otherwise cannot be hidden [indefinitely].

6 ALL WHO are under the yoke as bond-servants (slaves) are to regard their own masters as worthy of honor *and* respect so that the name of God and the teaching [about Him] will not be spoken against.

²Those who have believing masters are not to be disrespectful toward them because they are brothers [in Christ], but they should serve them even better, because those who benefit from their kindly service are believers and beloved. Teach and urge these [duties and principles].

³If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine *and* teaching which is in agreement with godliness

(personal integrity, upright behavior),

⁴he is conceited and woefully ignorant [understanding nothing]. He has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, which produces envy, quarrels, verbal abuse, evil suspicions,

⁵and perpetual friction between men who are corrupted in mind and deprived of the truth, who think that godliness is a source of profit [a lucrative, money-making business—withdraw from them].

⁶But godliness *actually* is a source of great gain when accompanied by contentment [that contentment which comes from a sense of inner confidence based on the sufficiency of God].

⁷For we have brought nothing into the world, so [it is clear that] we cannot take anything out of it, either.

⁸But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.

⁹But those who [are not financially ethical and] crave to get rich [with a compulsive, greedy longing for wealth] fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction [leading to personal misery].

Speak God's Word

I brought nothing into the world, so it is clear that I cannot take anything out of it, either. But if I have food and clothing, with these I will be content.

| *adapted from* 1 TIMOTHY 6:7–

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Energy for the Fight of Faith

Our energy level affects our creativity and ability to focus, and it has a huge impact on our desire and motivation to do things. Fearful thoughts can rob us of much-needed energy. Fear that something bad will happen drains us of energy; faith in God that good things will happen motivates and energizes us.

At the end of Paul's first letter to Timothy, he reminded Timothy of the battle we are in: "Fight the good fight of the faith [in the conflict with evil]" (1 Tim. 6:12). By the time he wrote his second letter to Timothy, Timothy's battle zeal seemed to have begun to fade due to fearful thoughts. Because of persecution, perhaps Timothy had let his thinking drift toward the bad things that could happen to him if he kept boldly preaching God's Word. These fearful thoughts drained his energy and lessened his motivation to stay focused on what God had called him to do. Paul reminded Timothy that God had not given him a spirit of fear but of power, love, and a sound mind (see 2 Tim. 1:7). God is not the source of fearful

thoughts; Satan is, and he is relentless as he tries to use them against us.

God gives us the ability to think soundly. Fear may come against us, but well-informed people know its source and resist it. Courageous people feel the fear and take action anyway. It was time for Timothy to cease behaving according to his feelings and to start acting on what he knew in his heart. We will not be able to keep all fearful thoughts from presenting themselves to our mind, but we certainly don't have to accept them and let them steal our energy, enthusiasm, and zeal.

Timothy's fearful thoughts had to be traded for ones that would help him regain his faith. It wasn't too late to shake off the apathy he was feeling and get going again. Thankfully, Timothy ultimately made decisions based on more than emotion, and he did fulfill the call on his life.

The root of most problems we encounter emotionally is directly linked to thoughts we permit to fester in our minds. We can immediately increase our energy level and fight the good fight of faith by choosing and meditating on positive thoughts.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Holy Spirit, I thank You that You are the source of power, love, and a sound mind in my life. In the name of Jesus, help me to push back fearful thoughts that drain my energy and to diligently fight the good fight of faith. Amen.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Lord, I choose to aim at and pursue righteousness, true goodness, godliness and the fear of God, faith, love, steadfastness, and gentleness.

• adapted from 1 Timothy 6:11

¹⁰For the love of money [that is, the greedy desire for it and the willingness to gain it unethically] is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves [through and through] with many sorrows.

¹¹But as for you, O man of God, flee from these things; aim at *and* pursue righteousness [true goodness, moral conformity to the character of God], godliness [the fear of God], faith, love, steadfastness, and gentleness. [2 Tim 3:17]

¹²Fight the good fight of the faith [in the conflict with evil]; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and [for which] you made the good confession [of faith] in the presence of many witnesses.

¹³I *solemnly* charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and [in the presence] of Christ Jesus, who made the good confession [in His testimony] before Pontius Pilate,

¹⁴to keep all His precepts without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Speak God's Word

To fight the good fight of the faith, I take hold of the eternal life to which I was called, and for which I made the good confession of faith in the presence of many witnesses.

| adapted from 1 TIMOTHY 6:12 |

¹⁵which He will bring about in His own time—He who is the blessed and only Sovereign [the absolute Ruler], the King of those who reign as kings and Lord of those who rule as lords,

¹⁶He alone possesses immortality [absolute exemption from death] and lives in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal power *and* dominion! Amen.

¹⁷As for the rich in this present world, instruct them not to be conceited *and* arrogant, nor to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly *and* ceaselessly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

¹⁸*Instruct them* to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous, willing to share [with others].

¹⁹In this way storing up for themselves the *enduring* riches of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

²⁰O Timothy, guard *and* keep safe the deposit [of godly truth] entrusted to you, turn away from worldly and godless chatter [with its profane, empty words], and the contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge”—

²¹which some have professed and by doing so have erred (missed the mark) *and* strayed from the faith.

Grace be with you.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Help me, Lord, to be rich in good works, to be generous, and to be willing to share with others. In this way, I will store up for myself the enduring riches of a good foundation for the future, so that I may take hold of that which is truly life.

- *adapted from 1 Timothy 6:18–19*

2 Timothy

Author: | Paul
Date: | AD 66–67

Written by Paul to Timothy perhaps not too long before Paul's death in prison, 2 Timothy is a warm, personal, encouraging epistle that includes many insights on how a Christian should think, speak, and feel.

Second Timothy 1:7 says that when we are afraid, we need to remember that fear is not from God, because God has given us a sound mind. This letter also reminds us that God's Word is what equips us for good works (see 2 Timothy 3:17), so we need to be diligent to study and live by it.

In this letter, Paul shares with Timothy some of the ways he thought and acted throughout his ministry, probably in an effort to give Timothy a good example to follow. Though Paul lived centuries ago, the way he followed God and lived his life as a believer is an excellent example not only for Timothy, but for you and me too.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM 2 TIMOTHY:

Fear is not from God, but great courage is. We can face our problems with a calm and well-balanced mind, knowing that God is mightier than all our problems (see 2 Timothy 1:7).

God's Word changes us and equips us as we apply it to our lives (see 2 Timothy 3:16–17).

Keep your faith all the way to the end and you will gain a victory you can enjoy (see 2 Timothy 4:7–8).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM 2 TIMOTHY:

God did not give us a spirit of timidity or cowardice or fear, but [He has given us a spirit] of power and of love and of sound judgment and personal discipline [abilities that result in a calm, well-balanced mind and self-control]. | 2 Timothy 1:7

Study and do your best to present yourself to God approved, a workman [tested by trial] who has no reason to be ashamed, accurately handling and skillfully teaching the word of truth. | 2 Timothy 2:15

The Lord will rescue me from every evil assault, and He will bring me safely into His heavenly kingdom. | 2 Timothy 4:18

THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO TIMOTHY

1 PAUL, AN apostle (special messenger, personally chosen representative) of Christ Jesus (the Messiah, the Anointed) by the will of God, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,

²to Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace [inner calm and spiritual well-being] from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

³I thank God, whom I worship *and* serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day,

⁴and as I recall your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy.

⁵I remember your sincere *and* unqualified faith [the surrendering of your entire self to God in Christ with confident trust in His power, wisdom and goodness, a faith] which first lived in [the heart of] your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am confident that it is in you as well.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Remember the Power of Words

Timothy was a very young man who lived during a time when Christians were being persecuted. He was the apostle Paul's spiritual son and had been ordained for the Gospel ministry by the elders, but fear was attacking him. He was concerned that he was too young for the ministry and that he would be persecuted for his belief in Jesus. Paul told him to stir up his faith, to fan the flame and not let the fire that was once in him go out (see 2 Tim. 1:6).

The longer we allow fearful thoughts in our minds, the more tightly they grip us. If we talk about our fears, we fan the flame of fear. But if we talk about God's goodness, His faithfulness to us in the past, and the privilege of living by faith, we fan the flame of our faith and it stays alive and powerful. We don't automatically stay strong in faith, and there are times when we need to stir ourselves up in faith and remind ourselves that we don't have to live in fear.

Perhaps Timothy was thinking too many negative thoughts and had forgotten the rich heritage of faith he had received from his grandmother and mother, so Paul reminded him of it (see 2 Tim. 1:1-6). Sometimes we need someone to interrupt our negative talk and help us get our thoughts back on track, and sometimes we need to lovingly remind others of the power of their words. We cannot take it upon ourselves to correct the mistakes of others all the time, but we can and should be led

by the Holy Spirit to speak a word in due season to those who have an open heart, as Paul did to Timothy.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Lean on God

One of the spiritual laws of receiving from God is to place our entire dependence upon Him. Without faith, we cannot please God. It is the channel through which we receive from Him. Faith is described in the Amplified Bible as surrendering “your entire self to God in Christ with confident trust in His power, wisdom and goodness” (2 Tim. 1:5).

We are to depend entirely on Him, taking all the weight off ourselves and putting it all on Him. When I plop down in a big easy chair, I am putting my entire dependence on that chair to hold me. I take all the weight off myself and put all of it on the chair. It is amazing that we trust a chair more than we trust God many times.

We forfeit peace and joy by not surrendering to God completely. We try to figure out things that we have no business even touching with our minds. There are some things that are simply too high or too deep for us. Nothing is too hard or too wonderful for God, but many things are too hard or too wonderful for us. God is infinite; we are finite human beings with limitations. God’s knowledge is surpassing; ours is limited, fragmentary and incomplete (see 1 Cor. 13:9). We know some things, but we don’t know everything. There are some things we should not even allow ourselves to think about. We won’t know everything, but we can grow to a place where we are satisfied to know the One Who knows and to

confidently trust in His power, wisdom, and goodness.

⁶That is why I remind you to fan into flame the gracious gift of God, [that inner fire—the special endowment] which is in you through the laying on of my hands [with those of the elders at your ordination].

⁷For God did not give us a spirit of timidity *or* cowardice *or* fear, but [He has given us a spirit] of power and of love and of sound judgment *and* personal discipline [abilities that result in a calm, well-balanced mind and self-control].

Speak God's Word

*God did not give me a spirit
of timidity or cowardice or
fear; but He has given me a
spirit of power and of love
and of sound judgment and
personal discipline—
abilities that result in a calm,
well-balanced mind and self-
control.*

| adapted from 2 TIMOTHY 1:7 |

⁸So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord or about me His prisoner, but with me take your share of suffering for the gospel [continue to preach regardless of the circumstances], in accordance with the power of God [for His power is invincible],

⁹for He delivered us *and* saved us and called us with a holy calling [a calling that leads to a consecrated life—a life set apart—a life of purpose], not because of our works [or because of any personal merit—we could do nothing to earn this], but because of His own purpose and grace [His amazing, undeserved favor] which was granted to us in Christ Jesus before the world began [eternal ages ago],

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

A Disciplined Mind

Discipline may be one of the most misunderstood entities of all time, but it is one of the gifts God has given us to defeat fear and live with a sound mind (see 2 Tim. 1:7). People don't always like the idea of discipline, but the truth is that discipline is our friend, not our enemy. It helps us live the life that we will enjoy most when all is said and done. Discipline may not make us smile while it is in action, but its fruit is a successful and joyful life.

I doubt that it is possible to find a happy and successful person who does not regularly exercise discipline. Do you want to be happy and successful? If so, discipline is necessary, and disciplining the mind and emotions is especially important.

The human personality consists of roughly four-fifths emotion and one-fifth intellect. This means that our decisions are based on 80 percent emotion and 20 percent intellect or reason. No wonder we see so many people make bad decisions! Many of our decisions are good, but if we don't follow through on them, they mean nothing. Emotion may help

us get started in the right direction, but it is rarely there at the finish line. Sooner or later, we need to press forward without the support of emotion and employ discipline.

Translated from the Greek language, the word *discipline* means “saving the mind or to be safe; an admonishment or calling to soundness of mind or to self-control.” In other words, people who think properly, with soundness of mind, will discipline all areas of their life. I believe our thoughts, words, and emotions are among the most important areas we need to discipline. A disciplined person maintains the correct mental attitude toward issues that arise. It is much easier to maintain a right attitude than to regain it once it is lost.

We can clearly see from 2 Timothy 1:7 that God has not “given us a spirit of timidity *or* cowardice *or* fear,” but that He has equipped us with a sound mind, one that stays calm (not emotional), well-balanced, disciplined, and self-controlled. We can choose and discipline ourselves to use our sound minds. This will help us live without fear, with a balanced mind, and with self-control.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Thank You, Lord, for giving me power, love, and a sound mind. Help me to discipline myself so I can enjoy a calm, well-balanced mind and use self-control. In Jesus' name. Amen.

POWERPOINT

No matter what kind of problem we have, we need self-control and discipline to help us come through to victory (see 2 Tim. 1:7). This is especially true with regard to our thought life and the battle for our mind. What begins in the mind eventually comes out of the mouth, and soon we're telling anyone who will listen how we feel. We have to discipline our mind, our mouth, our feelings, and our actions so that they are all in agreement with what the Word of God says.



¹⁰but now [that extraordinary purpose and grace] has been fully disclosed *and* realized by us through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus who [through His incarnation and earthly ministry] abolished death [making it null and void] and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

¹¹for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher [of this good news regarding salvation].

¹²This is why I suffer as I do. Still, I am not ashamed; for I know Him [and I am personally acquainted with Him] whom I have believed [with absolute trust and confidence in Him and in the truth of His deity], and I am persuaded [beyond any doubt] that He is able to guard that which I have entrusted to Him until that day [when I stand before Him]. [1 Cor 1:8, 3:13; Phil 1:6]

¹³Keep *and* follow the pattern of sound teaching (doctrine) which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

¹⁴Guard [with greatest care] *and* keep unchanged, the treasure [that precious truth] which has been entrusted to you [that is, the good news about salvation through personal faith in Christ Jesus], through [the help of] the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

¹⁵You are aware of the fact that all who are in [the province of] Asia turned away *and* deserted me, Phygelus and Hermogenes among them.

¹⁶The Lord grant mercy to the family of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me *and* showed me kindness [comforting and reviving me like fresh air] and he was not ashamed of my chains [for Christ's sake];

¹⁷but [instead] when he reached Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me—

¹⁸the Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord on that [great] day. You know very well how many things he did for me *and* what a help he was at Ephesus [you know

better than I can tell you].

2 SO YOU, my son, be strong [constantly strengthened] *and* empowered in the grace that is [to be found only] in Christ Jesus.

²The things [the doctrine, the precepts, the admonitions, the sum of my ministry] which you have heard me teach in the presence of many witnesses, entrust [as a treasure] to reliable *and* faithful men who will also be capable *and* qualified to teach others.

³Take with me your share of hardship [passing through the difficulties which you are called to endure], like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

⁴No soldier in active service gets entangled in the [ordinary business] affairs of civilian life; [he avoids them] so that he may please the one who enlisted him to serve.

⁵And if anyone competes as an athlete [in competitive games], he is not crowned [with the wreath of victory] unless he competes according to the rules.

⁶The hard-working farmer [who labors to produce crops] ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.

⁷Think over the things I am saying [grasp their application], for the Lord will grant you insight *and* understanding in everything.

⁸Remember Jesus Christ [the ever-living Lord who has] risen from the dead, [as the prophesied King] descended from David [king of Israel], according to my gospel [the good news that I preach], [Ps 16:10]

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, I pray that I will be
constantly strengthened and
empowered in the grace that
is to be found only in Christ
Jesus.*

• *adapted from 2 Timothy 2:1*

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Strive for Excellence

It is very easy to be a mediocre person. All you have to do is make no extra effort of any kind and compromise all your beliefs. If you compromise, it means you do a little less than you know is right and proper. To be excellent means to do a little more than you might have to in order to just get by; it means going the extra mile (see Matt. 5:41). To strive for excellence is exactly what Paul instructed Timothy to do: "Study and do your best to present yourself to God approved, a workman [tested by trial] who has no reason to be ashamed, accurately handling and skillfully teaching the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

Peace is one of the greatest rewards you receive when you make an effort to do things the way you know they should be done. Choose the more excellent way, and you will find that God's peace is yours.

⁹for that [gospel] I am suffering even to [the point of] wearing chains like a criminal; but the word of God is not chained or imprisoned!

¹⁰For this reason I [am ready to] patiently endure all things for the sake of those who are the elect (God's chosen ones), so that they too may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it the reward of eternal glory.

¹¹This is a faithful *and* trustworthy saying:

If we died with Him, we will also live with Him;

¹²If we endure, we will also reign with Him;

If we deny Him, He will also deny us;

¹³If we are faithless, He remains faithful [true to His word and His righteous character], for He cannot deny Himself.

¹⁴Remind *the people* of these facts, and solemnly charge *them* in the presence of God to avoid petty controversy over words, which does no good, and [upsets and undermines and] ruins [the faith of] those who listen.

¹⁵Study *and* do your best to present yourself to God approved, a workman [tested by trial] who has no reason to be ashamed, accurately handling *and* skillfully teaching the word of truth.

¹⁶But avoid all irreverent babble and godless chatter [with its profane, empty words], for it will lead to further ungodliness,

¹⁷and their teaching will spread like gangrene. So it is with Hymenaeus and Philetus,

¹⁸who have deviated from the truth. They claim that the resurrection has already taken place, and they undermine the faith of some.

¹⁹Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God [which He has laid] stands [sure and unshaken despite attacks], bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord stand apart from wickedness *and* withdraw from wrongdoing." [Num 16:5; Is 26:13]

²⁰Now in a large house there are not only vessels *and*

objects of gold and silver, but also vessels *and* objects of wood and of earthenware, and some are for honorable (noble, good) use and some for dishonorable (ignoble, common).

²¹Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these *things* [which are dishonorable—disobedient, sinful], he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified [set apart for a special purpose and], useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.

²²Run away from youthful lusts—pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace with those [believers] who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

²³But have nothing to do with foolish and ignorant speculations [useless disputes over unedifying, stupid controversies], since you know that they produce strife *and* give birth to quarrels.

²⁴The servant of the Lord must not participate in quarrels, but must be kind to everyone [even-tempered, preserving peace, and he must be], skilled in teaching, patient *and* tolerant when wronged.

²⁵He must correct those who are in opposition with courtesy *and* gentleness in the hope that God may grant that they will repent and be led to the knowledge of the truth [accurately understanding and welcoming it],

²⁶and that they may come to their senses and *escape* from the trap of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

3 BUT UNDERSTAND this, that in the last days dangerous times [of great stress and trouble] will come [difficult days that

will be hard to bear].

²For people will be lovers of self [narcissistic, self-focused], lovers of money [impelled by greed], boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy *and* profane,

³[and they will be] unloving [devoid of natural human affection, calloused and inhumane], irreconcilable, malicious gossips, devoid of self-control [intemperate, immoral], brutal, haters of good,

⁴traitors, reckless, conceited, lovers of [sensual] pleasure rather than lovers of God,

⁵holding to a form of [outward] godliness (religion), although they have denied its power [for their conduct nullifies their claim of faith]. Avoid such people *and* keep far away from them.

⁶For among them are those who worm their way into homes and captivate *morally* weak *and* spiritually-dwarfed women weighed down by [the burden of their] sins, easily swayed by various impulses,

⁷always learning *and* listening to anybody who will teach them, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

⁸Just as Jannes and Jambres [the court magicians of Egypt] opposed Moses, so these *men* also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, unqualified *and* worthless [as teachers] in regard to the faith. [Ex 7:11]

⁹But they will not get very far, for their meaningless nonsense *and* ignorance will become obvious to everyone, as was that of Jannes and Jambres.

¹⁰Now you have diligently followed [my example, that is]

my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, steadfastness,

¹¹persecutions, and sufferings—such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, but the Lord rescued me from them all! [2 Cor 12:10]

¹²Indeed, all who delight in pursuing righteousness *and* are determined to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be hunted *and* persecuted [because of their faith].

¹³But evil men and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

¹⁴But as for you, continue in the things that you have learned and of which you are convinced [holding tightly to the truths], knowing from whom you learned *them*,

POWERPOINT

God's Word exposes true motives and thereby shows us the true condition of our heart.

As a result we may realize we are doing certain things because we are proud, jealous, angry, seeking revenge against someone, or because we want to impress people. Once we understand our motives, we can repent, be cleansed, and experience the joy of forgiveness and freedom.

According to 2 Timothy 3:16, as we read the Word and apply it to our lives, we will be instructed, convicted of sin, corrected of error, and trained in righteousness so we can learn to live in conformity to God's will.



KEYS to a Victorious Life

God's Word Changes Us

When you receive Christ as your Savior, you receive the ability to do everything God wants you to do. God would never expect you to be patient if He didn't give you patience. He would never expect you to love if He didn't put within you love to give away.

But all of this comes in seed form, and these seeds will only grow when they are watered with the Word. God changes you as you stay in His Word and are transformed into His image (see 2 Cor. 3:18). "All Scripture is God-breathed... profitable for instruction, for conviction... for correction... for training in righteousness" so that we "may be complete and proficient, outfitted and thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16–17). Receive God's Word as one of the most precious gifts that God offers, and watch it change you!

¹⁵and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings (Hebrew Scriptures) which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus [surrendering your entire self to Him and having absolute confidence in His wisdom, power and goodness].

¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed [given by divine inspiration] and is profitable for instruction, for conviction [of sin], for correction [of error and restoration to obedience], for

training in righteousness [learning to live in conformity to God's will, both publicly and privately—behaving honorably with personal integrity and moral courage];

¹⁷so that the man of God may be complete *and* proficient, outfitted *and* thoroughly equipped for every good work.

4 I SOLEMNLY charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom:

²preach the word [as an official messenger]; be ready when the time is right and *even* when it is not [keep your sense of urgency, whether the opportunity seems favorable or unfavorable, whether convenient or inconvenient, whether welcome or unwelcome]; correct [those who err in doctrine or behavior], warn [those who sin], exhort *and* encourage [those who are growing toward spiritual maturity], with inexhaustible patience and [faithful] teaching.

³For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine *and* accurate instruction [that challenges them with God's truth]; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled [with something pleasing], they will accumulate for themselves [many] teachers [one after another, chosen] to satisfy their own desires *and* to support the errors they hold,

⁴and will turn their ears away from the truth and will wander off into myths *and* man-made fictions [and will accept the unacceptable].

⁵But as for you, be clear-headed in every situation [stay calm and cool and steady], endure every hardship [without

flinching], do the work of an evangelist, fulfill [the duties of] your ministry.

⁶For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure [from this world] is at hand *and* I will soon go free. [Num 15:1–12; 28:7; Phil 2:17]

⁷I have fought the good *and* worthy *and* noble fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith [firmly guarding the gospel against error].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Will Stand by You

God promises that He will never leave you nor forsake you, but will be with you until the very end (see Matt. 28:20). He is with you at all times, and He is planning to provide for all your needs (see Heb. 13:5). God is with you when you are going through trials, and He is planning your breakthrough (see 1 Cor. 10:13).

When all others forsake you, God will stand by you (see 2 Tim. 4:16–17). Look at Paul's attitude: "Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; [but that is no concern of mine, for] the Lord will repay him according to his actions" (2 Tim. 4:14). The apostle Paul trusted that God would take care of the entire situation and bring recompense, or a reward, to him for the pain he had endured. But keep in mind that we only see that reward when we choose to have a godly attitude in the midst of our pain. Second Timothy 4:16–17 says: "At my first trial no one supported me [as an advocate] or stood with me, but they all deserted me. May it not be counted against them [by God]. But the Lord stood by me and strengthened and empowered me."

Paul's friends should have stood by him when he needed them, but they didn't. And he actually asked God not to hold their unfaithfulness against them. Why? I think it was because he understood the weakness of man's nature. He didn't focus on what people didn't do for him; rather, he focused on the fact

that although all the others left him, the Lord stood by him. His heavenly Father was faithful. We have no promise from God that people will always be faithful, but we do have His promise that He will be faithful at all times. People may shift and change, but God is unchanging.

⁸In the future there is reserved for me the [victor's] crown of righteousness [for being right with God and doing right], which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that [great] day—and not to me only, but also to all those who have loved *and* longed for *and* welcomed His appearing.

⁹Make every effort to come to me soon;

¹⁰for Demas, having loved [the pleasures of] this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens *has gone* to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.

¹¹Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very helpful to me for the ministry.

¹²But Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus.

¹³When you come bring the coat that I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments.

¹⁴Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; [but that is no concern of mine, for] the Lord will repay him according to his actions.

¹⁵Be on guard against him yourself, because he vigorously opposed our message.

¹⁶At my first trial no one supported me [as an advocate] *or* stood with me, but they all deserted me. May it not be counted against them [by God].

¹⁷But the Lord stood by me and strengthened *and* empowered me, so that through me the [gospel] message might be fully proclaimed, and that all the Gentiles might hear it; and I was rescued from the mouth of the lion.

¹⁸The Lord will rescue me from every evil assault, and He will bring me safely into His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

¹⁹Give my greetings to Prisca and Aquila, and to the household of Onesiphorus.

²⁰Erastus stayed on at Corinth, but I left Trophimus sick at Miletus.

²¹Try your best to come [to me] before winter. Eubulus wishes to be remembered to you, as do Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brothers and sisters.

²²The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Keep the Faith

Typically, we are excited at the beginning of an opportunity, a relationship, or a venture; we're also happy when we can celebrate our achievements and have the satisfaction of fulfilled desires. But between the beginning and the end, every situation or pursuit has a "middle"—and the middle is where we often face our greatest challenges, hurdles, roadblocks, obstacles, detours, and tests.

The enemy wants you to stop short of receiving and enjoying everything God has for you, and he will tempt you to give up by sometimes making the middle of your venture seem too long or too hard. God, on the other hand, wants the very best for you; He wants you to finish the race set before you, enjoying every step along the way (see Heb. 12:1). Be determined to be faithful all the way through and enjoy your victory (see 2 Tim. 4:7–8).

Titus

Author: | Paul

Date: | Probably
between AD 63–65

Titus was a young minister, like Timothy, whom Paul wanted to encourage in the face of challenges and of difficult ministerial tasks in his church in Crete. In this letter, Paul focuses on the basics of Christian doctrine—the things we all need to know if we want to follow God effectively and grow in our faith. Paul also writes in this letter of the importance of living a godly life and of demonstrating faith through good works. While works without faith or love are ineffective, when we do good works based on our love for God and sincere desire to please Him, others take notice and those good works become part of our witness. It is very important to speak good, edifying words and to show our love for God in all that we do.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM TITUS:

One reason it is vital that we renew our minds according to God's Word is that the knowledge of the truth is what leads to godliness (see Titus 1:1).

As believers, it's important for us to desire to be people of good character whose words and actions reflect Christ (see Titus 2:1–8).

Jesus has personally set us free and made us pure. Since we belong to Him, we can do good with enthusiasm (see Titus 2:14).

We are accepted and freed from guilt through God's compassionate, undeserved grace (see Titus 3:7).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM TITUS:

For the [remarkable, undeserved] grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to reject ungodliness and worldly (immoral) desires, and to live sensible, upright, and godly lives [lives with a purpose that reflect spiritual maturity] in this present age. | Titus 2:11–12

He saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we have done, but because of His own compassion and mercy, by the cleansing of the new birth (spiritual transformation, regeneration) and renewing by the Holy Spirit. | Titus 3:5

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO TITUS

1 PAUL, A bond-servant of God and an apostle (special messenger, personally chosen representative) of Jesus Christ, for the faith of God's chosen ones and [to lead and encourage them to recognize and pursue] the knowledge of the truth which leads to godliness, ²based on the hope *and* divine guarantee of eternal life, [the life] which God, who is ever truthful *and* without deceit, promised before the ages of time began, ³and at the appointed time has made known His word *and* revealed it as His message, through preaching, which was entrusted to me according to the command of God our Savior—
⁴To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace [inner calm and spiritual well-being] from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

⁵For this reason I left you *behind* in Crete, so that you would set right what remains *unfinished*, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, ⁶*namely*, a man of unquestionable integrity, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of being immoral or rebellious.

⁷For the overseer, as God's steward, must be blameless, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not

violent, not greedy for dishonest gain [but financially ethical].

⁸And *he must be* hospitable [to believers, as well as strangers], a lover of what is good, sensible (upright), fair, devout, self-disciplined [above reproach—whether in public or in private].

Speak God's Word

I have the hope and divine guarantee of eternal life, which God, Who is ever truthful and without deceit, promised before the ages of time began.

| adapted from TITUS 1:2 |

⁹He must hold firmly to the trustworthy word [of God] as it was taught to him, so that he will be able both to give accurate instruction in sound [reliable, error-free] doctrine and to refute those who contradict [it by explaining their error].

¹⁰For there are many rebellious men who are empty talkers [just windbags] and deceivers; especially those of the circumcision [those Jews who insist that Gentile believers must be circumcised and keep the Law in order to be saved].

¹¹They must be silenced, because they are upsetting whole families by teaching things they should not teach for the purpose of dishonest *financial* gain.

¹²One of them [Epimenides, a Cretan], a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.”

¹³This description is true. So rebuke them sharply so that they will be sound in the faith *and* free from doctrinal error,

¹⁴not paying attention to Jewish myths and the commandments *and* rules of men who turn their backs on the truth.

¹⁵To the pure, all things are pure; but to the corrupt and unbelieving, nothing is pure; both their mind and their conscience are corrupted.

¹⁶They profess to know God [to recognize and be acquainted with Him], but by *their* actions they deny *and* disown Him. They are detestable and disobedient and worthless for good work of any kind.

2 BUT AS for you, teach the things which are in agreement with sound doctrine [which produces men and women of good character whose lifestyle identifies them as true Christians].

²Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in steadfastness [Christlike in character].

³Older women similarly are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor addicted to much wine, teaching what is right *and* good,

POWERPOINT

Hebrews 11:6 tells us that it is impossible to please God without faith in His Son. God's love for us is unconditional, and it's important for us to understand that He wants us to do good works, "to be an example of good works" (Titus 2:7), because of our love for Him and our faith in Jesus—not because we feel we have to earn His love. It blesses God when we live by faith and walk in love (see Gal. 5:6).



⁴so that they may encourage the young women to tenderly love their husbands and their children,

⁵to be sensible, pure, makers of a home [where God is honored], good-natured, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.

⁶In a similar way urge the young men to be sensible *and* self-controlled *and* to behave wisely [taking life seriously].

⁷And in all things show yourself to be an example of good works, with purity in doctrine [having the strictest regard for integrity and truth], dignified, ⁸sound *and* beyond reproach in instruction, so that the opponent [of the faith] will be shamed, having nothing bad to say about us.

⁹Urge bond-servants to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be pleasing and not talk back,

¹⁰not stealing [things, regardless of value], but proving

themselves trustworthy, so that in every respect they will adorn *and* do credit to the teaching of God our Savior.

¹¹For the [remarkable, undeserved] grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

¹²It teaches us to reject ungodliness and worldly (immoral) desires, and to live sensible, upright, and godly lives [lives with a purpose that reflect spiritual maturity] in this present age, ¹³awaiting *and* confidently expecting the [fulfillment of our] blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, ¹⁴who [willingly] gave Himself [to be crucified] on our behalf to redeem us *and* purchase our freedom from all wickedness, and to purify for Himself a chosen *and* very special people to be His own possession, *who are* enthusiastic for doing what is good. [Deut 14:2; Ps 130:8; Ezek 37:23]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Try To Make People Feel Good

I truly believe that the way we treat the people in our lives is very important to God. He loves people and wants us “to be kind and conciliatory and gentle, showing unqualified consideration and courtesy toward everyone” (Titus 3:2).

Someone once said that people may forget what you said and what you did, but they will never forget how you made them feel. I encourage you to do your best to help each individual feel that they matter and are valuable. Speak encouraging words, give gifts, and spend quality time with others, expressing kindness and concern for them. Listen with interest to what people say; make a big deal out of anything good that anyone does and shrug off their mistakes because we all make them. Be gentle, patient, and loving to each person you meet (see Eph. 4:2). Spend time each day thinking about how you can make others feel loved and valuable.

15 Tell *them* these things. Encourage and rebuke with full authority. Let no one disregard *or* despise you [conduct yourself and your teaching so as to command respect].

3 REMIND PEOPLE to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready *and* willing to do good,² to slander *or*

abuse no one, to be kind *and* conciliatory and gentle, showing unqualified consideration *and* courtesy toward everyone.

³For we too once were foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various *sinful* desires and pleasures, spending *and* wasting our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.

⁴But when the goodness *and* kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared [in human form as the Man, Jesus Christ],

⁵He saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we have done, but because of His own compassion *and* mercy, by the cleansing of the new birth (spiritual transformation, regeneration) and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom He poured out richly upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior,

⁷so that we would be justified [made free of the guilt of sin] by His [compassionate, undeserved] grace, and that we would be [acknowledged as acceptable to Him and] made heirs of eternal life [actually experiencing it] according to our hope (His guarantee).

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Lord, for saving
me, not because of any works
of righteousness that I have
done, but because of Your
own compassion and mercy.*

• *adapted from Titus 3:5*

Speak God's Word

*I am justified and made free of
the guilt of sin by God's
compassionate and
undeserved grace. I am
acknowledged as acceptable
to Him, and I am made an
heir of eternal life according
to my hope and His
guarantee.*

| adapted from TITUS 3:7 |

⁸This is a faithful *and* trustworthy saying; and concerning these things I want you to speak with great confidence, so that those who have believed God [that is, those who have trusted in, relied on, and accepted Christ Jesus as Savior,] will be careful to participate in doing good *and* honorable things. These things are excellent [in themselves] and profitable for the people.

⁹But avoid foolish *and* ill-informed *and* stupid controversies and genealogies and dissensions and quarrels about the Law, for they are unprofitable and useless.

¹⁰After a first and second warning reject a divisive man [who promotes heresy and causes dissension—ban him from

your fellowship and have nothing more to do with him], ¹¹well aware that such a person is twisted and is sinning; he is convicted *and* self-condemned [and is gratified by causing confusion among believers].

¹²When I send Artemas or [perhaps] Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.

¹³Do your best to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they are supplied *and* lack nothing.

¹⁴Our people must learn to do good deeds to meet necessary demands [whatever the occasion may require], so that they will not be unproductive.

¹⁵All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith.

Grace be with all of you.

Philemon

Author: | Paul
Date: | AD 60–61

Philemon was a wealthy, influential Christian man who owned slaves, like most other men of similar stature during his day. He had a slave named Onesimus who ran away to Rome, where he became a Christian because of Paul's ministry.

Paul's primary goal in writing to Philemon was to inspire him to change his mind about Onesimus. He knew that Philemon had always viewed Onesimus as his servant and slave, but that because of Onesimus's conversion to Christ, Philemon now needed to receive him as a fellow Christian and treat him accordingly.

As we renew our minds according to God's Word, we will learn and grow. Some of the lessons we learn may require us, like Philemon, to think differently about people or situations. It is very important that we treat all people equally and with excellence.

Whenever the Holy Spirit leads you to change your mind about something, I pray you will do it, because it is so important to your spiritual maturity.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM PHILEMON:

As a believer, it's important to know what Jesus has provided for you and to be able to talk about the good things that are yours in Christ as you share your faith with others (see Philemon 6).

We reap joy when we do our best to refresh the hearts of others (see Philemon 7).

We often have opportunities to do more than people ask or expect of us, and when we do, we often receive a blessing in return (see Philemon 21).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM PHILEMON:

Grace to you and peace [inner calm and spiritual well-being] from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. | Philemon 3

I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective and powerful because of your accurate knowledge of every good thing which is ours in Christ. | Philemon 6

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO
PHILEMON

¹PAUL, A prisoner [for the sake] of Christ Jesus (the Messiah, the Anointed), and our brother Timothy,

To Philemon our dearly beloved friend and fellow worker,

²and to [your wife] Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow soldier [in ministry], and to the church that meets in your house:

³Grace to you and peace [inner calm and spiritual well-being] from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers,

⁵because I hear of your love and of your faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints (God's people).

⁶I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective *and* powerful because of your *accurate* knowledge of every good thing which is ours in Christ.

⁷For I have had great joy and comfort *and* encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints (God's people) have been refreshed through you, my brother.

⁸Therefore [on the basis of these facts], though I have

enough confidence in Christ to order you to do what is appropriate,

⁹yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal *to you*—since I am such a person as Paul, an old man, and now also a prisoner [for the sake] of Christ Jesus—

¹⁰I appeal to you for my [own spiritual] child Onesimus, whom I have fathered [in the faith] while a captive in these chains.

¹¹Once he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you as well as to me.

¹²I have sent him back to you in person, that is, *like sending* my very heart.

¹³I would have chosen to keep him with me, so that he might minister to me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel;

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*I pray, Lord, that I will be full
of faith in the Lord Jesus and
love toward all God's people.*

¹⁴but I did not want to do anything without first getting your consent, so that your goodness would not be, in effect, by compulsion but of your own free will.

¹⁵Perhaps it was for this reason that he was separated from you for a while, so that you would have him back forever,

¹⁶no longer as a slave, but [as someone] more than a slave, as a brother [in Christ], especially dear to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh [as a servant] and in the Lord [as a fellow believer]. [Col 4:9]

¹⁷So if you consider me a partner, welcome *and* accept him as you would me.

¹⁸But if he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge that to my account;

¹⁹I, Paul, write this with my own hand, I will repay it *in full* (not to mention to you that you owe to me even your own self as well).

²⁰Yes, brother, let me have some benefit *and* joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ.

²¹I write to you [perfectly] confident of your obedient compliance, since I know that you will do even more than I ask.

POWERPOINT

Philemon 6 is such great advice. We are sometimes tempted to acknowledge what is not good about ourselves and to speak negatively, but this verse teaches us to have “*accurate* knowledge of every good thing which is ours in Christ.” When we know the good things that belong to us in Him, and we speak of those instead of talking about the bad things that come from our own thoughts or the opinions of others, we can share our faith effectively and powerfully.



²²At the same time also prepare a guest room for me [in expectation of a visit], for I hope that through your prayers I will be [granted the gracious privilege of] coming to you [at Colossae].

23Greetings to you from Epaphras, my fellow prisoner here in [the cause of] Christ Jesus,

24and from Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.

25The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

See the Good

According to Philemon 6, we should have “accurate knowledge” of the good things that are ours in Christ. You might even make a list of all your good qualities, because it is important to acknowledge your good traits, not just the ones that aren’t so good. Satan reminds us daily of what is wrong with us, but we can remind him of what is right with us if we are bold enough to do so.

When we focus on what we think is wrong or bad about ourselves, we develop a negative attitude. But when we can recognize the good things about ourselves because of what Jesus has done for us, we start thinking and speaking more positively.

God’s Spirit is in us, and His Spirit is definitely positive. We can allow Him to do a thorough work in us, changing our thoughts and attitudes toward ourselves until we can see all things and people the way God sees them. He always believes the best in regard to us, and He works with us to bring the best out of us.

We can start acknowledging the good that is in us by thinking and saying, “God loves me unconditionally. He has given me His Spirit and put a new heart and attitude in me. He has made me righteous, and I am full of hope and faith.” Anytime we do anything that is sinful, we should immediately ask God

to forgive us and with His help, go in a new direction. We should not ignore the wrong things that we do, but we also need to see and celebrate what we do that is right.

The more positive you are about yourself, the more positive you will be about other people and your circumstances. Believe the best about yourself and the people around you.

Hebrews

Author: | Unknown

Date: | Before AD

70

The book of Hebrews affirms the supremacy of Jesus Christ over everything else and explains why the New Covenant that we have in Him is better than the Old Covenant under which the Old Testament Israelites lived. Once Jesus came to earth, God's people had access to a better Mediator and a better covenant than they had ever known before. This is still true for us today. Hebrews 8:6 says, "Christ has acquired a [priestly] ministry which is more excellent [than the old Levitical priestly ministry], for He is the Mediator (Arbiter) of a better covenant [uniting God and man], which has been enacted *and* rests on better promises."

Hebrews 11 also gives us the "Hall of Fame of Faith," which reminds us of how powerful faith is. Any time you feel your faith growing weak, Hebrews 11 is a great chapter to read so you can be strengthened and encouraged.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM HEBREWS:

The living Word of God is like a sharp sword that has the power to expose our thoughts and the intentions of our hearts (see Hebrews 4:12).

The enemy likes to remind us of our past, but God will not remember our sins because Jesus has atoned for them (see Hebrews 10:14–18).

Never give up believing that God exists and that He rewards those who seek Him (see Hebrews 11:6).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM HEBREWS:

[Faith comprehends as fact what cannot be experienced by the physical senses.] | Hebrews 11:1

Let us run with endurance and active persistence the race that is set before us, [looking away from all that will distract us and] focusing our eyes on Jesus, who is the Author and Perfecter of faith. | Hebrews 12:1–2

Let us at all times offer up to God a sacrifice of praise, which is the fruit of lips that thankfully acknowledge and confess and glorify His name. | Hebrews 13:15

THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

1 GOD, HAVING spoken to the fathers long ago in [the voices and writings of] the prophets in many separate revelations [each of which set forth a portion of the truth], and in many ways,

²has in these last days spoken [with finality] to us in [the person of One who is by His character and nature] His Son [namely Jesus], whom He appointed heir *and* lawful owner of all things, through whom also He created the universe [that is, the universe as a space-time-matter continuum].

³The Son is the radiance *and* only expression of the glory of [our awesome] God [reflecting God's Shekinah glory, the Light-being, the brilliant light of the divine], and the exact representation *and* perfect imprint of His [Father's] essence, and upholding *and* maintaining *and* propelling all things [the entire physical and spiritual universe] by His powerful word [carrying the universe along to its predetermined goal]. When He [Himself and no other] had [by offering Himself on the cross as a sacrifice for sin] accomplished purification from sins *and* established our freedom from guilt, He sat down [revealing His completed work] at the right hand of the Majesty on high [revealing His Divine authority],

⁴having become as much superior to angels, since He has inherited a more excellent *and* glorious name than they [that is, Son—the name above all names].

⁵For to which of the angels did the Father ever say,

“YOU ARE MY SON,

TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN (fathered) YOU [established You as a Son, with kingly dignity]”?

And again [did He ever say to the angels],

“I SHALL BE A FATHER TO HIM

AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME”? [2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Jesus Expresses God's Glory

Jesus expresses the glory of God and is the perfect example of God's character and nature (see Heb.1:3). I am awed by the fact that He is upholding, maintaining, and guiding the universe by His mighty, powerful word. This clearly shows the power of God's words. Just think about this: Jesus is holding everything in the entire universe together; so surely He is capable of taking care of you and me.

Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin. Through His sacrifice, we are completely cleansed of sin and all sin's guilt has been removed. What Jesus has done and is doing for us is shockingly amazing! We should be in awe and overflowing with thanksgiving. His sacrifice should inspire us to follow His example and be willing to live unselfishly in order to see good things happen for other people.

⁶And when He again brings the firstborn [highest-ranking Son] into the world, He says,

“AND ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD ARE TO WORSHIP HIM.” [Ps 97:7]

⁷And concerning the angels He says,

“WHO MAKES HIS ANGELS WINDS,
AND HIS MINISTERING SERVANTS FLAMES OF FIRE [to do His

bidding].” [Ps 104:4]

⁸But about the Son [the Father says to Him],

“YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER,
AND THE SCEPTER OF [absolute] RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE
SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM.

⁹“YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS [integrity, virtue,
uprightness in purpose] AND HAVE HATED LAWLESSNESS
[injustice, sin].

THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU
WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS.” [Ps
45:6, 7]

¹⁰And,

“YOU, LORD, LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH IN THE
BEGINNING,

AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS;

¹¹THEY WILL PERISH, BUT YOU REMAIN [forever and ever];
AND THEY WILL ALL WEAR OUT LIKE A GARMENT,

¹²AND LIKE A ROBE YOU WILL ROLL THEM UP;
LIKE A GARMENT THEY WILL BE CHANGED.
BUT YOU ARE THE SAME [forever],
AND YOUR YEARS WILL NEVER END.” [Ps 102:25–27]

¹³But to which of the angels has the Father ever said,

“SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND [together with me in royal dignity],
UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES
A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET [in triumphant conquest]”? [Ps
110:1]

¹⁴Are not all the angels ministering spirits sent out [by God] to serve (accompany, protect) those who will inherit salvation? [Of course they are!]

2 FOR THIS reason [that is, because of God's final revelation in His Son Jesus and because of Jesus' superiority to the angels] we must pay much closer attention than ever to the things that we have heard, so that we do not [in any way] drift away from truth.

²For if the message given through angels [the Law given to Moses] was authentic *and* unalterable, and every violation and disobedient act received an appropriate penalty,

³how will we escape [the penalty] if we ignore such a great salvation [the gospel, the new covenant]? For it was spoken at first by the Lord, and it was confirmed to us *and* proved authentic by those who *personally* heard [Him speak],

⁴[and besides this evidence] God also testifying with them [confirming the message of salvation], both by signs and wonders and by various miracles [carried out by Jesus and the apostles] and by [granting to believers the] gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

⁵It was not to angels that God subjected the [inhabited] world of the future [when Christ reigns], about which we are speaking.

⁶But one has [solemnly] testified somewhere [in Scripture], saying,

“WHAT IS MAN, THAT YOU ARE MINDFUL OF HIM,

OR THE SON OF MAN, THAT YOU GRACIOUSLY CARE FOR HIM?

- 7“YOU HAVE MADE HIM FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER [in status]
THAN THE ANGELS;
YOU HAVE CROWNED HIM WITH GLORY AND HONOR,
AND SET HIM OVER THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS;
8YOU HAVE PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET
[confirming his supremacy].”

Now in putting all things in subjection to man, He left nothing outside his control. But at present we do not yet see all things subjected to him. [Ps 8:4–6]

⁹But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while [by taking on the limitations of humanity], crowned with glory and honor because of His suffering of death, so that by the grace of God [extended to sinners] He might experience death for [the sins of] everyone.

¹⁰For it was fitting for God [that is, an act worthy of His divine nature] that He, for whose sake are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the author *and* founder of their salvation perfect through suffering [bringing to maturity the human experience necessary for Him to be perfectly equipped for His office as High Priest].

¹¹Both Jesus who sanctifies and those who are sanctified [that is, spiritually transformed, made holy, and set apart for God's purpose] are all from one *Father*; for this reason He is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters,

¹²saying,

“I WILL DECLARE YOUR (the Father's) NAME TO MY
BRETHREN (believers),

IN THE MIDST OF THE CONGREGATION I WILL SING YOUR PRAISE.” [Ps 22:22]

¹³And again [He says],

“MY TRUST *and* CONFIDENT HOPE WILL BE PLACED IN HIM.”

And again,

“HERE I AM, I AND THE CHILDREN WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN ME.”
[Is 8:17, 18]

¹⁴Therefore, since [these His] children share in flesh and blood [the physical nature of mankind], He Himself in a similar manner also shared in the same [physical nature, but without sin], so that through [experiencing] death He might make powerless (ineffective, impotent) him who had the power of death—that is, the devil—

¹⁵and [that He] might free all those who through [the haunting] fear of death were held in slavery throughout their lives.

¹⁶For, as we all know, He (Christ) does not take hold of [the fallen] angels [to give them a helping hand], but He does take hold of [the fallen] descendants of Abraham [extending to them His hand of deliverance]. [Is 41:8, 9]

**A Prayer To
Renew Your
Mind**



*Thank You, Jesus, that
through experiencing death
You have made powerless,
ineffective, and impotent him
who had the power of death—
that is, the devil.*

• adapted from Hebrews 2:14

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*I am grateful, Jesus, because
in Your humanity You suffered
in being tempted. This means
You are able to help and
provide immediate assistance
to those who are being
tempted and exposed to*

suffering.

• *adapted from Hebrews 2:18*

¹⁷Therefore, *it was essential that* He had to be made like His brothers (mankind) in every respect, so that He might [by experience] become a merciful and faithful High Priest in things related to God, to make atonement (propitiation) for the people's sins [thereby wiping away the sin, satisfying divine justice, and providing a way of reconciliation between God and mankind].

¹⁸Because He Himself [in His humanity] has suffered in being tempted, He is able to help *and* provide immediate assistance to those who are being tempted *and* exposed to suffering.

3 THEREFORE, HOLY brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, [thoughtfully and attentively] consider the Apostle and High Priest whom we confessed [as ours when we accepted Him as Savior], namely, Jesus;

²He was faithful to Him who appointed Him [Apostle and High Priest], as Moses also was *faithful* in all God's house. [Num 12:7]

³Yet Jesus has been considered worthy of much greater glory *and* honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has more honor than the house.

⁴For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.

⁵Now Moses was faithful in [the administration of] all God's house, [but only] as a *ministering* servant, [his ministry serving] as a testimony of the things which were to be spoken afterward [the revelation to come in Christ]; [Num 12:7]

⁶but Christ is faithful as a Son over His [Father's] house. And we are His house if we hold fast our confidence and sense of triumph in our hope [in Christ].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

A Tender, Believing Heart

In Hebrews 3, we read about two conditions of the heart—a hard heart (see Heb. 3:8) and an unbelieving heart (see Heb. 3:12). In the wilderness, hard hearts caused the Israelites to rebel. A person with a hard heart cannot believe God easily, which is a major problem, because everything we receive from God comes through believing. To receive from Him, it is necessary that we come to Him in simple, childlike faith and just believe.

We call ourselves “believers,” but the truth is, there are a lot of “unbelieving believers.” For a long time, I was one of them. I had been hurt so much during my childhood that I developed a hardness of heart, and God had to change that in order for me to be able to trust Him.

Even Moses reached the place in the wilderness where he was slow of heart to believe God. That’s why we have to stay sharp spiritually if we are going to be quick to believe and to walk in faith day by day. We should be careful to go from faith to faith and not begin to mix in any doubt and unbelief leading to a hardness of heart.

Keep your heart soft, tender, and full of faith before the Lord!

⁷Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says,

“TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE,

⁸DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS [your fathers did] IN THE
REBELLION [of Israel at Meribah],

ON THE DAY OF TESTING IN THE WILDERNESS,

⁹WHERE YOUR FATHERS TRIED ME BY TESTING [My
forbearance and tolerance],

AND SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS

[And found I stood their test].

¹⁰“THEREFORE I WAS ANGERED WITH THIS GENERATION,

AND I SAID, ‘THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART,

AND THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS [nor become
progressively better and more intimately acquainted with
them]’;

¹¹SO I SWORE [an oath] IN MY WRATH,

“THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST [the promised land].” [Ps
95:7–11]

¹²Take care, brothers and sisters, that there not be in any
one of you a wicked, unbelieving heart [which refuses to trust
and rely on the Lord, a heart] that turns away from the living
God.

¹³But continually encourage one another every day, as
long as it is called “Today” [and there is an opportunity], so
that none of you will be hardened [into settled rebellion] by the
deceitfulness of sin [its cleverness, delusive glamour, and
sophistication].

¹⁴For we [believers] have become partakers of Christ
[sharing in all that the Messiah has for us], if only we hold firm
our newborn confidence [which originally led us to Him] until

the end,

¹⁵while it is said,

“TODAY [while there is still opportunity] IF YOU HEAR HIS
VOICE,

DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEART, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME
[in the rebellion in the desert at Meribah].” [Ps 95:7, 8]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Entering God's Rest

If we are not at rest, we are not believing, because the fruit of believing is that we enter God's rest. For many years of my life I claimed, "Oh, I'm believing God. I'm trusting the Lord." But I was not doing either of those things because I lived most days anxious, panicky, irritable, and worried.

The rest that God offers us is not from physical work, but a rest for our souls—a rest that operates as we go about daily life and take care of our responsibilities. To me, finding rest, relief, ease, refreshment, recreation, and blessed quiet for my soul means finding freedom from constant mental activity. It means not having to live in the torment of reasoning, always trying to come up with an answer that I don't have. I don't need to worry; instead, I can remain in a place of quiet peace and rest through trusting prayer.

If we are truly believing God and trusting Him, we have entered into His rest (see Heb. 4:3). We have prayed and cast our cares upon Him and are now abiding in the perfect peace of His holy presence (see 1 Pet. 5:7).

You can speak His Word to your raging soul and tortured mind just as Jesus spoke to the wind and waves and said, "Hush, be still (muzzled)!" (Mark 4:39).

¹⁶For who were they who heard and yet provoked Him

[with rebellious acts]? Was it not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses?

¹⁷And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose dead bodies were scattered in the desert?

¹⁸And to whom did He swear [an oath] that they would not enter His rest, but to those who disobeyed [those who would not listen to His word]?

¹⁹So we see that they were not able to enter [into His rest—the promised land] because of unbelief *and* an unwillingness to trust in God. [Num 14:1–35]

4 THEREFORE, WHILE the promise of entering His rest still remains *and* is freely offered today, let us fear, in case any one of you may seem to come short of reaching it *or* think he has come too late.

²For indeed we have had the good news [of salvation] preached to us, just as the Israelites also [when the good news of the promised land came to them]; but the message they heard did not benefit them, because it was not united with faith [in God] by those who heard.

³For we who believe [that is, we who personally trust and confidently rely on God] enter that rest [so we have His inner peace now because we are confident in our salvation, and assured of His power], just as He has said,

“AS I SWORE [an oath] IN MY WRATH,
THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST,”

[this He said] although His works were completed from the

foundation of the world [waiting for all who would believe]. [Ps 95:11]

⁴For somewhere [in Scripture] He has said this about the seventh day: “AND GOD RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL HIS WORKS”; [Gen 2:2]

⁵and again in this, “THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.” [Ps 95:11]

⁶Therefore, since the promise remains for some to enter His rest, and those who formerly had the good news preached to them failed to [grasp it and did not] enter because of [their unbelief evidenced by] disobedience,

⁷He again sets a definite day, [a new] “Today,” [providing another opportunity to enter that rest by] saying through David after so long a time, just as has been said before [in the words already quoted],

“TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE,

DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS.” [Ps 95:7, 8]

⁸[This mention of a rest was not a reference to their entering into Canaan.] For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not speak about another day [of opportunity] after that.

⁹So there remains a [full and complete] Sabbath rest for the people of God.

¹⁰For the one who has once entered His rest has also rested from [the weariness and pain of] his [human] labors, just as God rested from [those labors uniquely] His own. [Gen 2:2]

¹¹Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest [of God, to know and experience it for ourselves], so that no one will fall by *following* the same example of disobedience [as

those who died in the wilderness].

¹²For the word of God is living and active *and* full of power [making it operative, energizing, and effective]. It is sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating as far as the division of the soul and spirit [the completeness of a person], and of both joints and marrow [the deepest parts of our nature], exposing *and* judging the very thoughts and intentions of the heart.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Rest Is Available to You

Under the Old Covenant, the Lord required the Israelites to observe the Sabbath every week. They were to do no work from sundown Friday until sundown Saturday. This was a symbol of rest to them. In the Old Testament, God says that He created the world in six days and ceased from His labors on the seventh.

The writer of Hebrews used the idea of Sabbath as a way of talking about a spiritual rest that is available to God's people. In Hebrews 3:12, he wrote that although Israel saw God's miracles daily, they could not enter His rest because of their unbelief: "Take care... that there not be in any one of you a wicked, unbelieving heart [which refuses to trust and rely on the Lord, a heart] that turns away from the living God."

Hebrews 4:10–11 makes clear that this rest—the peace of God—is available to all believers and we should seek it zealously. This rest is a result of our knowing that God is in charge of all things that concern us and that He will take care of us. I believe we are to work hard and do our best at whatever God gives us to do. If we put our confidence and trust in Him while we do it, we can enjoy a rest that is far superior to the Sabbath rest the Israelites had. Their Sabbath rest was for their physical bodies, while our Sabbath rest is for our entire being—mind, will, emotions, and physical body.

As you lean entirely on God, you will experience this inner rest, and it will keep you fresh and strong for whatever you need to do.

POWERPOINT

The Word of God teaches us to hold fast our confession of faith in Jesus Christ (see Heb. 4:14). This means that no matter what our situation in life feels or looks like, we should continue to speak faith, not fear. It doesn't mean that we deny that our circumstances exist, but that we deny them the right to rule over us.



¹³And not a creature exists that is concealed from His sight, but all things are open *and* exposed, and revealed to the eyes of Him with whom we have to give account.

¹⁴Inasmuch then as we [believers] have a great High Priest who has [already ascended and] passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession [of faith and cling tenaciously to our absolute trust in Him as Savior].

¹⁵For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize *and* understand our weaknesses *and* temptations,

but One who has been tempted [knowing exactly how it feels to be human] in every respect as *we are*, yet without [committing any] sin.

¹⁶Therefore let us [with privilege] approach the throne of grace [that is, the throne of God's gracious favor] with confidence *and* without fear, so that we may receive mercy [for our failures] and find [His amazing] grace to help in time of need [an appropriate blessing, coming just at the right moment].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Jesus Understands Our Weaknesses

I went through years of agony before I finally heard God whisper in my heart, "Joyce, it is okay for you to have weaknesses." I am sure that He had tried to teach me that lesson previously, but I was unable to hear it due to wrong thinking. God wasn't telling me to try to be weak; He was letting me know that He understood that I was weak at times, and that He wasn't angry with me because of it.

When God let me know that it was okay to have some weaknesses, it sounded too good to be true. I immediately began a Bible study of the word weakness, and I discovered that Jesus actually understands our weaknesses (see Heb. 4:15). He understands them because He took on human flesh in order to identify with us, and He was tempted in every respect just as we are. While He never sinned, He is not shocked when we fail. I'm certainly not saying that we should not work with the Holy Spirit to overcome our weaknesses, but doing so is a process. Even as we overcome some of them, others still remain. We should learn to be happy about each step of progress instead of feeling guilty about how far we still have to go.

If we focus on our weaknesses, we will continually feel discouraged, but if we focus on our progress, it increases our joy.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

You Can Pray Boldly

As believers, we should know the Word of God, which is His will; therefore, it should be easy for us to pray according to God's will. We should avoid approaching God while wondering if what we are asking for is His will. We should settle that issue in our heart before we pray, and if what we are asking for isn't covered in His Word, then by all means ask for it only if it is God's will.

As you and I come boldly before the throne of God's grace (see Heb. 4:16), with our sins washed away by the blood of Jesus, asking in faith according to His Word, "we [also] know [with settled and absolute knowledge] that we have [granted to us] the requests which we have asked from Him" (1 John 5:15). We have this assurance not because we are perfect or worthy in ourselves, or because God owes us anything, but because He loves us and wants to give us what we need.

Jesus has purchased a glorious inheritance (see Eph. 1:18) for us by the shedding of His blood. As fellow heirs with Him (see Rom. 8:17), we can pray boldly.

5 FOR EVERY high priest chosen from among men is appointed [to act] on behalf of men in things relating to God, so that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.

²He is able to deal gently with the *spiritually* ignorant and misguided, since he is also subject to *human* weakness;

POWERPOINT

I am certainly glad that we have a High Priest (Jesus) who understands us because He was tempted in all respects just as we are, yet He never sinned. He was in total control of His emotions, but He still understands us; therefore we can boldly approach His throne of grace and receive the help we need even though our behavior is less than perfect (see Heb. 4:15–16).



³and because of this [human weakness] he is required to offer *sacrifices* for sins, for himself as well as for the people.

⁴And besides, one does not appropriate for himself the honor [of being high priest], but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.

⁵So too Christ did not glorify Himself so as to be made a high priest, but He [was exalted and appointed by the One]

who said to Him,

“YOU ARE MY SON,

TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN (fathered) YOU [declared Your authority and rule over the nations]”; [Ps 2:7]

⁶just as He also says in another place,

“YOU ARE A PRIEST [appointed] FOREVER

ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.” [Ps 110:4]

⁷In the days of His earthly life, Jesus offered up both [specific] petitions and [urgent] supplications [for that which He needed] with fervent crying and tears to the One who was [always] able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverent submission toward God [His sinlessness and His unfailing determination to do the Father’s will].

POWERPOINT

Hebrews 5:8–9 teaches us that Jesus learned obedience *through* what He suffered, and His completed experience made Him perfectly equipped to become the source of eternal salvation. In His humanity, Jesus had to learn, to grow, to suffer, and to gain experience, just as we do. He never sinned as we do, and He has gone before us as our Pioneer. He goes first, and we follow. He shows us the way to victory. *The only way out is through!*

We should not run from difficult things; rather, we can face them confidently, knowing God is by our side and will never leave us or forsake us. Even when we don't feel His Presence, we know He is with us.



⁸Although He was a Son [who had never been disobedient to the Father], He learned [active, special] obedience through what He suffered.

⁹And having been made perfect [uniquely equipped and prepared as Savior and retaining His integrity amid opposition], He became the source of eternal salvation [an eternal inheritance] to all those who obey Him, [Is 45:17]

¹⁰being designated by God as High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. [Ps 110:4]

¹¹Concerning this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull *and* sluggish in [your spiritual] hearing *and* disinclined to listen.

¹²For though by this time you ought to be teachers [because of the time you have had to learn these truths], you actually need someone to teach you again the elementary principles of God's word [from the beginning], and you have come to be *continually* in need of milk, not solid food.

¹³For everyone who lives on milk is [doctrinally inexperienced and] unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a *spiritual* infant.

¹⁴But solid food is for the [spiritually] mature, whose senses are trained by practice to distinguish between what is morally good and *what is* evil.

6 THEREFORE LET us get past the elementary stage in the teachings about the Christ, advancing on to maturity *and*

perfection *and* spiritual completeness, [doing this] without laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

²of teaching about washings (ritual purifications), the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. [These are all important matters in which you should have been proficient long ago.]

³And we will do this [that is, proceed to maturity], if God permits.

⁴For [it is impossible to restore to repentance] those who have once been enlightened [spiritually] and who have tasted *and* consciously experienced the heavenly gift and have shared in the Holy Spirit,

⁵and have tasted *and* consciously experienced the good word of God and the powers of the age (world) to come,

⁶and then have fallen away—it is impossible to bring them back again to repentance, since they again nail the Son of God on the cross [for as far as they are concerned, they are treating the death of Christ as if they were not saved by it], and are holding Him up again to public disgrace.

⁷For soil that drinks the rain which often falls on it and produces crops useful to those for whose benefit it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God;

⁸but if it persistently produces thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned. [Gen 3:17, 18]

⁹But, beloved, even though we speak to you in this way, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and of things that accompany salvation.

¹⁰For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown for His name in ministering to [the needs of] the saints (God's people), as you do.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Promises Come Through Patience

Patience is a fruit of the Spirit that we desperately need in our lives. But when we pray for patience, we often experience challenges that give us opportunities to develop it. We may not like the process, but God has something good in mind. He is actually answering our prayers for patience and we just don't realize it. The writer of Hebrews reminds us to be imitators of "those who through faith [lean on God with absolute trust and confidence in Him and in His power] and by patient endurance [even when suffering] are [now] inheriting the promises" (Heb. 6:12).

God wants us to bless Him at all times, not just when things are going our way. When challenges arise in your life, remember that you can be peaceful, enjoy the journey, have faith, and exercise patience, because Jesus is with you at every moment. He will bring you through to the other side and to the inheritance of His promises.

¹¹And we desire for each one of you to show the same diligence [all the way through] so as to realize and enjoy the full assurance of hope until the end,

¹²so that you will not be [spiritually] sluggish, but [will instead be] imitators of those who through faith [lean on God with absolute trust and confidence in Him and in His power]

and by patient endurance [even when suffering] are [now] inheriting the promises.

¹³For when God made the promise to Abraham, He swore [an oath] by Himself, since He had no one greater by whom to swear,

¹⁴saying, “I WILL SURELY BLESS YOU AND I WILL SURELY MULTIPLY YOU.” [Gen 22:16, 17]

¹⁵And so, having patiently waited, he realized the promise [in the miraculous birth of Isaac, as a pledge of what was to come from God].

¹⁶Indeed men swear [an oath] by one greater *than themselves*, and with them [in all disputes] the oath *serves* as confirmation [of what has been said] and is an end of the dispute.

¹⁷In the same way God, in His desire to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable nature of His purpose, intervened *and* guaranteed it with an oath,

¹⁸so that by two unchangeable things [His promise and His oath] in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled [to Him] for refuge would have strong encouragement *and* indwelling strength to hold tightly to the hope set before us.

¹⁹This hope [this confident assurance] we have as an anchor of the soul [it cannot slip and it cannot break down under whatever pressure bears upon it]—a safe and steadfast hope that enters within the veil [of the heavenly temple, that most Holy Place in which the very presence of God dwells], [Lev 16:2]

²⁰where Jesus has entered [in advance] as a forerunner for us, having become a High Priest forever according to the order

of Melchizedek. [Ps 110:4]

1 FOR THIS Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham as he returned from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him,

²and Abraham gave him a tenth of all [the spoil]. He is, first of all, by the translation *of his name*, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, which means king of peace.

³Without [any record of] father or mother, nor ancestral line, without [any record of] beginning of days (birth) nor ending of life (death), but having been made like the Son of God, he remains a priest without interruption *and* without successor.

⁴Now pause *and* consider how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the spoils.

⁵It is true that those descendants of Levi who are charged with the priestly office are commanded in the Law to collect tithes from the people—which means, from their kinsmen—though these have descended from Abraham.

⁶But this person [Melchizedek] who is not from their Levitical ancestry received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who possessed the promises [of God].

⁷Yet it is beyond all dispute that the lesser person is *always* blessed by the greater one.

⁸Furthermore, here [in the Levitical priesthood] tithes are received by men who are subject to death; but in that case [concerning Melchizedek], *they are received* by one of whom it is testified that he lives on [perpetually].

⁹A person might even say that Levi [the father of the priestly tribe] himself, who received tithes, paid tithes through Abraham [the father of all Israel and of all who believe],

¹⁰for Levi was still in the loins (unborn) of his forefather [Abraham] when Melchizedek met him (Abraham).

¹¹Now if perfection [a perfect fellowship between God and the worshiper] had been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people were given the Law) what further need was there for another *and* different kind of priest to arise, one in the manner of Melchizedek, rather than one appointed to the order of Aaron?

¹²For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is of necessity a change of the law [concerning the priesthood] as well.

¹³For the One of whom these things are said belonged [not to the priestly line of Levi but] to another tribe, from which no one has officiated *or* served at the altar.

¹⁴For it is evident that our Lord descended from [the tribe of] Judah, and Moses mentioned nothing about priests in connection with that tribe.

¹⁵And this becomes even more evident if another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, [Ps 110:4]

POWERPOINT

Hope is the force that keeps us steady in times of trial, because hope is the way through which we continually draw near to God (see Heb. 7:19). Don't ever stop hoping. People who quit hoping have a miserable life. If you are already struggling to be happy because you have lost hope, it's not too late to start hoping again. Don't be afraid. Even during disappointing times, you can hope and be positive. God is a God of good things and miracles, and He can do anything. Stir up your hope and expect good things in your life!



¹⁶who has become *a priest*, not on the basis of a physical *and* legal requirement in the Law [concerning his ancestry as a

descendant of Levi], but on the basis of the power of an indestructible *and* endless life.

¹⁷For it is attested [by God] of Him,

“YOU (Christ) ARE A PRIEST FOREVER

ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.” [Ps 110:4]

¹⁸For, on the one hand, a former commandment is cancelled because of its weakness and uselessness [because of its inability to justify the sinner before God]

¹⁹(for the Law never made anything perfect); while on the other hand a better hope is introduced through which we now *continually* draw near to God.

²⁰And indeed it was not without the taking of an oath [that Christ was made priest]

²¹(for those *Levites* who formerly became priests [received their office] without [its being confirmed by the taking of] an oath, but this One [was designated] with an oath through the One who said to Him,

“THE LORD HAS SWORN

AND WILL NOT CHANGE HIS MIND *or* REGRET IT,

“YOU (Christ) ARE A PRIEST FOREVER”). [Ps 110:4]

**A Prayer To
Renew Your
Mind**



*Thank You, Jesus, that You
are able to save forever those
who come to God through You
and that You always live to
intercede and intervene with
God on my behalf.*

• adapted from Hebrews 7:25

²²And so [because of the oath's greater strength and force] Jesus has become the certain guarantee of a better covenant [a more excellent and more advantageous agreement; one that will never be replaced or annulled].

²³The [former successive line of] priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were each prevented by death from continuing [perpetually in office];

²⁴but, on the other hand, Jesus holds His priesthood permanently *and* without change, because He lives on forever.

²⁵Therefore He is able also to save forever (completely, perfectly, for eternity) those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to intercede *and* intervene on their behalf [with God].

²⁶It was fitting for us to have such a High Priest [perfectly adapted to our needs], holy, blameless, unstained [by sin], separated from sinners and exalted higher than the heavens;

²⁷who has no day by day need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices, first of all for his own [personal] sins and then for those of the people, because He [met all the requirements and] did this once for all when He offered up Himself [as a willing sacrifice].

²⁸For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak [frail, sinful, dying men], but the word of the oath [of God], which came after [the institution of] the Law, *permanently appoints* [as priest] a Son who has been made perfect forever. [Ps 110:4]

8 NOW THE main point of what we have to say *is this*: we have such a High Priest, [the Christ] who is seated [in the place of honor] at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty (God) in heaven, [Ps 110:1]

²a Minister (Officiating Priest) in the holy places and in the true tabernacle, which is erected not by man, but by the Lord.

³For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; so it is essential for this One also to have something to offer.

⁴Now if He were [still living] on earth, He would not be a priest at all, for there are priests who offer the gifts [to God] in accordance with the Law.

⁵They serve as a pattern and foreshadowing of [what has its true existence and reality in] the heavenly things (sanctuary). For when Moses was about to erect the tabernacle, he was warned *by God*, saying, “SEE THAT YOU MAKE it all [exactly] ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH

WAS SHOWN TO YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN.” [Ex 25:40]

⁶But as it is, Christ has acquired a [priestly] ministry which is more excellent [than the old Levitical priestly ministry], for He is the Mediator (Arbiter) of a better covenant [uniting God and man], which has been enacted *and* rests on better promises.

⁷For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for a second one *or* an attempt to institute another one [the new covenant].

⁸However, God finds fault with them [showing its inadequacy] when He says,

“BEHOLD, THE DAYS WILL COME, SAYS THE LORD,
WHEN I WILL MAKE *and* RATIFY A NEW COVENANT
WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND WITH THE HOUSE OF JUDAH;

⁹NOT LIKE THE COVENANT THAT I MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS
ON THE DAY WHEN I TOOK THEM BY THE HAND
TO LEAD THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT;
FOR THEY DID NOT ABIDE IN MY COVENANT,
AND SO I WITHDREW MY FAVOR *and* DISREGARDED THEM,
SAYS THE LORD.

¹⁰“FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE
HOUSE OF ISRAEL
AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD:
I WILL IMPRINT MY LAWS UPON THEIR MINDS [even upon their
innermost thoughts and understanding],
AND ENGRAVE THEM UPON THEIR HEARTS [effecting their
regeneration].
AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD,

AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

¹¹“AND IT WILL NOT BE [necessary] FOR EACH ONE TO TEACH HIS FELLOW CITIZEN,

OR EACH ONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, ‘KNOW [by experience, have knowledge of] THE LORD,’

FOR ALL WILL KNOW [Me by experience and have knowledge of] ME,

FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM.

¹²“FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL *and* GRACIOUS TOWARD THEIR WICKEDNESS,

AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE.” [Jer 31:31–34]

¹³When God speaks of “A new *covenant*,” He makes the first one obsolete. And whatever is becoming obsolete (out of use, annulled) and growing old is ready to disappear.

9 NOW EVEN the first *covenant* had regulations for divine worship and for the earthly sanctuary. [Ex 25:10–40]

²A tabernacle (sacred tent) was put up, the outer one *or* first section, in which were the lampstand and the table with [its loaves of] the sacred showbread; this is called the Holy Place. [Lev 24:5, 6]

³Behind the second veil there was another tabernacle [the inner one or second section] known as the Holy of Holies, [Ex 26:31–33]

⁴having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered entirely with gold. This contained a golden jar which held the manna, and the rod of Aaron that sprouted,

and the [two stone] tablets of the covenant [inscribed with the Ten Commandments]; [Ex 16:32–34; 30:1–6; Num 17:8–10]

⁵and above the ark were the [golden] cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; but we cannot now go into detail about these things.

⁶Now when these things have been prepared in this way, the priests continually enter the outer [or first section of the] tabernacle [that is, the Holy Place] performing [their ritual acts of] the divine worship,

⁷but into the second [inner tabernacle, the Holy of Holies], only the high priest *enters* [and then only] once a year, and never without [bringing a sacrifice of] blood, which he offers [as a substitutionary atonement] for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance. [Lev 16:15]

⁸By this the Holy Spirit signifies that the way into the Holy Place [the true Holy of Holies and the presence of God] has not yet been disclosed as long as the first *or* outer tabernacle is still standing [that is, as long as the Levitical system of worship remains a recognized institution],

⁹for this [first or outer tabernacle] is a symbol [that is, an archetype or paradigm] for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which are incapable of perfecting the conscience *and* renewing the [inner self of the] worshiper.

¹⁰For they [the gifts, sacrifices, and ceremonies] deal only with [clean and unclean] food and drink and various ritual washings, [mere] external regulations for the body imposed [to help the worshipers] until the time of reformation [that is, the time of the new order when Christ will establish the reality of what these things foreshadow—a better covenant].

¹¹But when Christ appeared as a High Priest of the good things to come [that is, true spiritual worship], *He entered* through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not a part of this [material] creation.

¹²He went once for all into the Holy Place [the Holy of Holies of heaven, into the presence of God], and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, having obtained *and* secured eternal redemption [that is, the salvation of all who personally believe in Him as Savior].

¹³For if the sprinkling of [ceremonially] defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a [burnt] heifer is sufficient for the cleansing of the body, [Lev 16:6, 16; Num 19:9, 17, 18]

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



I am grateful, Jesus, that Your blood cleanses my conscience from dead works and lifeless observances so I can serve the ever living God!

• adapted from Hebrews 9:14

¹⁴how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal [Holy] Spirit *willingly* offered Himself unblemished [that is, without moral or spiritual imperfection as a sacrifice] to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works *and* lifeless observances to serve the ever living God?

¹⁵For this reason He is the Mediator *and* Negotiator of a new covenant [that is, an entirely new agreement uniting God and man], so that those who have been called [by God] may receive [the fulfillment of] the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has taken place [as the payment] which redeems them from the sins *committed* under the *obsolete* first covenant.

¹⁶For where there is a will *and* testament involved, the death of the one who made it must be established,

¹⁷for a will *and* testament takes effect [only] at death, since it is never in force as long as the one who made it is alive.

¹⁸So even the first *covenant* was not put in force without [the shedding of] blood.

¹⁹For when every commandment in the Law had been read by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of the calves and goats [which had been sacrificed], together with water and scarlet wool and with a bunch of hyssop, and he sprinkled both the scroll itself and all the people,

²⁰saying, "THIS IS THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT [that seals and ratifies the agreement] WHICH GOD ORDAINED *and* COMMANDED [me to deliver to] YOU." [Ex 24:6-8]

²¹And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle

and all the containers *and* sacred utensils of worship with the blood.

²²In fact under the Law almost everything is cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness [neither release from sin and its guilt, nor cancellation of the merited punishment].

²³Therefore it was necessary for the [earthly] copies of the heavenly things to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves required far better sacrifices than these.

²⁴For Christ did not enter into a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but [He entered] into heaven itself, now to appear in the very presence of God on our behalf;

²⁵nor did He [enter into the heavenly sanctuary to] offer Himself again and again, as the high priest enters the Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own.

²⁶Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer over and over since the foundation of the world; but now once for all at the consummation of the ages He has appeared *and* been publicly manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

²⁷And just as it is appointed *and* destined for all men to die once and after this [comes certain] judgment,

²⁸so Christ, having been offered once *and* once for all to bear [as a burden] the sins of many, will appear a second time [when he returns to earth], not to deal with sin, but to bring salvation to those who are eagerly *and* confidently waiting for Him.

10 FOR SINCE the Law has only a shadow [just a pale representation] of the good things to come—not the very image of those things—it can never, by offering the same sacrifices continually year after year, make perfect those who approach [its altars].

²For if it were otherwise, would not these sacrifices have stopped being offered? For the worshipers, having once [for all time] been cleansed, would no longer have a consciousness of sin.

³But [as it is] these [continual] *sacrifices* bring a fresh reminder of sins [to be atoned for] year after year,

⁴for it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

⁵Therefore, when Christ enters into the world, He says,

“SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED,
BUT [instead] YOU HAVE PREPARED A BODY FOR ME [to offer];

⁶IN BURNT OFFERINGS AND *sacrifices* FOR SIN YOU HAVE TAKEN
NO DELIGHT.

⁷“THEN I SAID, ‘BEHOLD, I HAVE COME
TO DO YOUR WILL, O GOD—

[TO FULFILL] WHAT IS WRITTEN OF ME IN THE SCROLL OF THE
BOOK.” [Ps 40:6–8]

⁸After saying [in the citation] above, “YOU HAVE NEITHER DESIRED, NOR HAVE YOU TAKEN DELIGHT IN SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS AND WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND *sacrifices* FOR SIN” (which are offered according to the Law)

⁹then He said, “BEHOLD, I HAVE COME TO DO YOUR WILL.”

[And so] He does away with the first [covenant as a means of atoning for sin based on animal sacrifices] so that He may inaugurate *and* establish the second [covenant by means of obedience]. [Ps 40:6–8]

¹⁰And in accordance with this will [of God] we [who believe in the message of salvation] have been sanctified [that is, set apart as holy for God and His purposes] through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed) once for all.

¹¹Every priest stands [at his altar of service] ministering daily, offering the same sacrifices over and over, which are never able to strip away sins [that envelop and cover us];

¹²whereas Christ, having offered the one sacrifice [the all-sufficient sacrifice of Himself] for sins for all time, SAT DOWN [signifying the completion of atonement for sin] AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD [the position of honor],

¹³waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES ARE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET. [Ps 110:1]

¹⁴For by the one offering He has perfected forever *and* completely cleansed those who are being sanctified [bringing each believer to spiritual completion and maturity].

¹⁵And the Holy Spirit also adds His testimony to us [in confirmation of this]; for after having said,

¹⁶“THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM
AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD:

I WILL IMPRINT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART,

AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL INSCRIBE THEM [producing an inward change],”

He then says,

¹⁷“AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS ACTS

I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE [no longer holding their sins against them].” [Jer 31:33, 34]

¹⁸Now where there is [absolute] forgiveness *and* complete cancellation of the penalty of these things, there is no longer any offering [to be made to atone] for sin.

POWERPOINT

Some people say they forgive us, but then remind us of whatever we did that hurt them. God never reminds us of our past sins, because He has forgotten them (see Heb. 10:17). When we are reminded of past sins, it is not God bringing them to our remembrance; the one who does that is Satan, the accuser of God's people.



¹⁹Therefore, believers, since we have confidence *and* full freedom to enter the Holy Place [the place where God dwells] by [means of] the blood of Jesus,

²⁰by this new and living way which He initiated *and* opened for us through the veil [as in the Holy of Holies], that is, through His flesh,

²¹and since we have a great *and* wonderful Priest [Who rules] over the house of God,

²²let us approach [God] with a true *and* sincere heart in

unqualified assurance of faith, having had our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

²³Let us seize *and* hold tightly the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is reliable *and* trustworthy *and* faithful [to His word];

²⁴and let us consider [thoughtfully] how we may encourage one another to love and to do good deeds,

²⁵not forsaking our meeting together [as believers for worship and instruction], as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more [faithfully] as you see the day [of Christ's return] approaching.

²⁶For if we go on willfully *and* deliberately sinning after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice [to atone] for our sins [that is, no further offering to anticipate],

Speak God's Word

*I seize and hold tightly the
confession of my hope
without wavering, for He who
promised is reliable,
trustworthy, and faithful to
His word.*

| adapted from HEBREWS 10:23 |

²⁷but a kind of awful *and* terrifying expectation of [divine] judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE *and* BURNING WRATH WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES [those who put themselves in opposition to God]. [Is 26:11]

²⁸Anyone who has ignored *and* set aside the Law of Moses is put to death without mercy on *the testimony* of two or three witnesses. [Deut 17:2–6]

²⁹How much greater punishment do you think he will deserve who has rejected *and* trampled under foot the Son of God, and has considered unclean *and* common the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and has insulted the Spirit of grace [who imparts the unmerited favor and blessing of God]? [Ex 24:8]

³⁰For we know Him who said, “VENGEANCE IS MINE [retribution and the deliverance of justice rest with Me], I WILL

REPAY [the wrongdoer].” And again, “THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE.” [Deut 32:35, 36]

³¹It is a fearful *and* terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God [incurring His judgment and wrath].

³²But remember the earlier days, when, after being [spiritually] enlightened, you [patiently] endured a great conflict of sufferings,

³³sometimes by being made a spectacle, publicly exposed to insults and distress, and sometimes by becoming companions with those who were so treated.

³⁴For you showed sympathy *and* deep concern for those who were imprisoned, and you joyfully accepted the [unjust] seizure of your belongings *and* the confiscation of your property, conscious of the fact that you have a better possession and a lasting one [prepared for you in heaven].

³⁵Do not, therefore, fling away your [fearless] confidence, for it has a glorious *and* great reward.

³⁶For you have need of patient endurance [to bear up under difficult circumstances without compromising], so that when you have carried out the will of God, you may receive *and* enjoy to the full what is promised.

³⁷FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE,

HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY.

³⁸BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE [the one justified by faith] SHALL LIVE BY FAITH [respecting man’s relationship to God and trusting Him];

AND IF HE DRAWS BACK [shrinking in fear], MY SOUL HAS NO DELIGHT IN HIM. [Hab 2:3, 4]

³⁹But our way is not that of those who shrink back to destruction, but [we are] of those who believe [relying on God through faith in Jesus Christ, the Messiah] *and* by this confident faith preserve the soul.

11 NOW FAITH is the assurance (title deed, confirmation) of things hoped for (divinely guaranteed), and the evidence of things not seen [the conviction of their reality—faith comprehends as fact what cannot be experienced by the physical senses].

²For by this [kind of] faith the men of old gained [divine] approval.

³By faith [that is, with an inherent trust and enduring confidence in the power, wisdom and goodness of God] we understand that the worlds (universe, ages) were framed *and* created [formed, put in order, and equipped for their intended purpose] by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

⁴By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which it was testified of him that he was righteous (upright, in right standing with God), and God testified by accepting his gifts. And though he died, yet through [this act of] faith he still speaks. [Gen 4:3–10]

**A Prayer To
Renew Your**

Mind



Thank You, God, for faith. It is the assurance and confirmation of things hoped for and divinely guaranteed. And it is the evidence of things not seen and the conviction of their reality. Faith comprehends as fact what cannot be experienced by the physical senses.

• adapted from Hebrews 11:1

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Expect Good Things from God

The fact that Abraham waited twenty-five years for the fulfillment of God's miraculous promise to him, never wavering in faith or doubting God's word (see Rom. 4:20–21) is amazing!

It's often difficult to believe God and hold on year after year waiting for His Word to come to pass. When people tell me sad stories, I encourage them to become positive and trust God. Some people listen and nod, and then they say the single word that negates it all: "*But...*" That's not the spirit we see in Abraham.

The Bible gives us promises, hope, and encouragement. Despite the adversity of our circumstances—and some people have absolutely terrible situations—God still promises good things to those who serve Him. Our sense of goodness, however, may not be the same as God's. Sometimes waiting is best because it helps develop the character of God in us.

The Lord chooses to do good to us and to give us joy; the devil chooses to do wrong and to make us miserable. We can remain patient and keep believing God's promises, or we can

allow the enemy's words to fill our minds, make us miserable, and lead us astray.

Hebrews 11 is a chapter about the people of God who dared to believe His promises. It says in verse 6, "Without faith it is impossible to [walk with God and] please Him, for whoever comes [near] to God must [necessarily] believe that God exists and that He rewards those who [earnestly and diligently] seek Him."

The devil tries to convince us that the heroes of faith we read about in Hebrews 11 were special people, and that we don't have the kind of faith they did. But the truth is that we all have been given a degree of faith to do anything God calls us to do (see Rom. 12:3). It is simply not true that they were somehow different and more special than we are, because they were in fact people just like us! We are all special to God. He does not show partiality, giving faith to some and not to others. Each of us is equipped to do what we need to do in life. Abraham did believe, and we can too.

Don't give up! Your miraculous breakthrough is on its way!

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Dear Father in heaven, forgive me for allowing Satan to deceive me or make me think I'm unworthy of Your miracles. I am worthy because You made me worthy. You are the God of the impossible, and I ask You to help me wait on You and keep believing. Amen.

⁵By faith [that pleased God] Enoch was caught up *and* taken to heaven so that he would not have a glimpse of death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD HAD TAKEN HIM; for even before he was taken [to heaven], he received the testimony [still on record] that he had walked with God *and* pleased Him. [Gen 5:21–24]

⁶But without faith it is impossible to [walk with God and] please Him, for whoever comes [near] to God must [necessarily] believe that God exists and that He rewards those who [earnestly and diligently] seek Him.

⁷By faith [with confidence in God and His word] Noah, being warned *by God* about events not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his family. By this [act of obedience] he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which comes by faith. [Gen 6:13–22]

⁸By faith Abraham, when he was called [by God], obeyed by going to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went, not knowing where he was going.

⁹By faith he lived as a foreigner in the promised land, as in a strange *land*, living in tents [as nomads] with Isaac and Jacob, who were fellow heirs of the same promise. [Gen 12:1–8]

¹⁰For he was [waiting expectantly and confidently] looking forward to the city which has foundations, [an eternal, heavenly city] whose architect and builder is God.

¹¹By faith even Sarah herself received the ability to conceive [a child], even [when she was long] past the normal age for it, because she considered Him who had given her the promise to be reliable *and* true [to His word]. [Gen 17:19; 18:11–

14; 21:2]

¹²So from one man, though he was [physically] as good as dead, were born *as many descendants* AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND ON THE SEASHORE. [Gen 15:5, 6; 22:17; 32:12]

¹³All these died in faith [guided and sustained by it], without receiving the [tangible fulfillment of God's] promises, only having seen (anticipated) them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. [Gen 23:4; Ps 39:12]

¹⁴Now those who say such things make it clear that they are looking for a country of their own.

¹⁵And if they had been thinking of that *country* from which they departed [as their true home], they would have had [a continuing] opportunity to return.

¹⁶But the truth is that they were longing for a better country, that is, a heavenly one. For that reason God is not ashamed [of them or] to be called their God [even to be surnamed their God—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob]; for He has prepared a city for them. [Ex 3:6, 15; 4:5]

¹⁷By faith Abraham, when he was tested [that is, as the testing of his faith was still in progress], offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises [of God] was ready to sacrifice his only son [of promise]; [Gen 22:1–10]

¹⁸to whom it was said, “THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED.” [Gen 21:12]

¹⁹For he considered [it reasonable to believe] that God was able to raise *Isaac* even from among the dead. [Indeed, in the sense that he was prepared to sacrifice Isaac in obedience to

God] Abraham did receive him back [from the dead] figuratively speaking.

²⁰By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau [believing what God revealed to him], even regarding things to come. [Gen 27:27–29, 39, 40]

²¹By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and bowed in worship, *leaning* on the top of his staff. [Gen 48]

²²By faith Joseph, when he was dying, referred to [the promise of God for] the exodus of the sons of Israel [from Egypt], and gave instructions concerning [the burial of] his bones [in the land of the promise]. [Gen 50:24, 25; Ex 13:19]

²³By faith Moses, after his birth, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful *and* divinely favored child; and they were not afraid of the king's (Pharaoh's) decree. [Ex 1:22; 2:2; Acts 7:20]

²⁴By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, [Ex 2:10, 15]

Speak God's Word

*I prefer to endure the
hardship of the people of God
rather than to enjoy the
passing pleasures of sin.*

| adapted from HEBREWS 11:25 |

²⁵because he preferred to endure the hardship of the people of God rather than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin.

²⁶He considered the reproach of the Christ [that is, the rebuke he would suffer for his faithful obedience to God] to be greater wealth than all the treasures of Egypt; for he looked ahead to the reward [promised by God].

²⁷By faith he left Egypt, being unafraid of the wrath of the king; for he endured [steadfastly], as seeing Him who is unseen. [Ex 2:15]

²⁸By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood [on the doorposts], so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch them (the firstborn of Israel). [Ex 12:21–30]

²⁹By faith the people [of Israel] crossed the Red Sea as though *they were passing* through dry land; but when the Egyptians attempted it they were drowned. [Ex 14:21–31]

³⁰By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days [by Joshua and the sons of Israel]. [Josh 6:12–21]

³¹By faith Rahab the prostitute was not destroyed along with those who were disobedient, because she had welcomed the spies [sent by the sons of Israel] in peace. [Josh 2:1–21; 6:22–25]

³²And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, [Judg 4; 5; 6–8; 11; 12; 13–16; 1 Sam 1–30; 2 Sam 1–24; 1 Kin 1; 2; Acts 3:24]

³³who by faith [that is, with an enduring trust in God and His promises] subdued kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promised blessings, closed the mouths of lions, [Dan 6]

³⁴extinguished the power of [raging] fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became mighty *and* unbeatable in battle, putting enemy forces to flight. [Dan 3]

³⁵Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured [to death], refusing to accept release [offered on the condition of denying their faith], so that they would be resurrected to a better life; [1 Kin 17:17–24; 2 Kin 4:25–37]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

The Right Response to Trials

I know people who have been sick or had other difficult problems for an extended period of time, yet they have the most beautiful attitudes. They never complain, are not grouchy, don't act as if the world owes them something, and don't blame God or even feel sorry for themselves. I also know people with similar circumstances who talk only about their illnesses and problems and how hard everything is for them. They are self-absorbed and often easily offended, bitter, and resentful.

Every situation in life requires making a decision about how we will respond. If we respond as God would, our trials are much easier to handle. Consider the "people of whom the world was not worthy" listed in Hebrews 11:35–40. I highly respect people who are able to be stable even when they are in tremendous pain and discomfort. They are wonderful examples to us all.

³⁶and others experienced the trial of mocking and scourging [amid torture], and even chains and imprisonment.

³⁷They were stoned [to death], they were sawn in two, they were lured with tempting offers [to renounce their faith], they were put to death by the sword; they went about wrapped in the skins of sheep and goats, utterly destitute, oppressed,

cruelly treated

³⁸(people of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and [living in] caves and holes in the ground.

³⁹And all of these, though they gained [divine] approval through their faith, did not receive [the fulfillment of] what was promised,

⁴⁰because God had us in mind *and* had something better for us, so that they [these men and women of authentic faith] would not be made perfect [that is, completed in Him] apart from us.

12 THEREFORE, SINCE we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses [who by faith have testified to the truth of God's absolute faithfulness], stripping off every unnecessary weight and the sin which so easily *and* cleverly entangles us, let us run with endurance *and* active persistence the race that is set before us,

POWERPOINT

Growing into the fullness of the person God intends you to be will take time. You will need to run your race with endurance and persistence (see Heb. 12:1), but you can enjoy each phase of growth and improvement along your journey. As long as you are pursuing God's perfect will for you, He is satisfied. It doesn't upset God if you have not arrived, but He does want you to press forward.



POWERPOINT

Hebrews 12:2 teaches us to look away from everything that will distract us from focusing on Jesus, the Author and the Perfecter of our faith. I believe that God plants goals, dreams, and visions into our heart, and we need to follow His guidance in order to see them brought to completion. Our enemy, the devil, seeks to prevent our progress by providing trials and problems that will distract us if we let them. I realize that we cannot completely ignore our problems. There are things that demand our attention, and we need to take care of them.

Let's learn to fulfill our responsibility, and cast our care on God.



²[looking away from all that will distract us and] focusing our eyes on Jesus, who is the Author and Perfecter of faith [the first incentive for our belief and the One who brings our faith to maturity], who for the joy [of accomplishing the goal] set before Him endured the cross, disregarding the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God [revealing His deity, His authority, and the completion of His work]. [Ps 110:1]

³Just consider *and* meditate on Him who endured from sinners such bitter hostility against Himself [consider it all in comparison with your trials], so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

⁴You have not yet struggled to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;

⁵and you have forgotten the divine word of encouragement which is addressed to you as sons,

“MY SON, DO NOT MAKE LIGHT OF THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD,

AND DO NOT LOSE HEART *and* GIVE UP WHEN YOU ARE CORRECTED BY HIM;

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Consider and Meditate on Jesus

Most of us think about quitting or giving up on our goals at some time, or perhaps several times, but it doesn't require any special talent to quit. Anyone can do that! We have the power of the Holy Spirit in us, and that means we have the ability to endure and see things through to the finish.

When you grow weary, think about Jesus and all that He suffered and endured in order to finish what His Father asked Him to do (see Heb. 12:3). Think about how we, along with multiplied millions of others, have benefitted from His perseverance. I am sure glad that Jesus didn't quit!

Be determined that you won't quit either, because your victory will not only bless you, but many others as well.

Something I have done in my mind at times when I wanted to quit was to consider that if I did quit, I would be right back where I started. I didn't like that option; therefore, I decided to press on and meditate on Jesus' example of perseverance.

God is in you, strengthening you, and I believe He will uphold you and keep you in the race. We all want to say at the end of our journey, "I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7).

⁶FOR THE LORD DISCIPLINES *and* CORRECTS THOSE WHOM HE

LOVES,
AND HE PUNISHES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES *and*
WELCOMES [TO HIS HEART].” [Prov 3:11, 12]

⁷You must submit to [correction for the purpose of] discipline; God is dealing with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

⁸Now if you are exempt from correction *and* without discipline, in which all [of God’s children] share, then you are illegitimate children and not sons [at all].

⁹Moreover, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us, and we submitted *and* respected them [for training us]; shall we not much more willingly submit to the Father of spirits, and live [by learning from His discipline]?

¹⁰For our earthly fathers disciplined us for only a short time as seemed best to them; but He *disciplines us* for our good, so that we may share His holiness.

¹¹For the time being no discipline brings joy, but seems sad *and* painful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness [right standing with God and a lifestyle and attitude that seeks conformity to God’s will and purpose].

¹²So then, strengthen hands that are weak and knees that tremble. [Is 35:3]

¹³Cut through *and* make smooth, straight paths for your feet [that are safe and go in the right direction], so that *the leg* which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather may be healed.

¹⁴*Continually* pursue peace with everyone, and the sanctification without which no one will [ever] see the Lord.

¹⁵See to it that no one falls short of God's grace; that no root of resentment springs up and causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;

Speak God's Word

*I continually pursue peace
with everyone, and the
sanctification without which
no one will ever see the Lord.*

| adapted from HEBREWS 12:14 |

¹⁶and [see to it] that no one is immoral or godless like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a *single* meal. [Gen 25:29–34]

¹⁷For you know that later on, when he wanted [to regain title to] his inheritance of the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no opportunity for repentance [there was no way to repair what he had done, no chance to recall the choice he had made], even though he sought for it with [bitter] tears. [Gen 27:30–40]

¹⁸For you have not come [as did the Israelites in the wilderness] to a *mountain* that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to gloom and darkness and a raging windstorm,

¹⁹and to the blast of a trumpet and a sound of words [such that] those who heard it begged that nothing more be said to them. [Ex 19:12–22; 20:18–21; Deut 4:11, 12; 5:22–27]

²⁰For they could not bear the command, “IF EVEN A WILD ANIMAL TOUCHES THE MOUNTAIN, IT WILL BE STONED [to death].”

[Ex 19:12, 13]

²¹In fact, so terrifying was the sight, that Moses said, “I AM FILLED WITH FEAR and trembling.” [Deut 9:19]

²²But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels [in festive gathering],

²³and to the general assembly and assembly of the firstborn who are registered [as citizens] in heaven, and to God, who is Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous (the redeemed in heaven) who have been made perfect [bringing them to their final glory],

²⁴and to Jesus, the Mediator of a new covenant [uniting God and man], and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks [of mercy], a better *and* nobler *and* more gracious message than *the blood* of Abel [which cried out for vengeance]. [Gen 4:10]

²⁵See to it that you do not refuse [to listen to] Him who is speaking [to you now]. For if those [sons of Israel] did not escape when they refused [to listen to] him who warned them on earth [revealing God’s will], how much less will we *escape* if we turn our backs on Him who warns from heaven? [Heb 2:1–4]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

We Need Spiritual Disciplines

Just as we need natural disciplines in our lives, such as discipline concerning work, appetites, finances, and so on, we also need spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, Bible study, giving, serving others, and confessing God's Word aloud.

As we discipline ourselves to do these things, they will become habits. Then we will see good results just as we see good results from any other discipline applied over a period of time. Discipline doesn't produce immediate joy, but it is an investment that will pay great dividends in due time —“afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness [right standing with God and a lifestyle and attitude that seeks conformity to God's will and purpose]” (Heb. 12:11). Discipline is wisdom, because a wise person always does now what he or she will be satisfied with later on in life.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Be Content with What You Have

Stability and contentment enable us to enjoy our lives. I have discovered that I enjoy myself more when I am stable and content, and I think other people enjoy me more this way too. I believe the same is true for you. Becoming emotionally stable and content is very important to a powerful life, and as you grow in these qualities, you'll find yourself strengthened as never before.

Paul said he learned how to be content in all circumstances (see Phil. 4:11). Likewise, you will have to learn in this area and begin believing you can be content “with what you have” (Heb. 13:5) before you actually see the fruit of it in your life. God’s Word states that we can and should speak of nonexistent things as if they already exist (see Rom. 4:17). Begin to think and say that you are content and emotionally stable. Confessing it will help you become that way.

²⁶His voice shook the earth [at Mount Sinai] then, but now He has given a promise, saying, “YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE [starry] HEAVEN.” [Hag 2:6]

²⁷Now this [expression], “Yet once more,” indicates the removal *and* final transformation of all those things which can be shaken—that is, of that which has been created—so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. [Ps 102:26]

²⁸Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, and offer to God pleasing service *and* acceptable worship with reverence and awe;

²⁹for our God is [indeed] a consuming fire. [Deut 4:24]

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Lord, You have said that You will never under any circumstances desert me, nor give me up nor leave me without support, nor will You in any degree leave me helpless, nor will You forsake or let me down or relax Your hold on me. Thank You!

• adapted from Hebrews 13:5

13 LET LOVE of your fellow believers continue.

²Do not neglect to extend hospitality to strangers

[especially among the family of believers—being friendly, cordial, and gracious, sharing the comforts of your home and doing your part generously], for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it. [Gen 18:1–8; 19:1–3; Judg 6:11–24; 13:6–20]

³Remember those who are in prison, as if you were their fellow prisoner, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body [and subject to physical suffering].

⁴Marriage *is to be held* in honor among all [that is, regarded as something of great value], and the *marriage* bed undefiled [by immorality or by any sexual sin]; for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

⁵Let your character [your moral essence, your inner nature] be free from the love of money [shun greed—be financially ethical], being content with what you have; for He has said, “I WILL NEVER [under any circumstances] DESERT YOU [nor give you up nor leave you without support, nor will I in any degree leave you helpless], NOR WILL I FORSAKE *or* LET YOU DOWN *or* RELAX MY HOLD ON YOU [assuredly not]!” [Josh 1:5]

POWERPOINT

Three times Hebrews 13:5–6 states emphatically that God will not leave us helpless. When the Lord says something once, we should believe He is serious. Saying it three times strongly emphasizes His promise to never leave us without support. I encourage you to meditate on these scriptures anytime fear comes against your mind concerning your future or how your needs will be met. God's Word has inherent power, and simply meditating on it makes you feel better. Faith comes by hearing God's Word. When Satan presents fear, run to the Word of God.



⁶So we take comfort *and* are encouraged *and* confidently

say,

“THE LORD IS MY HELPER [in time of need], I WILL NOT BE AFRAID.

WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?” [Ps 27:1; 118:6]

⁷Remember your leaders [for it was they] who brought you the word of God; and consider the result of their conduct [the outcome of their godly lives], and imitate their faith [their conviction that God exists and is the Creator and Ruler of all things, the Provider of eternal salvation through Christ, and imitate their reliance on God with absolute trust and confidence in His power, wisdom, and goodness].

Speak God's Word

I take comfort and am encouraged and confidently say, "The Lord is my Helper in time of need. I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?"

| adapted from HEBREWS 13:6 |

⁸Jesus Christ is [eternally changeless, always] the same yesterday and today and forever.

⁹Do not be carried away by diverse and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be established *and* strengthened by grace and not by foods [rules of diet and ritualistic meals], which bring no benefit *or* spiritual growth to those who observe them.

¹⁰We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle (sacred tent) have no right to eat.

¹¹For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest *as an offering* for sin, are burned outside the camp. [Lev 16:27]

¹²Therefore Jesus also suffered *and* died outside the [city] gate so that He might sanctify *and* set apart for God as holy the people [who believe] through [the shedding of] His own

blood.

¹³So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His contempt [the disgrace and shame that He had to suffer]. [Lev 16:27]

¹⁴For here we have no lasting city, but we are seeking *the city* which is to come.

¹⁵Through Him, therefore, let us at all times offer up to God a sacrifice of praise, which is the fruit of lips that thankfully acknowledge *and* confess *and* glorify His name. [Lev 7:12; Is 57:19; Hos 14:2]

POWERPOINT

Praise and thanksgiving from our mouth are powerful weapons against the enemy. Proverbs 18:21 teaches us that the power of life and death is in the tongue. We can speak life to ourselves and death to Satan's plan of destruction.

Words of praise and thanksgiving are devastating to the devil. He absolutely hates to hear a thankful person talking about the goodness of God. Let's use our words to give God thanks and praise (see Heb. 13:15)!



¹⁶Do not neglect to do good, to contribute [to the needy of the church as an expression of fellowship], for such sacrifices are always pleasing to God.

¹⁷Obey your [spiritual] leaders and submit to them

[recognizing their authority over you], for they are keeping watch over your souls *and* continually guarding your spiritual welfare as those who will give an account [of their stewardship of you]. Let them do this with joy and not with grief *and* groans, for this would be of no benefit to you.

¹⁸Keep praying for us, for we are convinced that we have a good conscience, seeking to conduct ourselves honorably [that is, with moral courage and personal integrity] in all things.

¹⁹And I urge all of you to pray earnestly, so that I may be restored to you soon.

²⁰Now may the God of peace [the source of serenity and spiritual well-being] who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood *that sealed and ratified* the eternal covenant, [Is 55:3; 63:11; Ezek 37:26; Zech 9:11]

²¹equip you with every good thing to carry out His will *and* strengthen you [making you complete and perfect as you ought to be], accomplishing in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

²²I call on you, brothers and sisters, listen [patiently] to this message of exhortation *and* encouragement, for I have written to you briefly.

²³Notice that our brother Timothy has been released [from prison]. If he comes soon, I will see you [along with him].

²⁴Give our greetings to all of your [spiritual] leaders and to all of the saints (God's people). Those [Christians] from Italy send you their greetings.

²⁵Grace be with you all.

James

Author: | James

Date: |
Approximately AD 48

The book of James mentions several key themes that are important for us to learn about and apply to our lives if we want to win the battle of the mind. James writes about such topics as joy in the midst of trials, wisdom, not being double-minded, perseverance during difficult times, resisting temptation, confessing our sins to fellow believers, faith, and effective prayer. In addition, James devotes many verses to the proper use of the tongue—explaining the dangers of using our words in negative or hurtful ways and the benefits of using our words in positive ways.

But James's primary message is that genuine faith in God always leads to good works. Are you looking for ways to serve God because of your love for Him and trust in Him? You can start by living your faith in practical ways as you do good works to help, encourage, and support people.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM JAMES:

We can have joy in trials because of what they produce—endurance leading to spiritual maturity (see James 1:2–4).

Ask God for wisdom, and He will give it to you (see James 1:5).

Words have power, so it is very important for us to watch what we say (see James 3:2–8).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM JAMES:

Pure and unblemished religion [as it is expressed in outward acts] in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit and look after the fatherless and the widows in their distress, and to keep oneself uncontaminated by the [secular] world.
| James 1:27

[Speak in a manner that reflects our fear of God and profound respect for His precepts.] | James 3:10

Submit to [the authority of] God. Resist the devil [stand firm against him] and he will flee from you. | James 4:7

THE LETTER OF
JAMES

1 JAMES, A bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

To the twelve [Hebrew] tribes [scattered abroad among the Gentiles] in the dispersion: Greetings (rejoice)!

²Consider it nothing but joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you fall into various trials.

³Be assured that the testing of your faith [through experience] produces endurance [leading to spiritual maturity, and inner peace].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Growing in Patience

Although being patient is challenging for most of us, the results of it are very good. Through patience and endurance we grow spiritually, and that is very important for us as God's children. Proverbs 18:14 says that when the spirit of a person is strong, it sustains him in bodily pain and trouble. Many Christians are weak in spirit rather than strong. When that is the case, they are not able to endure difficulty without moving into doubting God and perhaps becoming emotionally distraught.

Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words tells us that patience is a fruit of the spirit that only grows under trial. After all, how can patience grow if we never have to use it? I am sure your reaction to this is like mine, and you may be thinking, If I have to go through trials to get patience, I am not sure I want it! However, it is well worth it in the end. James 1:4 tells us that the patient man is completely developed, "lacking in nothing." Another translation says "wanting nothing." To be so content sounds very good to me, and probably does to you also.

God has a plan for each of our lives, and the path He uses to prepare us for that plan is not always short or easy. Exodus 13:17–18 says that God led the Israelites the long, hard way, because they were not yet ready for the wars they would have to fight. In order to possess all that God has for us, we will

have to face enemies, just as the Israelites did. Like the Israelites, we must also trust God to prepare us in the best way possible.

Always remember that God is only good, and the way that He leads you is intended only for your good. Let patience do a complete work in you and don't give up, because good things are coming.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

All Positive

If we take our concerns to the Lord in prayer and then continue to worry about them, we are mixing a positive and a negative force. Prayer is a positive force, and worry is a negative force. If we add them together, we come up with zero. I don't know about you, but I don't want to have zero power, so I try not to mix prayer and worry.

God once impressed on my mind that many people operate with zero power because they constantly mix positives and negatives. James 1:6–7 talks about these kinds of believers. They have a positive confession for a little while, then a negative confession for a little while. They pray for a little while, and then they worry for a little while. They trust for a while, and then they are anxious for a while. As a result, they just go back and forth, never really making any progress.

Let's not magnify the bad; let's magnify the good! Let's make the good larger by talking about it and by being positive in our thoughts, in our attitudes, in our outlook, in our words, and in our actions.

Why not make a decision to stay in the positive by trusting God and refusing to worry? Practice being positive as each situation arises. Even if whatever is taking place at the moment is not so good, expect God to bring good out of it.

⁴And let endurance have its perfect result *and* do a thorough work, so that you may be perfect and completely developed [in your faith], lacking in nothing.

⁵If any of you lacks wisdom [to guide him through a decision or circumstance], he is to ask of [our benevolent] God, who gives to everyone generously and without rebuke *or* blame, and it will be given to him.

Speak God's Word

I will consider it nothing but joy whenever I fall into various trials. I am assured that the testing of my faith produces endurance, leading to spiritual maturity and inner peace. And I let endurance have its perfect result and do a thorough work, so that I may be perfect and completely developed in my faith, lacking in nothing.

| *adapted from* JAMES 1:2–4 |

⁶But he must ask [for wisdom] in faith, without doubting [God's willingness to help], for the one who doubts is like a billowing surge of the sea that is blown about and tossed by the wind.

⁷For such a person ought not to think *or* expect that he will receive anything [at all] from the Lord,

A Prayer To

Renew Your Mind



Lord, if I lack wisdom to guide me through a decision or circumstance, I will ask You for it. You give wisdom to everyone generously and without rebuke or blame, and You will give it to me if I ask in faith, without doubting Your willingness to help.

- *adapted from James 1:5-6*

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Open-Minded, Not Double- Minded

Many Christians are sure of one thing until something else happens, and then they flip-flop to the opposite opinion. They have become what James calls double-minded (see James 1:5–8). The moment they feel sure they’ve made the decision they plan to stick with, they begin to wonder if it was the correct one. They continually doubt and question their decisions.

This kind of behavior is not the same as being open-minded. To be open-minded means we’re willing to consider all sides of an issue. But eventually we have to sort through the evidence or the circumstances in life and say, “This is what I’m going to do,” and then stick with it.

Once we have made a solid decision, if we continue asking, “What if I made a mistake and chose the wrong thing?” it is a sign of double-mindedness. Too often, that kind of second-guessing is a tool that Satan uses to distract and prevent Christians from taking action.

For many years, I was the kind of double-minded person James wrote about. I didn't like being that way. It took so much energy to keep rethinking the same problems. But I was so afraid of making mistakes that I didn't know how to make good decisions. It took a long time before I realized that the devil had declared war against me, and that my mind was his personal battlefield.

Many of God's people fit this description. They believe they have made the right decision, but due to the fear of making a mistake, they end up making no decision, except the decision to be indecisive. This is where Satan has an open door to sneak in, torment believers, and even prevent them from walking in the will of God.

I recommend that you pray, ponder your options, weigh the good points about each one as well as the potential negative ones, and then make your best decision. As you go forward, you will quickly recognize whether your decision was correct or not. If you find that it isn't the right one, you can still make a change, learn from the experience, and keep going forward.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Dear Father, I've been double-minded and confused, giving Satan an advantage over me. Please forgive me. I ask You now, in faith, to give me the necessary wisdom and courage to be decisive. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Help me, Lord, to always be steadfast under trial and to persevere when tempted; for when I have passed the test and been approved, I will receive the victor's crown of life which You have promised to those who love You.

• adapted from James 1:12

⁸*being* a double-minded man, unstable *and* restless in all his ways [in everything he thinks, feels, or decides].

⁹Let the brother in humble circumstances glory in his high position [as a born-again believer, called to the true riches and to be an heir of God];

¹⁰and the rich man *is to glory* in being humbled [by trials

revealing human frailty, knowing true riches are found in the grace of God], for like the flower of the grass he will pass away.

¹¹For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; its flower falls off and its beauty fades away; so too will the rich man, in the midst of his pursuits, fade away. [Is 40:6, 7]

¹²Blessed [happy, spiritually prosperous, favored by God] is the man who is steadfast under trial *and* perseveres when tempted; for when he has passed the test *and* been approved, he will receive the [victor's] crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him.

¹³Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God" [for temptation does not originate from God, but from our own flaws]; for God cannot be tempted by [what is] evil, and He Himself tempts no one.

¹⁴But each one is tempted when he is dragged away, enticed *and* baited [to commit sin] by his own [worldly] desire (lust, passion).

¹⁵Then when the illicit desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin has run its course, it gives birth to death.

¹⁶Do not be misled, my beloved brothers and sisters.

¹⁷Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above; it comes down from the Father of lights [the Creator and Sustainer of the heavens], in whom there is no variation [no rising or setting] or shadow cast by His turning [for He is perfect and never changes].

¹⁸It was of His own will that He gave us birth [as His children] by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits of His creatures [a prime example of what He created to be set apart to Himself—sanctified, made holy for His divine

purposes].

19 Understand this, my beloved brothers and sisters. Let everyone be quick to hear [be a careful, thoughtful listener], slow to speak [a speaker of carefully chosen words and], slow to anger [patient, reflective, forgiving];

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Listen More Than You Talk

In James 1:19–20, God is telling us to listen more than we talk. Think about it: If God wanted us to be quick to speak and slow to listen, He would have created us with two mouths and only one ear!

God is also telling us not to easily become offended or angry. If you have a quick, bad temper, slow down and start listening more and talking less. Read everything you can find about managing anger. Repeat over and over in your mind: I am quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger. Trust God to help you manage the feelings of anger. It is vitally necessary for you to be able to control this emotion if you want to enjoy the life God has in mind for you.

²⁰for the [resentful, deep-seated] anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God [that standard of behavior which He requires from us].

²¹So get rid of all uncleanness and all that remains of wickedness, and with a humble spirit receive the word [of God] which is implanted [actually rooted in your heart], which is able to save your souls.

²²But prove yourselves doers of the word [actively and continually obeying God's precepts], and not merely listeners [who hear the word but fail to internalize its meaning], deluding

yourselves [by unsound reasoning contrary to the truth].

²³For if anyone only listens to the word without obeying it, he is like a man who looks very carefully at his natural face in a mirror;

²⁴for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he immediately forgets what he looked like.

²⁵But he who looks carefully into the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and faithfully abides by it, not having become a [careless] listener who forgets but an active doer [who obeys], he will be blessed *and* favored by God in what he does [in his life of obedience].

²⁶If anyone thinks himself to be religious [scrupulously observant of the rituals of his faith], and does not control his tongue but deludes his *own* heart, this person's religion is worthless (futile, barren).

²⁷Pure and unblemished religion [as it is expressed in outward acts] in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit *and* look after the fatherless and the widows in their distress, and to keep oneself uncontaminated by the [secular] world.

2 MY FELLOW believers, do not practice your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with *an attitude* of partiality [toward people—show no favoritism, no prejudice, no snobbery].

²For if a man comes into your **meeting* place wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in dirty clothes also comes in,

³and you pay special attention to the one who wears the fine clothes, and say to him, “You sit here in this good seat,”

and you tell the poor man, “You stand over there, or sit down [on the floor] by my footstool,”

⁴have you not discriminated among yourselves, and become judges with wrong motives?

⁵Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters: has not God chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and [as believers to be] heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

⁶But you [in contrast] have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress *and* exploit you, and personally drag you into the courts of law?

⁷Do they not blaspheme the precious name [of Christ] by which you are called?

⁸If, however, you are [really] fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF [that is, if you have an unselfish concern for others and do things for their benefit]” you are doing well. [Lev 19:18]

⁹But if you show partiality [prejudice, favoritism], you are committing sin and are convicted by the Law as offenders.

¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole Law but stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of [breaking] all of it.

¹¹For He who said, “DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY,” also said, “DO NOT MURDER.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but you murder, you have become guilty of transgressing the [entire] Law. [Ex 20:13, 14; Deut 5:17, 18]

¹²Speak and act [consistently] as people who are going to be judged by the law of liberty [that moral law that frees obedient Christians from the bondage of sin].

¹³For judgment *will be* merciless to one who has shown no

mercy; but [to the one who has shown mercy] mercy triumphs [victoriously] over judgment.

¹⁴What is the benefit, my fellow believers, if someone claims to have faith but has no [good] works [as evidence]? Can that [kind of] faith save him? [No, a mere claim of faith is not sufficient—genuine faith produces good works.]

¹⁵If a brother or sister is without [adequate] clothing and lacks [enough] food for each day,

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Faith Without Works Is Dead

James clearly states that faith without works is dead (see James 2:17). I believe that true faith always produces good works, yet we need to reconcile these verses with what Paul says so often about salvation through faith alone, and not by works (see Rom. 3:20; 5:1). I have seen people become overly confused because of these two viewpoints, which seem to be at odds. In reality, if we understand them properly, they do not cause a problem.

We are justified before God by faith alone, but we are justified before other people by works that are done by faith. In James 2:14–17, James asks how people in need can see our faith if we only wish them well but do nothing to help them. The point is, they cannot, which is often what causes unbelievers to think of Christians as hypocritical. God’s Word tells us we will be known by our fruit (see Matt. 12:33). Fruit can be seen and its impact can be felt, but our faith cannot be seen or felt if it has no fruit to back it up. Let’s be sure that we allow our faith to be completed by working with God to let it produce good things from which others can benefit.

¹⁶and one of you says to them, “Go in peace [with my blessing], [keep] warm and feed yourselves,” but he does not give them the necessities for the body, what good does that do?

¹⁷So too, faith, if it does not have works [to back it up], is by itself dead [inoperative and ineffective].

¹⁸But someone may say, “You [claim to] have faith and I have [good] works; show me your [alleged] faith without the works [if you can], and I will show you my faith by my works [that is, by what I do].”

¹⁹You believe that God is one; you do well [to believe that]. The demons also believe [that], and shudder *and* bristle [in awe-filled terror—they have seen His wrath]! [Deut 6:4; 11:13–21; Mark 12:29]

²⁰But are you willing to recognize, you foolish [spiritually shallow] person, that faith without [good] works is useless?

²¹Was our father Abraham not [shown to be] justified by works [of obedience which expressed his faith] when he offered Isaac his son on the altar [as a sacrifice to God]? [Gen 22:1–14]

²²You see that [his] faith was working together with his works, and as a result of the works, his faith was completed [reaching its maturity when he expressed his faith through obedience].

²³And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND THIS [faith] WAS CREDITED TO HIM [by God] AS RIGHTEOUSNESS *and* AS CONFORMITY TO HIS WILL,” and he was called the friend of God. [Gen 15:6; 2 Chr 20:7; Is 41:8]

²⁴You see that a man (believer) is justified by works and not by faith alone [that is, by acts of obedience a born-again believer reveals his faith].

²⁵In the same way, was Rahab the prostitute not justified by works too, when she received the [Hebrew] spies as guests

and protected them, and sent them away [to escape] by a different route? [Josh 2:1–21]

Speak God's Word

I know that faith without works of obedience is dead.

| adapted from JAMES 2:26 |

²⁶For just as the [human] body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works [of obedience] is also dead.

3 NOT MANY[of you] should become teachers [serving in an official teaching capacity], my brothers and sisters, for you know that we [who are teachers] will be judged by a higher standard [because we have assumed greater accountability and more condemnation if we teach incorrectly].

²For we all stumble *and* sin in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says [never saying the wrong thing], he is a perfect man [fully developed in character, without serious flaws], able to bridle his whole body *and* rein in his entire nature [taming his human faults and weaknesses].

³Now if we put bits into the horses' mouths to make them obey us, we guide their whole body as well.

POWERPOINT

James 3:5–6 shows how major problems are birthed by something as simple as wrong words—a tiny spark can cause an entire forest to catch fire, just as a single word can hurt many people. Once we have said something, we cannot take it back, so we should be very careful about what we say. If you have said hurtful or unkind things to others, I urge you to apologize, seek forgiveness, and begin to use right words in your life and your relationships.



KEYS to a Victorious Life

Bridle and Rudder

James 3:3–4 gives us two examples of the power of words. First, the bit in the horse's mouth is a tiny piece of metal attached to the bridle, which forces the mighty horse to turn in any direction the rider directs. It is a little thing compared to a horse, which could weigh as much as 3,830 pounds. That's right! Although it is unusual, one horse actually weighed that much and was controlled by a tiny piece of metal. The bit actually puts pressure on the horse's tongue, which I think is amusing since God is using it as an example to teach us to understand the importance of the tongue.

The second example is a mighty ship. Some ships are ocean liners and can be city blocks in length, yet they are steered by a rudder that is very small in comparison to the huge ship. The message to us in James 3:3–4 is that our tongues and the words that roll over them are powerful enough to give direction to our entire lives. A great deal of the way our lives have turned out so far is a result of words—words we have spoken in the past or words that have been spoken to us.

It is comforting to know that I can change the direction of my life by changing my words, just as a horse's rider can change the direction of a horse or a ship's captain can change the course of a ship.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Just a Spark

A few spoken words may not seem like a big thing, but the Bible compares them to sparks that start huge forest fires. We have heard reports of millions of acres of forest destroyed because someone threw a lit cigarette on the ground. Such a little thing, but it caused terrible destruction. Do our words really have that much power? If we are going to believe God's Word, we have to believe that they do.

According to James 3:6, the tongue not controlled by God is unrighteous. It is set among our members (our body) and actually has the power to contaminate the whole body and set things in motion that bring devastating results. It can be used by hell itself to bring about things that only Satan would desire.

Thankfully, there is another side to this story. Through God's help, that same little tongue can be turned toward God and used for His great purposes on earth. It can be used to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to do great harm to Satan and the kingdom of darkness. It can be used for many good things, and even the bad things it has been used for in the past can be turned around for good. We can always overcome evil with good (see Rom. 12:21). Start right away speaking good things, and you will begin to see change.

⁴And look at the ships. Even though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the impulse of the helmsman determines.

⁵In the same sense, the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things.

POWERPOINT

Using our words in a way that tears down others is one of the strongest temptations we face.

We cannot tame our tongues without trusting God to convict us of sin anytime we start to say something that is not pleasing to Him (see James 3:8).

God will do His part, and we need to be committed to respond with obedience.



See [by comparison] how great a forest is set on fire by a small spark!

⁶And the tongue is [in a sense] a fire, the *very* world of injustice *and* unrighteousness; the tongue is set among our members as that which contaminates the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life [the cycle of man's existence], and is itself set on fire by hell (Gehenna).

⁷For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and sea creatures, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race.

⁸But no one can tame the *human* tongue; it is a restless evil [undisciplined, unstable], full of deadly poison.

⁹With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God.

¹⁰Out of the same mouth come *both* blessing and cursing. These things, my brothers, should not be this way [for we have a moral obligation to speak in a manner that reflects our fear of God and profound respect for His precepts].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Pray About Your Words

Do we realize the power that God has given us in the choice of our words? I don't think we do, for if we did, surely we would make better choices.

The issue of our words needs to become a matter of regular prayer, because no one can tame the tongue without God's help (see James 3:8). Hundreds of Scripture verses pertain to the tongue, the mouth, and words. I have most of them underlined in my Bible, and quite often I go through them and simply remind myself of the power of my words. Many of these verses are highlighted in this Bible for you, and I urge you to meditate on them often. I also pray about this area, asking God to let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart (thoughts) be acceptable to Him (see Ps. 19:14). Our words can help us or harm us in any area of life, so it's important to ask God to enable us to choose them wisely.

¹¹Does a spring send out from the same opening *both* fresh and bitter water?

¹²Can a fig tree, my brothers, produce olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh.

¹³Who among you is wise and intelligent? Let him by his good conduct show his [good] deeds with the gentleness *and* humility of *true* wisdom.

¹⁴But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be arrogant, and [as a result] be in defiance of the truth.

¹⁵This [superficial] wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly (secular), natural (unspiritual), *even* demonic.

¹⁶For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder [unrest, rebellion] and every evil thing *and* morally degrading practice.

¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure [morally and spiritually undefiled], then peace-loving [courteous, considerate], gentle, reasonable [and willing to listen], full of compassion and good fruits. It is unwavering, without [self-righteous] hypocrisy [and self-serving guile].

¹⁸And the seed whose fruit is righteousness (spiritual maturity) is sown in peace by those who make peace [by actively encouraging goodwill between individuals].

4 WHAT LEADS to [the unending] quarrels and conflicts among you? Do they not come from your [hedonistic] desires that wage war in your [bodily] members [fighting for control over you]?

²You are jealous *and* covet [what others have] and your lust goes unfulfilled; so you murder. You are envious and cannot obtain [the object of your envy]; so you fight and battle. You do not have because you do not ask [it of God]. [1 John 3:15]

Speak God's Word

*God gives me more and more
grace to defy sin and live an
obedient life that reflects
both my faith and my
gratitude for my salvation.
Therefore, it says, "God is
opposed to the proud and
haughty, but [continually]
gives [the gift of] grace to the
humble."*

| adapted from JAMES 4:6 |

³You ask [God for something] and do not receive it, because you ask with wrong motives [out of selfishness or with an unrighteous agenda], so that [when you get what you want] you may spend it on your [hedonistic] desires.

⁴You adulteresses [disloyal sinners—flirting with the world and breaking your vow to God]! Do you not know that being the world's friend [that is, loving the things of the world] is being God's enemy? So whoever chooses to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

⁵Or do you think that the Scripture says to no purpose that the [human] spirit which He has made to dwell in us lusts with

envy? [Gen 6:5]

⁶But He gives us more and more grace [through the power of the Holy Spirit to defy sin and live an obedient life that reflects both our faith and our gratitude for our salvation]. Therefore, it says, “GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD *and* HAUGHTY, BUT [continually] GIVES [the gift of] GRACE TO THE HUMBLE [who turn away from self-righteousness].” [Prov 3:34]

Speak God's Word

*I will submit to the authority
of God. I will resist the devil
and stand firm against him,
and he will flee from me.*

| adapted from JAMES 4:7 |

⁷So submit to [the authority of] God. Resist the devil [stand firm against him] and he will flee from you.

⁸Come close to God [with a contrite heart] and He will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; and purify your [unfaithful] hearts, you double-minded [people].

⁹Be miserable and grieve and weep [over your sin]. Let your [foolish] laughter be turned to mourning and your [reckless] joy to gloom.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

More and More Grace

Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words says this about James 4:6: "‘But He giveth more grace’ (Greek, ‘a greater grace’). God will give even ‘a greater grace,’ namely, all that follows from humbleness and from turning away from the world." Our part in this is to make the decision to humble ourselves and turn away from the world; God's part is to provide the power (grace) to enable us to do it. Remember; the decision is ours; the power is God's.

The apostle James has been speaking of believers who are like adulteresses, having an illicit love affair with the world (see James 4:4). The Holy Spirit Who dwells in us yearns to be welcome in all areas of our lives. He is filled with a divine jealousy for our full attention and commitment. James goes on to say in verse 6 that the Holy Spirit gives us more grace (a greater grace) to overcome this evil tendency of unfaithfulness to Him. How wonderful it is to know that God gives the power to defeat all our evil tendencies, no matter what they are or how often they appear. Believing this truth and leaning on God will produce wonderful changes in us. It also gives us the freedom to live without the fear of being rejected by God because of our weaknesses while we are growing spiritually. Change comes little by little, and it is important to enjoy each change that comes, without being frustrated because we have not reached the next one yet.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Submit and Resist

Although people don't usually enjoy hearing or learning about Satan, we do have an enemy, and he is constantly on the prowl, looking for opportunities to steal, kill, and destroy (see John 10:10). According to James 4:7, we are expected to resist him.

I can't tell you how many years I heard only the second half of that scripture quoted: "Resist the devil... and he will flee from you." I had never really paid any attention to the first half of that verse, which says we are to submit ourselves to God.

We cannot overcome the enemy successfully if we do not submit to God, because the power to resist the devil is found in submitting to God.

If you want to gain victory over the enemy, it's necessary to walk in obedience to God and in submission to His Word.

¹⁰Humble yourselves [with an attitude of repentance and insignificance] in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you [He will lift you up, He will give you purpose].

¹¹Believers, do not speak against *or* slander one another. He who speaks [self-righteously] against a brother or judges his brother [hypocritically], speaks against the Law and judges the Law. If you judge the Law, you are not a doer of the Law

but a judge of it.

¹²There is *only* one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy [the one God who has the absolute power of life and death]; but who are you to [hypocritically or self-righteously] pass judgment on your neighbor?

¹³Come now [and pay attention to this], you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and carry on our business and make a profit.”

Speak God's Word

I humble myself with an attitude of repentance and humility in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt me. He will lift me up and give me purpose.

| adapted from JAMES 4:10 |

¹⁴Yet you do not know [the least thing] about what may happen in your life tomorrow. [What is secure in your life?] You are *merely* a vapor [like a puff of smoke or a wisp of steam from a cooking pot] that is visible for a little while and then vanishes [into thin air].

¹⁵Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and we will do this or that.”

¹⁶But as it is, you boast [vainly] in your pretension *and* arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

¹⁷So any person who knows what is right to do but does not do it, to him it is sin.

5 COME [QUICKLY] now, you rich [who lack true faith and

hoard and misuse your resources], weep and howl over the miseries [the woes, the judgments] that are coming upon you.

²Your wealth has rotted *and* is ruined and your [fine] clothes have become moth-eaten.

³Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. You have stored up your treasure in the last days [when it will do you no good].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Plan for Tomorrow, Live Today

I recall a time when Dave and I were at a nice resort in Alabama and I was enjoying the needed rest so much that I started planning another trip to the same place for the next year. I had my mind made up that we would return the following year, when I sensed the Lord speaking, "You ought to be saying, 'Lord, if it is Your will, we will do that.'"

I was immediately convicted in my heart because the words I sensed were totally in line with James 4:15: "You ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and we will do this or that.'" The only way anything ever works out properly is if it is God's will, so seeking His will before making any plans is wise.

It is easy for us to boast about our plans (see James 4:16). We decide what we want and then expect God to make everything run smoothly. But God wants us to pray first and then plan!

None of us knows what's ahead. We can think and plan, but it's up to God to make those plans happen. The writer of Proverbs teaches us to acknowledge God in all of our ways and He will direct our path (see Prov. 3:6). I don't think we must have a divine word from God before making any decisions, but we do need to show enough humility to indicate that we definitely care what He wants and that we know nothing will work well without His approval.

⁴Look! The wages that you have [fraudulently] withheld from the laborers who have mowed your fields are crying out [against you for vengeance]; and the cries of the harvesters have come to the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. [1 Sam 1:3]

⁵On the earth you have lived luxuriously *and* abandoned yourselves to soft living and led a life of wanton pleasure [self-indulgence, self-gratification]; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.

⁶You have condemned and have put to death the righteous *man*; he offers you no resistance.

⁷So wait patiently, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits [expectantly] for the precious harvest from the land, being patient about it, until it receives the early and late rains.

⁸You too, be patient; strengthen your hearts [keep them energized and firmly committed to God], because the coming of the Lord is near.

⁹Do not complain against one another, believers, so that you will not be judged [for it]. Look! The Judge is standing right at the door.

¹⁰As an example, brothers and sisters, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord [as His messengers and representatives].

¹¹You know we call those blessed [happy, spiritually prosperous, favored by God] who were steadfast *and* endured [difficult circumstances]. You have heard of the *patient* endurance of Job and you have seen the Lord's outcome [how He richly blessed Job]. The Lord is full of compassion and is merciful. [Job 1:21, 22; 42:10; Ps 111:4]

12 But above all, my fellow believers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but let your yes be [a truthful] yes, and your no be [a truthful] no, so that you may not fall under judgment. [Matt 5:34–37]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Prayer Is Based on Faith, Not Feelings

The King James Version of James 5:16 says that for prayer to be effective it also needs to be fervent. However, if we misunderstand the word fervent, we may feel that we have to “work up” some strong emotion before we pray; otherwise, our prayers will not be effective.

For many years I believed this way, and perhaps you have been similarly confused or deceived. Let's look at some of the other translations of this verse that may make its meaning clearer: “effectual fervent prayer... avails much”; “exerts a mighty influence”; “has a powerful effect”; “the heartfelt and persistent prayer... can accomplish much.”

I believe that James 5:16 means that our prayers must be truly sincere, coming out of our hearts and not just our heads.

At times I experience a great deal of emotion in prayer. Sometimes I even cry. But more often than not I don't feel emotional. Believing prayer is not possible if we base the value of our prayers on feelings. I remember enjoying so much those prayer times when I could feel God's presence, and then wondering what was wrong during the times when I didn't feel anything. I have learned to leave all that in God's hands and to pray by faith, not being overly concerned about what I do or don't feel.

Trust that your earnest, heartfelt, and persistent prayer is

effective and can accomplish much, because your faith is in Him, not in your own ability to pray eloquently.

¹³Is anyone among you suffering? He must pray. Is anyone joyful? He is to sing praises [to God].

¹⁴Is anyone among you sick? He must call for the elders (spiritual leaders) of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;

¹⁵and the prayer of faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

¹⁶Therefore, confess your sins to one another [your false steps, your offenses], and pray for one another, that you may be healed *and* restored. The heartfelt *and* persistent prayer of a righteous man (believer) can accomplish much [when put into action and made effective by God—it is dynamic and can have tremendous power].

¹⁷Elijah was a man with a nature like ours [with the same physical, mental, and spiritual limitations and shortcomings], and he prayed intensely for it not to rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. [1 Kin 17:1]

¹⁸Then he prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the land produced its crops [as usual]. [1 Kin 18:42–45]

¹⁹My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you strays from the truth *and* falls into error and [another] one turns him back [to God],

²⁰let the [latter] one know that the one who has turned a sinner from the error of his way will save that one's soul from death and cover a multitude of sins [that is, obtain the pardon

of the many sins committed by the one who has been restored].

! REMEMBER, any time the
enemy attacks your mind,
the battle belongs to the
Lord.

1 Peter

Author: | Peter
Date: | Early AD
60s

As Christians, we will suffer at times and for various reasons. We can suffer in ungodly ways—complaining about our circumstances, murmuring about other people, speaking angry or jealous words, or feeling defeated. We can also suffer in godly ways—ways that honor the Lord and bring glory to Him—and we learn about that in 1 Peter. It’s an encouraging letter filled with hope for anyone who is suffering or struggling.

When we go through difficulty, the enemy likes to take advantage of us. First Peter offers powerful instruction about hard times in our lives: “Be sober [well balanced and self-disciplined], be alert *and* cautious at all times. That enemy of yours, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion [fiercely hungry], seeking someone to devour. But resist him, be firm in *your* faith [against his attack—rooted, established, immovable]” (1 Peter 5:8–9).

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM 1 PETER:

Several ways to enjoy life include: speaking good things; pursuing peace with God, yourself, and others; and doing what is right (see 1 Peter 3:10–11).

Arm yourself for battle and prepare to win by being like-minded with Christ, choosing to suffer for doing what is right if necessary (see 1 Peter 4:1).

When you choose to humble yourself before God, He will exalt you when the time is right (see 1 Peter 5:6).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM 1 PETER:

Prepare your minds for action. | 1 Peter 1:13

Above all, have fervent and unfailing love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins [it overlooks unkindness and unselfishly seeks the best for others]. | 1 Peter 4:8

Casting... all your cares [all your anxieties, all your worries, and all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares about you [with deepest affection, and watches over you very carefully]. | 1 Peter 5:7

THE FIRST LETTER OF PETER

1 PETER, AN apostle (special messenger, personally chosen representative) of Jesus Christ,

To those [elect—both Jewish and Gentile believers] who live as exiles, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia [Minor], and Bithynia, who are chosen [Heb 13:14]

²according to the foreknowledge of God the Father by the sanctifying work of the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace [that special sense of spiritual well-being] be yours in increasing abundance [as you walk closely with God]. [John 14:27]

³Blessed [gratefully praised and adored] be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant *and* boundless mercy has caused us to be born again [that is, to be reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, and set apart for His purpose] to an ever-living hope *and* confident assurance through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, [Matt 28:1–9; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:6; John 20:1–18]

⁴[born anew] into an inheritance which is imperishable [beyond the reach of change] and undefiled and unfading,

reserved in heaven for you,

⁵who are being protected *and* shielded by the power of God through *your* faith for salvation that is ready to be revealed [for you] in the last time.

⁶In this you rejoice greatly, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

⁷so that the genuineness of your faith, which is much more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested *and* purified by fire, may be found to result in [your] praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

⁸Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and though you do not even see Him now, you believe *and* trust in Him and you greatly rejoice *and* delight with inexpressible and glorious joy,

⁹receiving as the result [the outcome, the consummation] of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

¹⁰Regarding this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace [of God] that *was intended for* you, searched carefully and inquired [about this future way of salvation],

¹¹seeking to find out what person or what time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He foretold the sufferings of Christ and the glories [destined] to follow.

¹²It was revealed to them that their services [their prophecies regarding grace] were not [meant] for themselves *and* their time, but for you, in these things [the death, resurrection, and glorification of Jesus Christ] which have now been told to you by those who preached the gospel to you by the [power of the] Holy Spirit [who was] sent from heaven. Into these things even the angels long to look.

¹³So prepare your minds for action, be completely sober [in spirit—steadfast, self-disciplined, spiritually and morally alert], fix your hope completely on the grace [of God] that is coming to you when Jesus Christ is revealed.

¹⁴[Live] as obedient children [of God]; do not be conformed to the evil desires *which governed you* in your ignorance [before you knew the requirements and transforming power of the good news regarding salvation].

Speak God's Word

*I prepare my mind for action,
to be completely sober in
spirit—steadfast, self-
disciplined, spiritually and
morally alert. I fix my hope
completely on the grace of
God that is coming to me
when Jesus Christ is
revealed.*

| *adapted from* 1 PETER 1:13 |

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Prepare Your Mind for Action

In the days when the apostle Peter said to “prepare your minds for action” (1 Pet. 1:13), men wore long, flowing robes that had to be “girded up” or “prepared” with belts about their waists in order to move quickly and take strenuous action. Peter’s words are a serious call to have a mind actively focused on important things.

If you do not discipline your mind to remain focused on what is important, the devil will cause it to wander aimlessly to other things. If you’ve allowed your mind to wander for long, it may be a habit. You may hardly be aware that it’s taking place and that the devil is taking advantage of it.

Lack of concentration can happen for various reasons, even health problems, and those reasons should be considered before automatically blaming the enemy for it. Sometimes a lack of concentration creates a lack of comprehension. Perhaps as you read the Bible, your mind engages somewhere else, and when you finish, you can’t recall anything you’ve read. Perhaps your mind constantly wanders during sermons and

you have no idea what was said. If the enemy can rob you of the benefits of studying and attentively hearing God's Word, he has won some major skirmishes in the battle for your mind. This is why Peter wrote, "Prepare your minds for action."

We take action by confronting our wandering mind and disciplining it to focus on what's important. I recently read a shocking statement that said a goldfish can focus for nine seconds, and most humans can now only focus for eight seconds. That sounds rather severe, but in some cases, it may be true.

In conversation, when I realize my mind has wandered, I now ask the person to repeat what I missed. This kind of behavior not only interrupts the plan of the enemy but also brings victory over the problem. It demonstrates that I am determined to pay attention and not miss important things.

It's not easy to discipline your mind when it has been allowed to wander aimlessly, but you can make the necessary corrections. The devil would like to convince you that you can't help yourself, but when you consistently come against his bid for your mind, he is defeated, and you have won another battle.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Holy Spirit, I realize how quickly Satan distracts me and takes advantage of my mind. Thank You for giving me a good, clear mind. Help me overcome every temptation to lose my focus. Amen.

Speak God's Word

*I live as an obedient child of
God. I will not be conformed
to the evil desires that
governed me in my ignorance
before I knew the
requirements and
transforming power of the
good news regarding
salvation. I will be set apart
from the world by godly
character and moral
courage.*

| *adapted from* 1 PETER 1:14–15

|

¹⁵But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves in all *your* conduct [be set apart from the world by your godly character and moral courage];

¹⁶because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY (set apart), FOR I AM HOLY.” [Lev 11:44, 45; 19:2]

¹⁷If you address as Father, the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in [reverent] fear [of Him] *and* with profound respect for Him throughout the

time of your stay *on earth*.

¹⁸For you know that you were not redeemed from your useless [spiritually unproductive] way of life inherited [by tradition] from your forefathers with perishable things like silver and gold,

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Jesus, that I have
actually been purchased with
Your precious blood, like that
of a sacrificial lamb
unblemished and spotless, the
precious blood of Christ.*

*adapted from 1
Peter 1:19*

¹⁹but [you were actually purchased] with precious blood, like that of a [sacrificial] lamb unblemished and spotless, *the priceless blood* of Christ. [Lev 22:20]

²⁰For He was foreordained (foreknown) before the

foundation of the world, but has appeared [publicly] in these last times for your sake

²¹and through Him you believe [confidently] in God [the heavenly Father], who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are [centered and rest] in God.

²²Since by your obedience to the truth you have purified yourselves for a sincere love of the believers, [see that you] love one another from the heart [always unselfishly seeking the best for one another],

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Can Use You

Invite Jesus into every area of your life. Don't feel you have to hide your faults from Him; He knows all about them anyway. Besides, His strength is made perfect in our weaknesses (see 2 Cor. 12:9). Because God works through weak, imperfect people, so no one can take the credit that is due Him alone, it's important that you never doubt that God can use you.

First Peter 1:23 says, "You have been born again [that is, reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, and set apart for His purpose.]" The Lord doesn't see only what you are right now; He sees what you can become. He knows the plans He has for you, and they are plans for progress and success, not defeat and failure (see Jer. 29:11).

²³for you have been born again [that is, reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, and set apart for His purpose] not of seed which is perishable but [from that which is] imperishable *and* immortal, *that is*, through the living and everlasting word of God.

²⁴For,

“ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS,
AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS.
THE GRASS WITHERS
AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF,

²⁵BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER.”

And this is the word [the good news of salvation] which was preached to you. [Is 40:6–8]

2 SO PUT aside every trace of malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander *and* hateful speech;

²like newborn babies [you should] long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may be nurtured *and* grow in respect to salvation [its ultimate fulfillment],

³if in fact you have [already] tasted the goodness *and* gracious kindness of the Lord. [Ps 34:8]

⁴Come to Him [the risen Lord] as to a living Stone which men rejected *and* threw away, but which is choice and precious in the sight of God. [Ps 118:22; Is 28:16]

⁵You [believers], like living stones, are being built up into a spiritual house for a holy *and* dedicated priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices [that are] acceptable *and* pleasing to God through Jesus Christ.

⁶For this is contained in Scripture:

“BEHOLD, I AM LAYING IN ZION A CHOSEN STONE, A PRECIOUS (honored) CORNERSTONE,

AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM [whoever adheres to, trusts in, and relies on Him] WILL NEVER BE DISAPPOINTED [in his expectations].” [Is 28:16]

⁷This precious value, then, is for you who believe [in Him as God’s only Son—the Source of salvation]; but for those who disbelieve,

“THE [very] STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED
HAS BECOME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE,” [Ps 118:22]

⁸and,

“A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE”;

for they stumble because they disobey the word [of God], and to this they [who reject Him as Savior] were also appointed. [Is 8:14]

⁹But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A CONSECRATED NATION, A [special] PEOPLE FOR *God's* OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies [the wonderful deeds and virtues and perfections] of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. [Ex 19:5, 6]

¹⁰Once you were NOT A PEOPLE [at all], but now you are GOD'S PEOPLE; once you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY. [Hos 2:23]

¹¹Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers [in this world] to abstain from the sensual urges [those dishonorable desires] that wage war against the soul.

¹²Keep your behavior excellent among the [unsaved] Gentiles [conduct yourself honorably, with graciousness and integrity], so that for whatever reason they may slander you as evildoers, yet by observing your good deeds they may [instead come to] glorify God in the day of visitation [when He looks upon them with mercy].

¹³Submit yourselves to [the authority of] every human institution for the sake of the Lord [to honor His name], whether it is to a king as one in a position of power,

¹⁴or to governors as sent by him to bring punishment to

those who do wrong, and to praise *and* encourage those who do right.

¹⁵For it is the will of God that by doing right you may silence (muzzle, gag) the [culpable] ignorance *and* irresponsible criticisms of foolish people.

Speak God's Word

*I will live in freedom. I will
not use my freedom as a cover
or pretext for evil, but I will
use it and live as a bond-
servant of God.*

| *adapted from* 1 PETER 2:16 |

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Jesus, for
personally carrying my sins
in Your body on the cross, for
willingly offering Yourself on
it, as on an altar of sacrifice,
so that I might become*

immune to the penalty and power of sin and live for righteousness. By Your wounds and because I believe, I have been healed.

• adapted from 1 Peter 2:24

¹⁶Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover *or* pretext for evil, but [use it and live] as bond-servants of God.

¹⁷Show respect for all people [treat them honorably], love the brotherhood [of believers], fear God, honor the king.

¹⁸Servants, be submissive to your masters with all [proper] respect, not only to those who are good and kind, but also to those who are unreasonable.

¹⁹For this *finds* favor, if a person endures the sorrow of suffering unjustly because of an awareness of [the will of] God.

²⁰After all, what kind of credit is there if, when you do wrong and are punished for it, you endure it patiently? But if when you do what is right and patiently bear [undeserved] suffering, this *finds* favor with God.

²¹For [as a believer] you have been called for this purpose, since Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you may follow in His footsteps.

²²HE COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS DECEIT EVER FOUND IN HIS MOUTH. [Is 53:9]

²³While being reviled *and* insulted, He did not revile *or* insult in return; while suffering, He made no threats [of

vengeance], but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges fairly.

²⁴He personally carried our sins in His body on the cross [willingly offering Himself on it, as on an altar of sacrifice], so that we might die to sin [becoming immune from the penalty and power of sin] and live for righteousness; for by His wounds you [who believe] have been healed.

²⁵For you were continually wandering like [so many] sheep, but now you have come back to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls. [Is 53:5, 6]

3 IN THE same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands [subordinate, not as inferior, but out of respect for the responsibilities entrusted to husbands and their accountability to God, and so partnering with them] so that even if some do not obey the word [of God], they may be won over [to Christ] without discussion by the *godly* lives of their wives, [Eph 5:22]

²when they see your modest and respectful behavior [together with your devotion and appreciation—love your husband, encourage him, and enjoy him as a blessing from God].

³Your adornment must not be *merely* external—with interweaving *and* elaborate knotting of the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or [being superficially preoccupied with] dressing in *expensive* clothes;

⁴but let it be [the inner beauty of] the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality *and* unfading charm of a

gentle and peaceful spirit, [one that is calm and self-controlled, not overanxious, but serene and spiritually mature] which is very precious in the sight of God.

⁵For in this way in former times the holy women, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands *and* adapting themselves to them;

⁶just as Sarah obeyed Abraham [following him and having regard for him as head of their house], calling him lord. And you have become her daughters if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear [that is, being respectful toward your husband but not giving in to intimidation, nor allowing yourself to be led into sin, nor to be harmed].

POWERPOINT

First Peter 3:3–4 is not implying that styling our hair, wearing jewelry, or having nice clothes is wrong or bad. It is simply saying that if we pay excessive attention to our appearance or other external things and ignore “the hidden person of the heart,” God is not pleased. Rather than merely seeking to be viewed as attractive in the eyes of the world, it would be far better for us to work with the Holy Spirit to improve our thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and motives—to work on the condition of our hearts.



KEYS to a Victorious Life

Use Good Words

According to 1 Peter 3:10, we can enjoy life and see good days no matter what the circumstances may be—even in difficult times—as long as we know what to do with our words and conversations. If we keep from speaking evil, we are setting ourselves up for a good life. The words we choose to speak have a tremendous impact on the level of joy we experience.

Notice the words that make you happy when people speak them to you and start speaking them to others. Work cheerful, happy words into your conversations instead of talking excessively about problems and using negative, discouraging words such as hate, anger, bitter, jealous, give up, my problem, so tired, worn out, miserable, depressed, hopeless, and wretched. Instead, fill your vocabulary with words such as wonderful, beautiful, amazing, appreciate, thank you, fantastic, celebrate, good job, enthusiastic, great, huge, superb, hope, faith, believe, and love. Use these words and watch your level of joy and positivity rise.

⁷In the same way, you husbands, live with *your wives* in an understanding way [with great gentleness and tact, and with an intelligent regard for the marriage relationship], as with someone physically weaker, since she is a woman. Show her honor *and* respect as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that

your prayers will not be hindered *or* ineffective.

⁸Finally, all of you be like-minded [united in spirit], sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted [courteous and compassionate toward each other as members of one household], and humble in spirit;

⁹and never return evil for evil or insult for insult [avoid scolding, berating, and any kind of abuse], but on the contrary, give a blessing [pray for one another's well-being, contentment, and protection]; for you have been called for this very purpose, that you might inherit a blessing [from God that brings well-being, happiness, and protection].

¹⁰For,

“THE ONE WHO WANTS TO ENJOY LIFE AND SEE GOOD DAYS
[good—whether apparent or not],
MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FREE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM
SPEAKING GUILF (treachery, deceit).

¹¹“HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM WICKEDNESS AND DO WHAT IS
RIGHT.

HE MUST SEARCH FOR PEACE [with God, with self, with
others] AND PURSUE IT EAGERLY [actively—not merely
desiring it].

¹²“FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE [looking favorably] UPON
THE RIGHTEOUS (the upright),
AND HIS EARS ARE ATTENTIVE TO THEIR PRAYER (eager to
answer),
BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO PRACTICE
EVIL.” [Ps 34:12–16]

¹³Now who is there to hurt you if you become enthusiastic

for what is good?

¹⁴But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness [though it is not certain that you will], you are still blessed [happy, to be admired and favored by God]. DO NOT BE AFRAID OF THEIR INTIMIDATING THREATS, NOR BE TROUBLED *or* DISTURBED [by their opposition].

¹⁵But in your hearts set Christ apart [as holy—acknowledging Him, giving Him first place in your lives] as Lord. Always be ready to give a [logical] defense to anyone who asks you to account for the hope *and* confident assurance [elicited by faith] that is within you, yet [do it] with gentleness and respect. [Is 8:12, 13]

¹⁶And see to it that your conscience is entirely clear, so that every time you are slandered *or* falsely accused, those who attack *or* disparage your good behavior in Christ will be shamed [by their own words].

¹⁷For it is better that you suffer [unjustly] for doing what is right, if that should be God's will, than [to suffer justly] for doing wrong.

¹⁸For indeed Christ died for sins once for all, the Just *and* Righteous for the unjust *and* unrighteous [the Innocent for the guilty] so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit;

¹⁹in which He also went and preached to the spirits *now* in prison,

²⁰who once were disobedient, when the *great* patience of God was waiting in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons [Noah's family], were brought safely through the water. [Gen 6–8]

²¹Corresponding to that [rescue through the flood], baptism [which is an expression of a believer's new life in Christ] now saves you, not by removing dirt from the body, but by an appeal to God for a good (clear) conscience, [demonstrating what you believe to be yours] through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

²²who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God [that is, the place of honor and authority], with [all] angels and authorities and powers made subservient to Him.

4 THEREFORE, SINCE Christ suffered in the flesh [and died for us], arm yourselves [like warriors] with the same purpose [being willing to suffer for doing what is right and pleasing God], because whoever has suffered in the flesh [being like-minded with Christ] is done with [intentional] sin [having stopped pleasing the world],

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Pursue Peaceful Relationships

The Bible is a book about relationships and it has a great deal to say about our relationship with God. Everything starts with the development of our relationship with the Father through His Son, Jesus Christ. God's Word also talks extensively about our relationships with other people. Teachings on love, proper attitudes, serving others, and giving—as well as on the importance of having a proper attitude toward ourselves—abound.

First Peter 3:11 instructs us to desire peaceful relations with God, with ourselves, and with one another. It actually says we are not merely to desire them but to pursue and go after them. Receive God's love and develop a good relationship with yourself. Value yourself and realize that you are created in God's image and that He delights in you. When you have a good relationship of love and acceptance with the Father and with yourself, having good relationships with other people will be much easier.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Love Covers a Multitude of Sins

One of the most valuable and beautiful things you can do is to love others (see John 13:35). The Bible says, “Above all, have fervent and unfailing love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins [it overlooks unkindness and unselfishly seeks the best for others]” (1 Pet. 4:8). We can purpose to think about the good things we find in all the people we know, and as we do, our attitudes toward them will improve.

Often we think about what is wrong with people and what we don't like about them. Focusing on people's faults is not showing love to them. We can choose to pray for them concerning any weaknesses they may have, and to pray for ourselves, that God will help us in our weaknesses also.

Focus on positive, loving thoughts about people. Then when they do something you don't like, you are already so full of good thoughts about them that it is easy to just let it go.

²so that he can no longer spend the rest of his natural life living for human appetites *and* desires, but [lives] for the will *and* purpose of God.

³For the time already past is [more than] enough for doing what the [unsaved] Gentiles like to do—living [unrestrained as you have done] in a course of [shameless] sensuality, lusts,

drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties, and wanton idolatries.

⁴In [connection with] all this, they [the unbelievers] are resentful *and* surprised that you do not [think like them, value their values and] run [hand in hand] with *them* into the same excesses of dissipation *and* immoral freedom, and they criticize *and* abuse *and* ridicule you *and* make fun of your values.

⁵But they will [have to] give an account to Him who is ready to judge *and* pass sentence on the living and the dead.

⁶For this is why the good news [of salvation] was preached [in their lifetimes] even to those who are dead, that though they were judged in the flesh as men are, they may live in the spirit according to [the will and purpose of] God.

⁷The end *and* culmination of all things is near. Therefore, be sound-minded and self-controlled for the purpose of prayer [staying balanced and focused on the things of God so that your communication will be clear, reasonable, specific and pleasing to Him.]

⁸Above all, have fervent *and* unfailing love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins [it overlooks unkindness and unselfishly seeks the best for others]. [Prov 10:12]

⁹Be hospitable to one another without complaint.

¹⁰Just as each one of you has received a *special* gift [a spiritual talent, an ability graciously given by God], employ it in serving one another as [is appropriate for] good stewards of God's multi-faceted grace [faithfully using the diverse, varied gifts and abilities granted to Christians by God's unmerited favor].

¹¹Whoever speaks [to the congregation], *is to do so* as one who speaks the oracles (utterances, the very words) of God. Whoever serves [the congregation] *is to do so* as one who serves by the strength which God [abundantly] supplies, so that in all things God may be glorified [honored and magnified] through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

¹²Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which is taking place to test you [that is, to test the quality of your faith], as though something strange *or* unusual were happening to you.

¹³But insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, keep on rejoicing, so that when His glory [filled with His radiance and splendor] is revealed, you may rejoice with great joy.

¹⁴If you are insulted *and* reviled for [bearing] the name of Christ, you are blessed [happy, with life-joy and comfort in God's salvation regardless of your circumstances], because the Spirit of glory and of God is resting on you [and indwelling you —He whom they curse, you glorify]. [Is 11:2]

¹⁵Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or a thief, or any sort of criminal [in response to persecution], or as a troublesome meddler interfering in the affairs of others;

¹⁶but if *anyone suffers* [ill-treatment] as a Christian [because of his belief], he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God [because he is considered worthy to suffer] in this name.

¹⁷For it is the time [destined] for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if *it begins* with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not respect *or* believe *or* obey the gospel of God?

¹⁸AND IF IT IS DIFFICULT FOR THE RIGHTEOUS TO BE SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS AND THE SINNER? [Prov 11:31]

¹⁹Therefore, those who are ill-treated *and* suffer in accordance with the will of God must [continue to] do right and commit their souls [for safe-keeping] to the faithful Creator.

5 THEREFORE, I strongly urge the elders among you [pastors, spiritual leaders of the church], as a fellow elder and as an eyewitness [called to testify] of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory that is to be revealed:

²shepherd *and* guide *and* protect the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of* God; and not [motivated] for shameful gain, but with wholehearted enthusiasm;

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Help me, Lord, to always
humble myself under the*

mighty hand of God and set aside self-righteous pride, so that You may exalt me to a place of honor in Your service at the appropriate time.

• adapted from 1 Peter 5:6

³not lording it over those assigned to your care [do not be arrogant or overbearing], but be examples [of Christian living] to the flock [set a pattern of integrity for your congregation].

⁴And when the Chief Shepherd (Christ) appears, you will receive the [conqueror's] unfading crown of glory.

⁵Likewise, you younger men [of lesser rank and experience], be subject to your elders [seek their counsel]; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another [tie on the servant's apron], for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD [the disdainful, the presumptuous, and He defeats them], BUT HE GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE. [Prov 3:34]

⁶Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God [set aside self-righteous pride], so that He may exalt you [to a place of honor in His service] at the appropriate time, [John 3:30]

⁷casting all your cares [all your anxieties, all your worries, and all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares about you [with deepest affection, and watches over you very carefully]. [Ps 55:22]

⁸Be sober [well balanced and self-disciplined], be alert *and* cautious at all times. That enemy of yours, the devil, prowls

around like a roaring lion [fiercely hungry], seeking someone to devour.

Speak God's Word

*I will cast all my cares—all
my anxieties, all my worries,
and all my concerns—once
and for all on the Lord, for He
cares about me with deepest
affection, and watches over
me very carefully.*

| *adapted from* 1 PETER 5:7 |

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Know God's Love, Then Resist the Enemy

We know that the devil “prowls around like a roaring lion [fiercely hungry], seeking someone to devour,” and that we must resist him daily (1 Pet. 5:8–9), but the Christian life is not just about battles. That’s not the picture I want to present. The Christian life is one of joy and peace. God gives us a great sense of fulfillment, and we’re at rest because we know we honor Him by the way we live.

Before Peter urged his readers to be vigilant, he said to cast “all your cares [all your anxieties, all your worries, and all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares about you [with deepest affection, and watches over you very carefully]” (v. 7). As we fight the battles of the mind, it’s important to remind ourselves of God’s love for us. Because God cares, we can trust Him to take care of us.

We need that as part of our foundation. We do have faith; but Satan tries to destroy our faith with lies such as, “If God

really cared about you, would He make you go through this trial?” If he can make you think you’re not loved or that God doesn’t have your best interests at heart, he can plant tiny seeds of unbelief. God wants you to remain strong.

The problems that strike our lives are not what cause us to turn away from God. No, it’s our reaction to those situations that makes the difference. When struggles, trials, and hardships come your way, you have a choice. You can heed Peter’s words and give God your cares, worries, and concerns. No matter how dark the night or how evil the situation, remind yourself that God is not only present with you in those situations, He also loves you and will provide for you.

Your job is to be vigilant during those difficult times. You can rejoice in God’s love and blessings when all is going well—and that’s what God wants you to do. But in the dark moments, you need to remind yourself that the devil stalks you and wants to defeat you. And the more faithful you are, the more you have to be prepared to resist him and his lies of unbelief.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Heavenly Father, the enemy may seek to devour me, but I cast my cares on You, trust in Your love for me, and resist him. Thank You for caring for me and leading me to victory over the enemy. Amen.

POWERPOINT

The implication of 1 Peter 5:8 is that the enemy seeks those whom he *may* devour, meaning the people who will allow him to destroy them. When he tries to attack someone, his success is never guaranteed. He will only be able to hurt them if they let him. The only power Satan has is the power people give him. When you are attacked, stay at peace and speak the Word. If the enemy cannot upset you and sees you standing firm on God's Word, he cannot defeat you.



⁹But resist him, be firm in *your* faith [against his attack—rooted, established, immovable], knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being experienced by your brothers and sisters throughout the world. [You do not suffer alone.]

¹⁰After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace [who imparts His blessing and favor], who called you to His *own* eternal glory in Christ, will Himself complete, confirm, strengthen, and establish you [making you what you ought to be].

¹¹To Him be dominion (power, authority, sovereignty) forever and ever. Amen.

¹²By Silvanus, our faithful brother (as I consider him), I have written to you briefly, to counsel and testify that this is the true grace [the undeserved favor] of God. Stand firm in it!

¹³She [the church] who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and *so does* my son [in the faith], Mark.

¹⁴Greet one another with a kiss of love.

To all of you who are in Christ, may there be peace.

Speak God's Word

*I will be sober, well balanced
and self-disciplined, and I
will be alert and cautious at
all times because that enemy
of mine, the devil, prowls
around like a roaring lion,
fiercely hungry, seeking to
devour me. I will resist him,
firm in my faith against his
attack.*

| *adapted from* 1 PETER 5:8–9 |

2 Peter

Author: | Peter
Date: | AD 65–68

At the time Peter wrote this book, people were exposed to false teaching concerning Jesus' second coming, and Peter did not want them to be deceived. One of Peter's main goals in writing 2 Peter was to help establish people in the truth. Some people had never heard the truth, so he introduced them to it. Others knew the truth, but were not strong in it and needed to be encouraged.

The enemy is a master deceiver. He orchestrated the deception that was rampant in Peter's day, and he is behind the deception that attempts to ensnare you and me. Nothing will help you defeat deception like the truth of God's Word. I cannot urge you strongly enough to read His Word, study His Word, meditate on His Word, and apply His Word to your life. In that way, you will saturate your heart and mind with truth and strengthen yourself against deception.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM 2 PETER:

When we exercise our faith and apply ourselves to God's promises, we develop the character qualities necessary for productive living (see 2 Peter 1:5–8).

Allow your behavior to reflect your relationship with God, and others will be led to Him as they see how you live your life (see 2 Peter 1:10–11).

Be on guard against spiritual error and be steadfast in your mind, growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord (see 2 Peter 3:17–18).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM 2 PETER:

His divine power has bestowed on us [absolutely] everything necessary for [a dynamic spiritual] life and godliness, through true and personal knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. | 2 Peter 1:3

[Learn to unselfishly seek the best for others and to do things for their benefit.] | 2 Peter 1:7

Therefore, [let me warn you] beloved, knowing these things beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men [who distort doctrine] and fall from your own steadfastness [of mind, knowledge, truth, and faith]. | 2 Peter 3:17

THE SECOND LETTER OF PETER

1 SIMON PETER, a bond-servant and apostle (special messenger, personally chosen representative) of Jesus Christ,

To those who have received *and* possess [by God's will] a precious faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:

²Grace and peace [that special sense of spiritual well-being] be multiplied to you in the [true, intimate] knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

³For His divine power has bestowed on us [absolutely] everything necessary for [a dynamic spiritual] life and godliness, through true *and* personal knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

⁴For by these He has bestowed on us His precious and magnificent promises [of inexpressible value], so that by them you may escape from the immoral freedom that is in the world because of disreputable desire, and become sharers of the divine nature.

⁵For this very reason, applying your diligence [to the divine promises, make every effort] in [exercising] your faith to, develop moral excellence, and in moral excellence, knowledge (insight, understanding),

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Thank You, God, that Your divine power has bestowed on me everything necessary for a dynamic spiritual life and godliness, through true and personal knowledge of You who have called me by Your own glory and excellence.

• *adapted from 2 Peter 1:3*

⁶and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, steadfastness, and in *your* steadfastness, godliness,

⁷and in *your* godliness, brotherly affection, and in *your* brotherly affection, [develop Christian] love [that is, learn to unselfishly seek the best for others and to do things for their benefit].

⁸For as these *qualities* are yours and are increasing [in you

as you grow toward spiritual maturity], they will keep you from being useless and unproductive in regard to the true knowledge *and* greater understanding of our Lord Jesus Christ.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Has Shared His Nature

The devil tries to tell us that we can't be like God—we can't be merciful and gracious; we can't have joy; we can't be slow to anger and quick to forgive. But the Bible says God has shared His divine nature with us (see 2 Pet. 1:4); it is in us, thus we can develop it and express it.

Don't listen to the devil's lies. Believe instead the promises of God: You can imitate God's nature; you can have unspeakable joy; you can be merciful, never holding a grudge. Fill your thoughts and words with God's promises. Apply the truth of His Word to your daily life, and you will finish your course with joy (see Acts 20:24).

⁹For whoever lacks these *qualities* is blind—shortsighted [closing his spiritual eyes to the truth], having become oblivious to the fact that he was cleansed from his old sins.

¹⁰Therefore, believers, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you [be sure that your behavior reflects and confirms your relationship with God]; for by doing these things [actively developing these virtues], you will never stumble [in your spiritual growth and will live a life that leads others away from sin];

¹¹for in this way entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly provided to you.

¹²Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you *already* know them and are established in the truth which is held firmly in your grasp.

¹³I think it right, as long as I am in this *earthly* tent, to inspire you by reminding you,

¹⁴knowing that the laying aside of this *earthly* tent of mine is imminent, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.

¹⁵Moreover, I will diligently endeavor [to see to it] that even after my departure you will be able, at all times, to call these things to mind.

¹⁶For we did not follow cleverly devised stories *or* myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty [His grandeur, His authority, His sovereignty].

¹⁷For when He was invested with honor and [the radiance of the Shekinah] glory from God the Father, such a voice as this came to Him from the [splendid] Majestic Glory [in the bright cloud that overshadowed Him, saying], “This is My Son, My Beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased *and* delighted”—[Matt 17:5]

¹⁸and we [actually] heard this voice made from heaven when we were together with Him on the holy mountain. [Matt 17:6]

¹⁹So we have the prophetic word made more certain. You do well to pay [close] attention to it as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns *and* light breaks through the gloom and the morning star arises in your hearts. [Num 24:17]

²⁰But understand this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter of or* comes from one’s own [personal or

special] interpretation,

²¹for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

2 BUT [in those days] false prophets arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will subtly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction on themselves.

²Many will follow their shameful ways, and because of them the way of truth will be maligned.

³And in *their* greed they will exploit you with false arguments *and* twisted doctrine. Their sentence [of condemnation which God has decreed] from a time long ago is not idle [but is still in force], and their destruction *and* deepening misery is not asleep [but is on its way].

⁴For if God did not [even] spare angels that sinned, but threw them into hell and sent them to pits of gloom to be kept [there] for judgment;

⁵and if He did not spare the ancient world, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought [the judgment of] a flood upon the world of the ungodly; [Gen 6-8; 1 Pet 3:20]

⁶and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly *lives* thereafter; [Gen 19:24]

⁷and if He rescued righteous Lot, who was tormented by the immoral conduct of unprincipled *and* ungodly men [Gen

19:16, 29]

⁸(for that just man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by what he saw and heard of their lawless acts),

⁹then [in light of the fact that all this is true, be sure that] the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and how to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment,

¹⁰and especially those who indulge in the corrupt passions of the sin nature, and despise authority.

Presumptuous *and* reckless, self-willed *and* arrogant [creatures, despising the majesty of the Lord], they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties,

¹¹whereas *even* angels who are superior in might and power do not bring a reviling (defaming) accusation against them before the Lord. [Jude 8]

¹²But these [false teachers], like unreasoning animals, [mere] creatures of instinct, born to be captured and destroyed, reviling things they do not understand, will also perish in their own corruption [in their destroying they will be destroyed],

¹³suffering wrong [destined for punishment] as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a delight to revel in the daytime [living luxuriously]. They are stains and blemishes [on mankind], reveling in their deceptions even as they feast with you.

¹⁴They have eyes full of adultery, constantly looking for sin, enticing *and* luring away unstable souls. Having hearts trained in greed, [they are] children of a curse.

¹⁵Abandoning the straight road [that is, the right way to

live], they have gone astray; they have followed the way of [the false teacher] Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the reward of wickedness; [Num 22:5, 7]

¹⁶but he was rebuked for his own transgression: a mute donkey spoke with a man's voice and restrained the prophet's madness. [Num 22:21–31]

¹⁷These [false teachers] are springs without water and mists driven by a tempest, for whom is reserved the gloom of black darkness.

¹⁸For uttering arrogant *words* of vanity [pompous words disguised to sound scholarly or profound, but meaning nothing and containing no spiritual truth], they beguile *and* lure *using* lustful desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error.

¹⁹They promise them liberty, when they themselves are the slaves of depravity—for by whatever anyone is defeated *and* overcome, to that [person, thing, philosophy, or concept] he is *continually* enslaved.

²⁰For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world by [personal] knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, their last condition has become worse for them than the first.

²¹For it would have been better for them not to have [personally] known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to have turned back from the holy commandment [verbally] handed on to them.

²²The thing spoken of in the true proverb has happened to them, “THE DOG RETURNS TO HIS OWN VOMIT,” and, “A sow is washed only to wallow [again] in the mire.” [Prov 26:11]

3 BELOVED, I am now writing you this second letter. In this [as in the first one], I am stirring up your untainted mind to remind you,

²that you should remember the words spoken in the past [about the future] by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior *given* by your apostles [His personally chosen representatives].

³First of all, know [without any doubt] that mockers will come in the last days with their mocking, following after their own human desires

⁴and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming [what has become of it]? For ever since the fathers fell asleep [in death], all things have continued [exactly] as they did from the beginning of creation.”

⁵For they willingly forget [the fact] that the heavens existed long ago by the word of God, and the earth was formed out of water and by water,

⁶through which the world at that time was destroyed by being flooded with water. [Gen 1:6–8; 7:11]

⁷But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly people.

⁸Nevertheless, do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like one day. [Ps 90:4]

⁹The Lord does not delay [as though He were unable to act] *and* is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is [extraordinarily] patient toward you, not

wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



I know, Lord, that You do not delay, as though You are unable to act, and You are not slow about Your promise, as some count slowness. But You are extraordinarily patient, not willing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

• adapted from 2 Peter 3:9

¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will vanish with a [mighty and thunderous] roar, and the [material] elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and the works that are on it will be burned up.

¹¹Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be [in the meantime] in holy

behavior [that is, in a pattern of daily life that sets you apart as a believer] and in godliness [displaying profound reverence toward our awesome God],

¹²[while you earnestly] look for and await the coming of the day of God. For on this day the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the [material] elements will melt with intense heat! [Is 34:4]

¹³But in accordance with His promise we expectantly await new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. [Is 65:17; 66:22]

¹⁴So, beloved, since you are looking forward to these things, be diligent *and* make every effort to be found by Him [at His return] spotless and blameless, in peace [that is, inwardly calm with a sense of spiritual well-being and confidence, having lived a life of obedience to Him].

Speak God's Word

I will be diligent and make every effort to be found by the Lord at His return spotless and blameless, in peace. I will be diligent to be inwardly calm with a sense of spiritual well-being and confidence, having lived a life of obedience to Him.

| adapted from 2 PETER 3:14 |

¹⁵And consider the patience of our Lord [His delay in judging and avenging wrongs] as salvation [that is, allowing time for more to be saved]; just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given to him [by God],

¹⁶speaking about these things as he does in all of his letters. In which there are some things that are difficult to understand, which the untaught and unstable [who have fallen into error] twist *and* misinterpret, just as *they do* the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

¹⁷Therefore, [let me warn you] beloved, knowing these things beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not

carried away by the error of unprincipled men [who distort doctrine] and fall from your own steadfastness [of mind, knowledge, truth, and faith],

¹⁸but grow [spiritually mature] in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory (honor, majesty, splendor), both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

POWERPOINT

The mature believer is a person who learns to do God's will no matter how it feels or how difficult it is. A mature believer works with the Holy Spirit continuously to be changed into the image of Jesus Christ—learning to say what God says and live a life dedicated to God and His purposes. God's goals for you are to mature spiritually and no longer be controlled by your own thoughts, emotions, and desires. He wants you to learn His Word and direct your life accordingly, being ready at all times to be His representative in the earth (see 2 Pet. 3:18).



1 John

Author: | John
Date: | Probably
between AD 85–95

In the battle of the mind, the way we become increasingly victorious is to continue to renew our thinking according to God's Word. First John, perhaps more than any other single book of the Bible, teaches us how to think about the love of God. The more accurately we understand God's love, the easier it is for us to become established in it. The more established we are in God's love, the less the enemy can take advantage of us.

First John also helps us understand such important dynamics of the Christian life as receiving God's forgiveness, walking in the light, and Jesus' power over the enemy. Understanding these truths empowers us to think as God wants us to think.

I encourage you to study and meditate on the truths in 1 John and allow them to transform your thinking so you can go from one level of victory in your mind to another.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM 1 JOHN:

When feelings of guilt and condemnation arise, press through them in faith and say, “No matter how I feel, I believe God’s Word more than my feelings. I have confessed my sins, and I have been forgiven” (see 1 John 1:9).

When we say we love someone, we need to follow through with sincere and practical actions (see 1 John 3:18).

With God’s power working in you, you can outlast the enemy and continue serving God while the battle rages (see 1 John 4:4).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM 1 JOHN:

The Son of God appeared... to destroy the works of the devil.
| 1 John 3:8

He who is in you is greater than he (Satan) who is in the world [of sinful mankind]. | 1 John 4:4

Who is the one who is victorious and overcomes the world?
It is the one who believes and recognizes the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. | 1 John 5:5

THE FIRST LETTER OF
JOHN

1 [I AM writing about] what existed from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life [the One who existed even before the beginning of the world, Christ]—

²and the Life [an aspect of His being] was manifested, and we have seen [it as eyewitnesses] and testify and declare to you [the Life], the eternal Life who was [already existing] with the Father and was [actually] made visible to us [His followers]

³what we have seen and heard we also proclaim to you, so that you too may have fellowship [as partners] with us. And indeed our fellowship [which is a distinguishing mark of born-again believers] is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

⁴We are writing these things to you so that our joy [in seeing you included] may be made complete [by having you share in the joy of salvation].

⁵This is the message [of God's promised revelation] which we have heard from Him and now announce to you, that God is Light [He is holy, His message is truthful, He is perfect in

righteousness], and in Him there is no darkness at all [no sin, no wickedness, no imperfection].

Speak God's Word

*If I freely admit that I have
sinned and confess my sins,
God is faithful, just, and true
to His own nature and
promises, and will forgive my
sins and cleanse me
continually from all
unrighteousness and from
everything not in conformity
with His will and purpose.*

| adapted from 1 JOHN 1:9 |

⁶If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness [of sin], we lie and do not practice the truth;

⁷but if we [really] walk in the Light [that is, live each and every day in conformity with the precepts of God], as He Himself is in the Light, we have [true, unbroken] fellowship with one another [He with us, and we with Him], and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin [by erasing the stain of sin, keeping us cleansed from sin in all its forms and manifestations].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Walk in the Light

Do you want to be emotionally stable and consistently content? Then “walk in the Light [that is, live each and every day in conformity with the precepts of God], as He Himself is in the Light” (1 John 1:7). Meditate on God’s Word and make sure your thoughts are in line with it. Stop concentrating on wrong things, and start thinking, No matter what is going on in my circumstances, I am able to remain calm and loving while I trust God to take care of everything.

Come into agreement with God and His Word. Think what He thinks and say what He says. Will you ever falter in your commitment to think and say positive things? Probably, but when you fall, all you have to do is get up and begin again.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

A Clear Conscience

To have a clear conscience, people have two choices: Either they must not sin at all or they need to repent of their sin and receive forgiveness when they do make mistakes. We grow spiritually and find that we sin less and less as we mature; however, the Bible teaches that a little leaven affects the entire lump of dough. This means that even a little sin renders us in need of cleansing.

It is great to be making progress daily, but I am also very thankful for the gift of repentance. First John 1:9 says that we can admit and confess our sins, and that God is faithful to completely cleanse us of all unrighteousness. What good news!

Sin is only a problem if we refuse to recognize it and deal with it. It is spiritually and emotionally freeing to simply agree with God, take responsibility for our wrong actions, receive His gift of forgiveness, and ask Him to help us do better. Jesus has already paid for every sin we have ever committed, the ones we commit today, and the ones we will commit tomorrow. When we admit our sin and ask for forgiveness, the blood of Jesus washes away the guilty stain and we can live before God with a clear conscience.

⁸If we say we have no sin [refusing to admit that we are

sinner], we delude ourselves and the truth is not in us. [His word does not live in our hearts.]

⁹If we [freely] admit that we have sinned *and* confess our sins, He is faithful and just [true to His own nature and promises], and will forgive our sins and cleanse us *continually* from all unrighteousness [our wrongdoing, everything not in conformity with His will and purpose].

¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned [refusing to admit acts of sin], we make Him [out to be] a liar [by contradicting Him] and His word is not in us.

2 MYLITTLE children (believers, dear ones), I am writing you these things so that you will not sin *and* violate God's law. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate [who will intercede for us] with the Father: Jesus Christ the righteous [the upright, the just One, who conforms to the Father's will in every way—purpose, thought, and action].

POWERPOINT

What a glorious scripture 1

John 2:1 is! Of course our desire should be not to sin, but if we do sin, God has already taken care of it. We can look to Jesus, Who is perfect and Who stands in our place before God the Father. He conforms to the Father's will in every way, and He intercedes for us before God. God forgives us for Jesus' sake. When we go to God in Jesus' name, He sees Jesus, not our sin. He will forever honor the sacrifice that Jesus made for us in obedience to His Father.



²And He [that same Jesus] is the propitiation for our sins [the atoning sacrifice that holds back the wrath of God that would otherwise be directed at us because of our sinful nature—our worldliness, our lifestyle]; and not for ours alone, but

also for [the sins of all believers throughout] the whole world.

³And this is how we know [daily, by experience] that we have come to know Him [to understand Him and be more deeply acquainted with Him]: if we *habitually* keep [focused on His precepts and obey] His commandments (teachings).

⁴Whoever says, “I have come to know Him,” but does not *habitually* keep [focused on His precepts and obey] His commandments (teachings), is a liar, and the truth [of the divine word] is not in him.

⁵But whoever *habitually* keeps His word *and* obeys His precepts [and treasures His message in its entirety], in him the love of God has truly been perfected [it is completed and has reached maturity]. By this we know [for certain] that we are in Him:

⁶whoever says he lives in Christ [that is, whoever says he has accepted Him as God and Savior] ought [as a moral obligation] to walk *and* conduct himself just as He walked *and* conducted Himself.

⁷Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the message which you have heard [before from us]. [John 13:34, 35]

⁸On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true *and* realized in Christ and in you, because the darkness [of moral blindness] is clearing away and the true Light [the revelation of God in Christ] is already shining.

⁹The one who says he is in the Light [in consistent fellowship with Christ] and yet *habitually* hates (works against) his brother [in Christ] is in the darkness until now.

¹⁰The one who loves *and* unselfishly seeks the best for his [believing] brother lives in the Light, and in him there is no occasion for stumbling *or* offense [he does not hurt the cause of Christ or lead others to sin].

¹¹But the one who *habitually* hates (works against) his brother [in Christ] is in [spiritual] darkness and is walking in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

¹²I am writing to you, little children (believers, dear ones), because your sins have been forgiven for His name's sake [you have been pardoned and released from spiritual debt through His name because you have confessed His name, believing in Him as Savior].

¹³I am writing to you, fathers [those believers who are spiritually mature], because you know Him who has existed from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men [those believers who are growing in spiritual maturity], because you have been victorious *and* have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children [those who are new believers, those spiritually immature], because you have come to know the Father.

¹⁴I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has existed from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong *and* vigorous, and the word of God remains [always] in you, and you have been victorious over the evil one [by accepting Jesus as Savior].

¹⁵Do not love the world [of sin that opposes God and His precepts], nor the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

¹⁶For all that is in the world—the lust *and* sensual craving of the flesh and the lust *and* longing of the eyes and the boastful pride of life [pretentious confidence in one's resources or in the stability of earthly things]—these do not come from the Father, but are from the world.

¹⁷The world is passing away, and with it its lusts [the shameful pursuits and ungodly longings]; but the one who does the will of God *and* carries out His purposes lives forever.

¹⁸Children, it is the last hour [the end of this age]; and just as you heard that the antichrist is coming [the one who will oppose Christ and attempt to replace Him], even now many antichrists (false teachers) have appeared, which confirms our belief that it is the last hour.

¹⁹They went out from us [seeming at first to be Christians], but they were not *really* of us [because they were not truly born again and spiritually transformed]; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out* [teaching false doctrine], so that it would be clearly shown that none of them are of us.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Trust the Holy Spirit To Speak Truth

If you are going to overcome insecurity, you will have to learn to cope with criticism.

Are you a self-validating person, or do you need outside validation? Outside validation is a continued need to have somebody tell you that you are okay. Self-validation is knowing who you are in Christ and being confident enough to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

When we hear from God, we often confer too much with people because we do not trust that we can be led by God and act accordingly. We feel that we have to first check out with others what we think God is telling us to do to see if it is valid. With the Holy Spirit in us, we do not need to consult or check it out with others all the time (see 1 John 2:27). Trust the Holy Spirit to speak truth for you to act on as you remain in Him.

Proverbs 11:14 says, "In the abundance of [wise and godly] counselors there is victory." Even though we don't need to always rely on what others think we should do, we are instructed to be obedient to the Spirit without refusing counsel from others. There are those who are wiser than we are, who have developed a deeper maturity in the things of God and a deeper understanding of God's Word, and hearing from them at times is very helpful.

I encourage you to have enough confidence in who you are in

Christ that you can listen to others and be open to change without feeling you have to agree with their viewpoint or meet with their approval if you don't feel their suggestion is right for you.

I believe that if we truly want to do the right thing, God will always keep us on the right track.

²⁰But you have an anointing from the Holy One [you have been set apart, specially gifted and prepared by the Holy Spirit], and all of you know [the truth because He teaches us, illuminates our minds, and guards us from error].

²¹I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie [nothing false, no deception] is of the truth.

²²Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed)? This is the antichrist [the enemy and antagonist of Christ], the one who denies *and* consistently refuses to acknowledge the Father and the Son.

²³Whoever denies *and* repudiates the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses *and* acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

²⁴As for you, let that remain in you [keeping in your hearts that message of salvation] which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning remains in you, you too will remain in the Son and in the Father [forever].

²⁵This is the promise which He Himself promised us—eternal life.

²⁶These things I have written to you with reference to

those who are trying to deceive you [seducing you and leading you away from the truth and sound doctrine].

²⁷As for you, the anointing [the special gift, the preparation] which you received from Him remains [permanently] in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you. But just as His anointing teaches you [giving you insight through the presence of the Holy Spirit] about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as His anointing has taught you, you must remain in Him [being rooted in Him, knit to Him].

²⁸Now, little children (believers, dear ones), remain in Him [with unwavering faith], so that when He appears [at His return], we may have [perfect] confidence and not be ashamed and shrink away from Him at His coming.

²⁹If you know that He is *absolutely* righteous, you know [for certain] that everyone who practices righteousness [doing what is right and conforming to God's will] has been born of Him.

3 SEE WHAT an incredible quality of love the Father has shown to us, that we would [be permitted to] be named *and* called *and* counted the children of God! And so we are! For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

²Beloved, we are [even here and] now children of God, and it is not yet made clear what we will be [after His coming]. We know that when He comes *and* is revealed, we will [as His children] be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is [in all His glory].

³And everyone who has this hope [confidently placed] in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure (holy, undefiled, guiltless).

⁴Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness [ignoring God's law by action or neglect or by tolerating wrongdoing—being unrestrained by His commands and His will].

⁵You know that He appeared [in visible form as a man] in order to take away sins; and in Him there is [absolutely] no sin [for He has neither the sin nature nor has He committed sin or acts worthy of blame].

⁶No one who abides in Him [who remains united in fellowship with Him—deliberately, knowingly, and habitually] practices sin. No one who *habitually* sins has seen Him or known Him.

⁷Little children (believers, dear ones), do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who practices righteousness [the one who strives to live a consistently honorable life—in private as well as in public—and to conform to God's precepts] is righteous, just as He is righteous.

⁸The one who practices sin [separating himself from God, and offending Him by acts of disobedience, indifference, or rebellion] is of the devil [and takes his inner character and moral values from him, not God]; for the devil has sinned *and* violated God's law from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

⁹No one who is born of God [deliberately, knowingly, and habitually] practices sin, because God's seed [His principle of life, the essence of His righteous character] remains

[permanently] in him [who is born again—who is reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, and set apart for His purpose]; and he [who is born again] cannot *habitually* [live a life characterized by] sin, because he is born of God *and* longs to please Him.

¹⁰By this the children of God and the children of the devil are clearly identified: anyone who does not practice righteousness [who does not seek God's will in thought, action, and purpose] is not of God, nor is the one who does not [unselfishly] love his [believing] brother.

¹¹For this is the message which you [believers] have heard from the beginning [of your relationship with Christ], that we should [unselfishly] love *and* seek the best for one another;

¹²and not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother [Abel]. And why did he murder him? Because Cain's deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

¹³Do not be surprised, believers, if the world hates you.

¹⁴We know that we have passed out of death into Life, because we love the brothers and sisters. He who does not love remains in [spiritual] death.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Jesus Came To Defeat the Devil

As believers in Jesus Christ, we have authority over the enemy (see Luke 10:19), and all we have to do is exercise it. Satan has power, but he has no authority to use that power against God's people unless we allow him to do so. He may come against us, but he will not be ultimately successful in executing his evil plans if we resist him while also maintaining an intimate relationship with God. Actually, Jesus already defeated him when He died on the cross. According to 1 John 3:8, the purpose for which Christ came to earth was to destroy the works of the devil.

Jesus was successful, and Satan was definitely defeated, so how can he still cause us trouble? Jesus destroyed Satan's right to do his evil work, but it is our responsibility to use the authority that God gave us and keep the devil in his place.

We have spiritual weapons to defeat Satan, but they can only be effective if we use them. The name of Jesus and the authority it holds has been given to us as a weapon, along with the Word of God, which is referred to as the sword of the Spirit

(see Eph. 6:17). We can use both of these in prayer and confession. We also have the cross of Jesus Christ and His shed blood as powerful weapons, and we should remember them when the enemy attacks us. Even the mention of the cross and the blood drives him backward!

You are not a helpless victim of the enemy; you are a powerful and authoritative child of God who does not travel through life alone, but with Jesus Who is Himself a mighty warrior and the Captain of God's army of angels.

God's Word teaches us to give no place to the devil (see Eph. 4:27). We can do this in a variety of ways, and simple heartfelt obedience to God is one of the most important. We do not have to live in fear of Satan, because he is a defeated foe and his works have been destroyed. All we need to do is remember these truths and be more aggressive against him than he is against us.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Thank You, Jesus, for coming to earth to destroy the works of the devil. Help me to use the authority You have given me to resist and defeat him when he comes against me, so I can live the victory You have won for me. Amen.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Delights in Answering Prayer

We all want to have confidence that when we pray, our prayers will be answered, but we must also trust that God will do so in His own way and timing. There are times when we may ask for something that wouldn't be good for us, or perhaps we are asking selfishly. God lovingly withholds the answers to those types of prayers, and we can learn to trust that when He doesn't do as we ask, He will do something better as we wait on Him.

Obedience is important in seeing our prayers answered. It is vital for us to maintain a heart of confidence rather than condemnation (see 1 John 3:21–22). Believing we have obeyed God to the best of our ability gives us confidence to boldly go to Him and to receive what we ask from Him. God doesn't want us to do as we please, often being disobedient to Him and then expecting Him to give us everything we want and need. Even if we did live that way, we would have no true confidence, because our hearts would condemn us.

Keep your heart right before God, pray boldly, and receive by faith. If God delays, trust His ways and timing.

¹⁵Everyone who hates (works against) his brother [in Christ] is [at heart] a murderer [by God's standards]; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. [Matt

5:21–23]

¹⁶By this we know [and have come to understand the depth and essence of His precious] love: that He [willingly] laid down His life for us [because He loved us]. And we ought to lay down our lives for the believers.

¹⁷But whoever has the world's goods (adequate resources), and sees his brother in need, but has no compassion for him, how does the love of God live in him?

¹⁸Little children (believers, dear ones), let us not love [merely in theory] with word or with tongue [giving lip service to compassion], but in action and in truth [in practice and in sincerity, because practical acts of love are more than words].

¹⁹By this we will know [without any doubt] that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart *and* quiet our conscience before Him

²⁰whenever our heart convicts us [in guilt]; for God is greater than our heart and He knows all things [nothing is hidden from Him because we are in His hands].

²¹Beloved, if our heart does not convict us [of guilt], we have confidence [complete assurance and boldness] before God;

²²and we receive from Him whatever we ask because we [carefully and consistently] keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight [habitually seeking to follow His plan for us].

²³This is His commandment, that we believe [with personal faith and confident trust] in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and [that we unselfishly] love *and* seek the best for one another, just as He commanded us.

²⁴The one who *habitually* keeps His commandments [obeying His word and following His precepts, abides and] remains in Him, and He in him. By this we know *and* have the proof that He [really] abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us [as a gift].

4 BELOVED, DO not believe every spirit [speaking through a self-proclaimed prophet]; instead test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets *and* teachers have gone out into the world.

POWERPOINT

People have so many fears that we could spend all day naming them and probably not run out of things people are afraid of.

Even though God's Word repeatedly instructs us not to fear, many believers struggle with the same fears that everyone else does. That is why verses such as 1 John 4:4 were given to us—to assure us that because of the presence and power of Almighty God within us, we have nothing to fear. God is in us, and He is greater than the enemy who is in the world!



²By this you know *and* recognize the Spirit of God: every spirit that acknowledges *and* confesses [the fact] that Jesus Christ has [actually] come in the flesh [as a man] is from God [God is its source];

³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus [acknowledging that He has come in the flesh, but would deny any of the Son's true nature] is not of God; this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming, and is now already in the world.

⁴Little children (believers, dear ones), you are of God *and* you belong to Him and have [already] overcome them [the agents of the antichrist]; because He who is in you is greater than he (Satan) who is in the world [of sinful mankind].

⁵They [who teach twisted doctrine] are of the world *and* belong to it; therefore they speak from the [viewpoint of the] world [with its immoral freedom and baseless theories—demanding compliance with their opinions and ridiculing the values of the upright], and the [gullible one of the] world listens closely *and* pays attention to them.

⁶We [who teach God's word] are from God [energized by the Holy Spirit], and whoever knows God [through personal experience] listens to us [and has a deeper understanding of Him]. Whoever is not of God does not listen to us. By this we know [without any doubt] the spirit of truth [motivated by God] and the spirit of error [motivated by Satan].

⁷Beloved, let us [unselfishly] love *and* seek the best for one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves [others] is born of God and knows God [through personal experience].

⁸The one who does not love has not become acquainted with God [does not and never did know Him], for God is love. [He is the originator of love, and it is an enduring attribute of His nature.]

⁹By this the love of God was displayed in us, in that God has sent His [One and] only begotten Son [the One who is truly unique, the only One of His kind] into the world so that we might live through Him.

¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation [that is, the atoning sacrifice, and the satisfying offering] for our sins [fulfilling God's requirement for justice against sin and placating His wrath].

¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us [in this incredible way], we also ought to love one another.

¹²No one has seen God at any time. But if we love one another [with unselfish concern], God abides in us, and His love [the love that is His essence abides in us and] is completed *and* perfected in us.

¹³By this we know [with confident assurance] that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given to us His [Holy] Spirit.

¹⁴We [who were with Him in person] have seen and testify [as eyewitnesses] that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

**A Prayer To
Renew Your
Mind**



*Thank You, Lord, for helping
me come to know by personal
experience and to believe
with deep, consistent faith the
love You have for me. You are
love, and the one who abides
in love abides in You, and You
abide continually in him.*

• adapted from 1 John 4:16

POWERPOINT

The source of fear is Satan, not God. God is love, and 1 John 4:18 says that perfect love “drives out fear.” Satan sends fear to try to torment us into being so doubtful and miserable that we will be prevented from knowing God’s love, doing what God wants us to do, and receiving all that God has for us. We can live without fear by receiving God’s love and building our faith on what God has said in His Word. Confessing what the Lord says to us and about us in His Word gives us the power to overcome the fears that torment and prevent us from moving forward in faith.



¹⁵Whoever confesses *and* acknowledges that Jesus is the

Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

¹⁶We have come to know [by personal observation and experience], and have believed [with deep, consistent faith] the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides *continually* in him.

Speak God's Word

*The true love of God is this:
that I habitually keep His
commandments and remain
focused on His precepts. And
His commandments and His
precepts are not difficult to
obey.*

| adapted from 1 JOHN 5:3 |

¹⁷In this [union and fellowship with Him], love is completed *and* perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment [with assurance and boldness to face Him]; because as He is, so are we in this world.

¹⁸There is no fear in love [dread does not exist]. But perfect (complete, full-grown) love drives out fear, because fear involves [the expectation of divine] punishment, so the one who is afraid [of God's judgment] is not perfected in love [has not grown into a sufficient understanding of God's love].

¹⁹We love, because He first loved us.

²⁰If anyone says, "I love God," and hates (works against) his [Christian] brother he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

No Fear in Love

I wasted many years living with a vague fear that God was angry with me, and it wasn't until I received His love by faith that I was released from that burden. I believed that God loved me in some sort of general, impersonal way, but I did not know the amazing, all-consuming, perfect and complete love that God has for each of His children. Thankfully, over the years I have come to know that love, and it has truly delivered me.

We can know that God is not angry with us. This is not because we are perfect; it's simply because He is love and He is in love with us. We no longer need to be afraid to face Him just as we are. You and I have no reason to fear His anger or displeasure any longer. God loves us perfectly and unconditionally right now. Believe it, receive it, and let it deliver you from fear.

²¹And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should also [unselfishly] love his brother *and* seek the best for him.

5 EVERYONE WHO believes [with a deep, abiding trust in the fact] that Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed) is

born of God [that is, reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, and set apart for His purpose], and everyone who loves the Father also loves the *child* born of Him.

²By this we know [without any doubt] that we love the children of God: [expressing that love] when we love God and obey His commandments.

³For the [true] love of God is this: that we *habitually* keep His commandments *and* remain focused on His precepts. And His commandments *and* His precepts are not difficult [to obey].

⁴For ^{*}everyone born of God is victorious *and* overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has conquered *and* overcome the world—our [continuing, persistent] faith [in Jesus the Son of God].

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Thank You, God, that everyone born of You is victorious and overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has conquered and

*overcome the world—our
continuing, persistent faith in
Jesus, Your Son.*

• *adapted from 1 John 5:4*

⁵Who is the one who is victorious *and* overcomes the world? It is the one who believes *and* recognizes the fact that Jesus is the Son of God.

⁶This is He who came through water and blood [His baptism and death], Jesus Christ—not by the water only, but by the water and the blood. It is the [Holy] Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. [He is the essence and origin of truth itself.]

⁷For there are three witnesses:

⁸the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three are in agreement [their testimony is perfectly consistent].

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Is Working in You

According to 1 John 5:4, “Everyone born of God is victorious and overcomes the world.” Yet Paul says in Romans 7:15, “I do not practice what I want to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.” Paul, like the rest of us, was growing into the fullness of what belonged to him in Christ.

We can get confused when we read something in the Word that we aren’t experiencing in our lives, such as “No one who is born of God... practices sin, because God’s seed [His principle of life, the essence of His righteous character] remains [permanently] in him” (1 John 3:9). It is important to understand that holding a biblical truth doesn’t mean we automatically operate in it. When God blesses us with His nature, or the seed of all that He is, we have to let it develop before we see it fully take effect in our lives. Be patient; God is working in you.

⁹If we accept [as we do] the testimony of men [that is, if we are willing to take the sworn statements of fallible humans as evidence], the testimony of God is greater [far more authoritative]; for this is the testimony of God, that He has testified regarding His Son.

¹⁰The one who believes in the Son of God [who adheres to, trusts in, and relies confidently on Him as Savior] has the

testimony within himself [because he can speak authoritatively about Christ from his own personal experience]. The one who does not believe God [in this way] has made Him [out to be] a liar, because he has not believed in the evidence that God has given regarding His Son.

¹¹And the testimony is this: God has given us eternal life [we already possess it], and this life is in His Son [resulting in our spiritual completeness, and eternal companionship with Him].

¹²He who has the Son [by accepting Him as Lord and Savior] has the life [that is eternal]; he who does not have the Son of God [by personal faith] does not have the life.

¹³These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God [which represents all that Jesus Christ is and does], so that you will know [with settled and absolute knowledge] that you [already] have eternal life.

¹⁴This is the [remarkable degree of] confidence which we [as believers are entitled to] have before Him: that if we ask anything according to His will, [that is, consistent with His plan and purpose] He hears us.

¹⁵And if we know [for a fact, as indeed we do] that He hears *and* listens to us in whatever we ask, we [also] know [with settled and absolute knowledge] that we have [granted to us] the requests which we have asked from Him.

¹⁶If anyone sees his brother committing a sin that does not *lead* to death, he will pray *and* ask [on the believer's behalf] and *God* will for him give life to those whose sin is not *leading* to death. There is a sin *that leads* to death; I do not say that one should pray for this [kind of sin].

¹⁷All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not *lead* to death [one can repent of it and be forgiven].

¹⁸We know [with confidence] that anyone born of God does not *habitually* sin; but He (Jesus) who was born of God [carefully] keeps *and* protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.

¹⁹We know [for a fact] that we are of God, and the whole world [around us] lies in the power of the evil one [opposing God and His precepts].

²⁰And we [have seen and] know [by personal experience] that the Son of God has [actually] come [to this world], and has given us understanding *and* insight so that we may [progressively and personally] know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true—in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

²¹Little children (believers, dear ones), guard yourselves from idols—[false teachings, moral compromises, and anything that would take God's place in your heart].

2 John

Author: | John
Date: | Probably
between AD 85–95

For centuries, the recipient of 2 John has been a mystery. The letter is addressed to “the elect (chosen) lady and her children” (2 John 1), and no one has ever known exactly who they were. Perhaps she was an individual with literal children or maybe the term referred to a church or a group of churches. Either way, the elect lady was someone important to John. He wrote this letter to warn her against false teachers spreading untrue messages among groups of early believers. They denied Jesus’ coming to earth as a man and rejected the idea of His full humanity and full divinity.

In 2 John, John helps the elect lady know how to deal with false teachers, which is not to receive them at all, according to verse 10. He also encouraged the elect lady to know the truth, because for her and for us today, the truth is what lives in our hearts forever (see 2 John 2).

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM 2 JOHN:

We have peace because God's truth lives in our hearts now and forever (see 2 John 2–3).

We are truly fulfilled in life when we are considerate of others and seek the best for them (see 2 John 5).

Continue to do what Christ taught, and you will avoid being misled by those who distort God's Word (see 2 John 9–10).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM 2 JOHN:

Grace, mercy, and peace (inner calm, a sense of spiritual well-being) will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, in truth and love. | 2 John 3

And this is love: that we walk in accordance with His commandments and are guided continually by His precepts. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should [always] walk in love. | 2 John 6

THE SECOND LETTER OF
JOHN

¹THE ELDER [of the church addresses this letter] to the elect (chosen) lady and her children, whom I love in truth—and not only I, but also all who know *and* understand the truth—

²because of the truth which lives in our hearts and will be with us forever:

³Grace, mercy, and peace (inner calm, a sense of spiritual well-being) will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, in truth and love.

⁴I was greatly delighted to find *some* of your children walking in truth, just as we have been commanded by the Father.

Speak God's Word

*I will walk in truth, just as I
have been commanded by the
Father.*

| *adapted from* 2 JOHN 4 |

⁵Now I ask you, lady, not as if *I were* writing to you a new commandment, but [simply reminding you of] the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love *and* unselfishly seek the best for one another.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Don't Lose What You Have Gained

Second John 8 urges us to be careful that we don't lose the truth and liberties we have labored for over the course of our journey with the Lord. Satan hates for us to make any kind of progress, and he tempts us to not only backslide (slide backward to where we came from) in our faith in Him, but also in other areas of life where we have gained victory. We not only work with the Holy Spirit to gain victory; we must also work with Him to maintain victory.

Let's say a person had a bad temper. As he learned the Word of God and received strength from Him, he was set free from quickly becoming angry. However, Satan may well come around at another time and try to draw that person back into the same bad habits he once had. We see this principle in Luke 4:13, when after Satan finished the cycle of temptation that he brought against Jesus after He fasted forty days in the wilderness, he went away to wait for a more opportune time to tempt Him again.

The Bible also teaches us to stand firm in the liberties with which Christ has set us free and not be ensnared again in a yoke of bondage we have already put off (see Gal. 5:1). We see from Luke 4:13, Galatians 5:1, and 2 John 8 that we should be diligent that we don't lose or throw away all we have labored for.

The minute you recognize yourself starting to slip backward into old habits and bondages, submit yourself to God, resist the devil, and he will flee (see James 4:7).

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Lord, help me to always
remember the commandment I
have had from the beginning,
to love and unselfishly seek
the best for others.*

• adapted from 2 John 5

⁶And this is love: that we walk in accordance with His commandments *and* are guided continually by His precepts. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should [always] walk in love.

⁷For many deceivers [heretics, posing as Christians] have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge *and* confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh (bodily form).

This [person, the kind who does this] is the deceiver and the antichrist [that is, the antagonist of Christ].

⁸Watch yourselves, so that you do not lose what we have accomplished together, but that you may receive a full *and* perfect reward [when He grants rewards to faithful believers].

⁹Anyone who runs on ahead and does not remain in the doctrine of Christ [that is, one who is not content with what He taught], does not have God; but the one who *continues* to remain in the teaching [of Christ does have God], he has both the Father and the Son.

¹⁰If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching [but diminishes or adds to the doctrine of Christ], do not receive *or* welcome him into your house, and do not give him a greeting *or* any encouragement;

¹¹for the one who gives him a greeting [who encourages him or wishes him success, unwittingly] participates in his evil deeds.

¹²I have many things to write to you, but I prefer not to do so with paper (papyrus) and black (ink); but I hope to come to you and speak with you face to face, so that your joy may be complete. [Num 12:8]

¹³The children of your elect (chosen) sister greet you.

**A Prayer To
Renew Your
Mind**



*Father, I pray that You will
help me to always show love
by walking in accordance
with Your commandments. I
pray that You will guide me
continually by Your precepts.*

• adapted from 2 John 6

3 John

Author: | John
Date: | Probably
between AD 85–95

When we read 2 John and 3 John together, we see that both letters are intended to help early church leaders know how to handle traveling teachers or ministers. In 2 John, John instructs the elect lady on how to deal with false teachers, and in 3 John, he writes to a church leader named Gaius to explain how the early believers were to treat teachers who were sincere and who taught the truth. He encouraged kindness, generosity, and support for those who communicated God's message with integrity.

All kinds of spiritual teachings are available in the world today, but not all agree with God's Word. Let me encourage you to study and meditate on His truth so you can reject false or ungodly influences, receive godly teaching, and help those who teach truth as God leads you to do so. You may not be able to personally travel the world and teach God's Word, but when you support those who do, you participate

in their ministry (see 2 John 8).

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM 3 JOHN:

God desires to bless us even more than we desire to be blessed (see 3 John 2).

Showing others how to live in God's truth will help you experience great joy (see 3 John 4).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM 3 JOHN:

So we ought to support such people [welcoming them as guests and providing for them], so that we may be fellow workers for the truth [that is, for the gospel message of salvation]. | 3 John 8

Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but [imitate] what is good. The one who practices good [exhibiting godly character, moral courage and personal integrity] is of God. | 3 John 11

THE THIRD LETTER OF
JOHN

¹THE ELDER [of the church addresses this letter] to the beloved *and* esteemed Gaius, whom I love in truth.

²Beloved, I pray that in every way you may succeed *and* prosper and be in good health [physically], just as [I know] your soul prospers [spiritually].

³For I was greatly pleased when [some of the] brothers came [from time to time] and testified to your [faithfulness to the] truth [of the gospel message], *that is*, how you are walking in truth.

⁴I have no greater joy than this, to hear that my [spiritual] children are living [their lives] in the truth.

⁵Beloved, you are acting faithfully in what you are providing for the brothers, and especially *when they are* strangers;

⁶and they have testified before the church of your love *and* friendship. You will do well to [assist them and] send them on their way in a manner worthy of God.

A Prayer To

Renew Your Mind



I pray that in every way I may succeed and prosper and be in good health physically, just as my soul prospers spiritually.

• adapted from 3 John 2

⁷For these [traveling missionaries] went out for the sake of the Name [of Christ], accepting nothing [in the way of assistance] from the Gentiles.

⁸So we ought to support such people [welcoming them as guests and providing for them], so that we may be fellow workers for the truth [that is, for the gospel message of salvation].

⁹I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to put himself first, does not accept what we say *and* refuses to recognize my authority.

¹⁰For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, unjustly accusing us with wicked words *and* unjustified charges. And not satisfied with this, he refuses to receive the [missionary] brothers himself, and also forbids those who want

to [welcome them] and puts *them* out of the church.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Wants To Bless You

In plain, everyday language, 3 John 2 could read, “My dearly beloved children, I want you to have every earthly blessing you can possibly imagine, but only to the degree that you have spiritual maturity and Christlike character.” When you look at the verse this way, you get the message: “My blessings will grow as I grow spiritually.”

You don't need to talk God into blessing you. He wants to bless you. In fact, He wants to bless you more than you can imagine being blessed (see Eph. 3:20). And even more than He wants you to have something, He wants you to be something. He wants you to be Christlike. Once you are like Christ and spiritually mature, you will be able to handle having the earthly blessings He desires for you, and you will use them for His glory.

Speak God's Word

*I will not imitate what is evil;
I will imitate what is good. I
will do my best to exhibit
godly character, moral
courage and personal
integrity because I know God
and have personal
experience with Him.*

| adapted from 3 JOHN 11 |

¹¹Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but [imitate] what is good. The one who practices good [exhibiting godly character, moral courage and personal integrity] is of God; the one who practices [or permits or tolerates] evil has not seen God [he has no personal experience with Him and does not know Him at all]. [1 John 3:6]

¹²Demetrius has received a *good* testimony *and* commendation from everyone—and from the truth [the standard of God's word] itself; and we add our testimony *and* speak well of him, and you know that our testimony is true.

¹³I had many things [to say when I began] to write to you, but I prefer not to put it down with pen (reed) and black (ink);

¹⁴but I hope to see you soon, and we will speak face to

face. [Num 12:8]

15Peace be to you. The friends [here] greet you. Greet the friends [personally] by name.

Jude

Author: | Jude
Date: | AD 65–80

One benefit of Jude’s brief encouraging and informative letter is that it helps us recognize the fruit of false teaching that would lead us away from God’s truth (see Jude 4, 8, 10–16) while also urging us to stand firm in our faith. His letter establishes us both in greater discernment and in greater conviction of God’s love and truth.

No doubt Jude’s closing words about the power of God strengthened the readers of his original letter, just as they strengthen you and me today: “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling *or* falling into sin, and to present you unblemished [blameless and faultless] in the presence of His glory with triumphant joy *and* unspeakable delight, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and power, before all time and now and forever. Amen” (Jude 24–25).

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM JUDE:

When confronted with evil, we have the authority through Jesus' name to say, "Satan, the Lord rebuke you!" (see Jude 9).

You can build yourself up by praying in the Holy Spirit and keeping yourself in the love of God (see Jude 20–21).

God is able to keep us from stumbling into sin, and He will present us faultless in His glorious presence with triumphant joy—all because of the cross (see Jude 24).

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM JUDE:

May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you [filling your heart with the spiritual well-being and serenity experienced by those who walk closely with God]. | Jude 2

Fight strenuously for [the defense of] the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints [the faith that is the sum of Christian belief that was given verbally to believers]. | Jude 3

Beloved, remember the [prophetic] words spoken by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. | Jude 17

THE LETTER OF JUDE

1 JUDE, A bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, [writes this letter],

To those who are the called (God's chosen ones, the elect), dearly loved by God the Father, and kept [secure and set apart] for Jesus Christ:

2 May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you [filling your heart with the spiritual well-being and serenity experienced by those who walk closely with God].

3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I was compelled to write to you [urgently] appealing that you fight strenuously for [the defense of] the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints [the faith that is the sum of Christian belief that was given verbally to believers].

4 For certain people have crept in unnoticed [just as if they were sneaking in by a side door]. They are ungodly persons whose condemnation was predicted long ago, for they distort the grace of our God into decadence *and* immoral freedom [viewing it as an opportunity to do whatever they want], and deny *and* disown our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

5 Now I want to remind you, although you are fully informed

once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe [who refused to trust and obey and rely on Him]. [Num 14:27–37]

⁶And angels who did not keep their own designated place of power, but abandoned their proper dwelling place, [these] He has kept in eternal chains under [the thick gloom of utter] darkness for the judgment of the great day,

Speak God's Word

*I will fight strenuously for the
defense of the faith that was
once and for all handed
down to the saints, the sum of
the Christian faith.*

| adapted from JUDE 3 |

⁷just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the adjacent cities, since they in the same way as these *angels* indulged in gross immoral freedom *and* unnatural vice and sensual perversity. They are exhibited [in plain sight] as an example in undergoing the punishment of everlasting fire. [Gen 19:1–29]

⁸Nevertheless in the same way, these dreamers [who are dreaming that God will not punish them] also defile the body, and reject [legitimate] authority, and revile *and* mock angelic majesties.

⁹But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil (Satan), and arguing about the body of Moses, did not dare bring an abusive condemnation against him, but [simply] said, “The Lord rebuke you!” [Deut 34:5, 6; Zech 3:2]

¹⁰But these men sneer at anything which they do not understand; and whatever they do know by [mere] instinct, like unreasoning *and* irrational beasts—by these things they are

destroyed.

¹¹Woe to them! For they have gone the [defiant] way of Cain, and for profit they have run headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of [mutinous] Korah. [Gen 4:3–8; Num 16:22–24; 2 Pet 2:15]

¹²These men are hidden reefs [elements of great danger to others] in your love feasts when they feast together with you without fear, looking after [only] themselves; [they are like] clouds without water, swept along by the winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted *and* lifeless;

¹³wild waves of the sea, flinging up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of deep darkness has been reserved forever.

¹⁴It was about these people that Enoch, in the seventh *generation* from Adam, prophesied, when he said, “Look, the Lord came with myriads of His holy ones

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

“Satan, the Lord Rebuke You”

One of Satan’s favorite questions for believers when we have a problem is, “What are you going to do?” If you listen, the “what ifs” increase and pressure intensifies. The more this type of thinking increases, the more negative and intense it becomes. Soon, you think of every possible obstacle on your path and begin to feel as though nothing in your life is right.

The devil wages this constant war on the battlefield of your mind. The more questions and uncertainties he raises, the greater his chances for victory. The enemy knows that if he can feed your mind with wrong thoughts often enough and for long enough, he can make you think only about the wrong things.

But that’s not the end. Once the devil starts to succeed in poisoning your mind, he moves on, and before long you’re repeating his words—words that not only tear you down, but also hurt and damage others. Then Satan has a double victory—he’s trapped you, and you’ve possibly influenced others with negativity.

Jesus instructs us to stop being worried or anxious about our lives (see Matt. 6:25). When the devil whispers worrisome thoughts in your ear, Jesus says not to worry. Then He reminds you to focus on the fact that our Father is with us and will take care of us.

Jesus also said to the people of His day, “The mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man, from his [inner] good treasure, brings out good things; and the evil man, from his [inner] evil treasure, brings out evil things” (Matt. 12:34–35).

Those are powerful words, reminding you that the devil starts with just the smallest whisper of doubt in your ear. If you listen, you soon become convinced of his lies, and that leads you to speak the words that have taken root in your heart. Once you speak, you move into action. In this way, you can become an instrument to churn up doubts and fears in others. There is only one way for you to win: Refuse to listen to Satan. As soon as he whispers to you, you need to say what the archangel Michael said, “Satan, the Lord rebuke you! Stay out of my mind” (see Jude 9).

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord Jesus, thank You for reminding me of the importance of my thoughts and my words. Fill my heart with such an abundance of peace and joy that the enemy cannot infiltrate my mind. May my words reflect Your presence in my life. Amen.

¹⁵to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly deeds they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh *and* cruel things ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”

¹⁶These *people* are [habitual] murmurers, griping *and* complaining, following after their own desires [controlled by passion]; they speak arrogantly, [pretending admiration and] flattering people to *gain an* advantage.

¹⁷But as for you, beloved, remember the [prophetic] words spoken by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹⁸They used to say to you, “In the last days there will be scoffers, following after their own ungodly passions.” [2 Pet 3:3, 4]

¹⁹These are the ones who are [agitators] causing divisions—worldly-minded [secular, unspiritual, carnal, merely sensual—unsaved], devoid of the Spirit.

²⁰But you, beloved, build yourselves up on [the foundation of] your most holy faith [continually progress, rise like an edifice higher and higher], pray in the Holy Spirit,

²¹and keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously *and* looking forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ [which will bring you] to eternal life.

²²And have mercy on some, who are doubting;

²³save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy but with fear, loathing even the clothing spotted *and* polluted by their shameless immoral freedom. [Amos 4:11; Zech 3:2–4]

²⁴Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling *or* falling into sin, and to present you unblemished [blameless and faultless] in the presence of His glory with triumphant joy *and* unspeakable delight,

²⁵to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and power, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Pray in the Holy Spirit

Just as Ephesians 6:18 tells us that “with all prayer and petition pray [with specific requests] at all times... in the Spirit,” Jude 20 instructs us to “pray in the Holy Spirit.” The apostle Paul tells us in Romans 8:26 that when we don’t know how to pray, the Holy Spirit Himself intercedes on our behalf.

God’s Holy Spirit within us is the One Who prompts us and leads us to pray. Rather than delay or question the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it’s important for us to learn to yield to His leading as soon as we sense it.

Our motto should be that of the old spiritual song: “Every time I feel the Spirit moving in my heart, I will pray.” If we know we can pray anytime and anywhere, we won’t feel we have to wait until just the right moment or place to pray. When we are praying in the Holy Spirit, we can know that our prayers are reaching the throne of God and will be answered.

Invite the Holy Spirit to get involved in everything you do. He is your Helper, and He is waiting for you to ask for His help.

Revelation

Author: | John
Date: | AD 70–95

The book of Revelation has many themes and ideas, and for centuries it has been interpreted in various ways from different perspectives. Because this Bible focuses on winning the battle of the mind, I want to emphasize that Revelation strongly proves that we do have an enemy, Satan, who is out to destroy us, and that there is an invisible war raging in the spiritual atmosphere. Satan is a real enemy with real abilities to influence our thoughts and therefore our lives, but he is not more powerful than God. Revelation also reminds us how strong and mighty Jesus is, and how much He loves us.

Jesus defeated Satan at the cross on Calvary and empowers us by His Spirit to defeat him every day. Satan still comes against us trying to deceive us with his lies, but the good news is that Revelation teaches us that in the end, the battle will be completely over, and Jesus will reign forever.

WINNING THOUGHTS FROM REVELATION:

If you want the devil to flee, use God's Word to remind him of the cross and his defeat at Calvary (see Revelation 12:11).

Praise and worship release God's power in the spiritual realm (see Revelation 15:4).

Although there are things that we don't fully understand now, we can be comforted by the fact that Revelation teaches us that Jesus wins in the end, and He makes all things new (see Revelation 20:10; 21:4–6)!

VERSES FOR VICTORY FROM REVELATION:

And they overcame and conquered him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, for they did not love their life and renounce their faith even when faced with death. | Revelation 12:11

They will wage war against the Lamb (Christ), and the Lamb will triumph and conquer them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings. | Revelation 17:14

Come, Lord Jesus. | Revelation 22:20

THE
REVELATION
TO JOHN

1 *THIS IS* the revelation of Jesus Christ [His unveiling of the divine mysteries], which God [the Father] gave to Him to show to His bond-servants (believers) the things which must soon take place [in their entirety]; and He sent and communicated it by His angel (divine messenger) to His bond-servant John,

²who testified *and* gave supporting evidence to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, *even* to everything that he saw [in his visions].

³Blessed (happy, prosperous, to be admired) is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and who keep the things which are written in it [heeding them and taking them to heart]; for the time [of fulfillment] is near.

⁴John, to the seven churches that are in [the province of] Asia: Grace [be granted] to you and peace [inner calm and spiritual well-being], from Him Who is [existing forever] and Who was [continually existing in the past] and Who is to come, and from the seven Spirits that are before His throne, [Is 11:2]

⁵and from Jesus Christ, the ^{*}faithful *and* trustworthy Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who [always] loves us and who [has once

for all] ^{*}—freed us [or washed us] from our sins by His own blood (His sacrificial death)—[Ps 89:27]

⁶and formed us into a kingdom [as His subjects], priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory *and* the power *and* the majesty and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. [Ex 19:6; Is 61:6]

⁷BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes (nations) of the earth will mourn over Him [realizing their sin and guilt, and anticipating the coming wrath]. ^{*}So it is to be. Amen. [Dan 7:13; Zech 12:10]

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Thank You, Jesus, for always
loving me and for freeing me
from my sins by Your own
blood.*

• adapted from Revelation 1:5

⁸“I am the Alpha and the Omega [the Beginning and the End],” says the Lord God, “Who is [existing forever] and Who was [continually existing in the past] and Who is to come, the Almighty [the Omnipotent, the Ruler of all].” [Is 9:6]

⁹I, John, your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patient endurance *which are* in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos, [exiled there] because of [my preaching of] the word of God [regarding eternal salvation] and the testimony of Jesus *Christ*.

¹⁰I was in the ^{*}Spirit [in special communication with the Holy Spirit and empowered to receive and record the revelation from Jesus Christ] on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the *sound* of a trumpet,

¹¹saying, “Write on a scroll what you see [in this revelation], and send it to the seven churches—to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.”

¹²Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And after turning I saw seven golden lampstands;

¹³and in the midst of the lampstands *I saw* someone like the Son of Man, dressed in a robe reaching to His feet, and with a golden sash wrapped around His chest. [Dan 7:13; 10:5]

¹⁴His head and His hair were white like white wool, [glistening white] like snow; and His [all-seeing] eyes were [flashing] like a flame of fire [piercing into my being]. [Dan 7:9]

¹⁵His feet were like burnished [white-hot] bronze, refined in a furnace, and His voice was [powerful] like the sound of many waters. [Dan 10:6]

¹⁶In His right hand He held seven stars, and from His

mouth came a sharp two-edged sword [of judgment]; and His face [reflecting His majesty and the Shekinah glory] was like the sun shining in [all] its power [at midday]. [Ex 34:29]

¹⁷When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead. And He placed His right hand on me and said, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last [absolute Deity, the Son of God], [Is 44:6]

¹⁸and the Ever-living One [living in and beyond all time and space]. I died, but see, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of [absolute control and victory over] death and of Hades (the realm of the dead).

¹⁹“So write the things which you have seen [in the vision], and the things which are [now happening], and the things which will take place after these things.

²⁰“As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels (divine messengers) of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

2 “TO THE angel (divine messenger) of the church in Ephesus write:

“These are the words of the One who holds [firmly] the seven stars [which are the angels or messengers of the seven churches] in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands (the seven churches):

²“I know your deeds and your toil, and your patient endurance, and that you cannot tolerate those who are evil, and have tested *and* critically appraised those who call

themselves apostles (special messengers, personally chosen representatives, of Christ), and [in fact] are not, and have found them to be liars *and* impostors;

³and [I know that] you [who believe] are enduring patiently and are bearing up for My name's sake, and that you have not grown weary [of being faithful to the truth].

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*I pray, Lord, that I will endure
patiently and bear up for
Your name's sake, and that I
will not grow weary of being
faithful to the truth.*

• adapted from Revelation 2:3

⁴But I have *this* [charge] against you, that you have left your first love [you have lost the depth of love that you first had for Me].

⁵So remember *the heights* from which you have fallen, and repent [change your inner self—your old way of thinking, your

sinful behavior—seek God’s will] and do the works you did at first [when you first knew Me]; otherwise, I will visit you and remove your lampstand (the church, its impact) from its place—unless you repent.

⁶“Yet you have this [to your credit], that you hate the works *and* corrupt teachings of the Nicolaitans [that mislead and delude the people], which I also hate.

⁷“He who has an ear, let him hear *and* heed what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes [the world through believing that Jesus is the Son of God], I will grant [the privilege] to eat [the fruit] from the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.’ [Gen 2:9; 3:24; 1 John 5:5]

⁸“And to the angel (divine messenger) of the church in Smyrna write:

“These are the words of the First and the Last [absolute Deity, the Son of God] who died and came to life [again]: [Is 44:6]

⁹“I know your suffering and your poverty (but you are rich), and how you are blasphemed *and* slandered by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan [they are Jews only by blood, and do not believe and truly honor the God whom they claim to worship].

¹⁰“Fear nothing that you are about to suffer. Be aware that the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested [in your faith], and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful to the point of death [if you must die for your faith], and I will give you the crown [consisting] of life. [Rev 3:10, 11]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

God Tests Our Thinking

When you consider buying a new car, you are wise to test-drive it before you commit to purchase it. When you do, you might ask: “Is this car of good quality? Is it mechanically sound, and can I trust it to take me where I need to go? Will it hold up well under everyday wear and tear and long road trips? Are there any hidden flaws, imperfections, or defects in it?” And if you find an imperfection in the car, you might ask for it to be fixed, or you might decide not to make the purchase at all.

In a similar way, God tries our thinking. According to Revelation 2:23, He “searches the minds and hearts [the innermost thoughts, purposes]” to see if there are any defects in our minds so He can make us into a quality “product”—a person of character He can trust. The test comes as we face pressure, and if we stand firm in the truth we say we believe, we pass the test; if we don’t, we get to take the test over again. God will never give up on us, and if we will ask Him, He will help us change our thinking until it is what He wants it to be.

¹¹‘He who has an ear, let him hear *and* heed what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes [the world through believing that Jesus is the Son of God] will not be hurt by the second death (the lake of fire).’ [1 John 5:5; Rev 20:14]

¹²“And to the angel (divine messenger) of the church in Pergamum write:

“These are the words of Him who has *and* wields the sharp two-edged sword [in judgment]:

¹³“I know where you dwell, [a place] where Satan sits enthroned. Yet you are holding fast to My name, and you did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed (martyred) among you, where Satan dwells.

¹⁴“But I have a few things against you, because you have there some [among you] who are holding to the [corrupt] teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, [enticing them] to eat things that had been sacrificed to idols and to commit [acts of sexual] immorality. [Num 25:1, 2; 31:16]

¹⁵“You also have some who in the same way are holding to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

¹⁶“Therefore repent [change your inner self—your old way of thinking, your sinful behavior—seek God’s will]; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war *and* fight against them with the sword of My mouth [in judgment].

¹⁷“He who has an ear, let him hear *and* heed what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes [the world through believing that Jesus is the Son of God], to him I will give [the privilege of eating] *some* of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone with a new name engraved on the stone which no one knows except the one who receives it.’ [Ps 78:24; Is 62:2; 1 John 5:5]

¹⁸“And to the angel (divine messenger) of the church in

Thyatira write:

“These are the words of the Son of God, who has eyes [that flash] like a flame of fire [in righteous judgment], and whose feet are like burnished [white-hot] bronze: [Dan 10:6]

¹⁹“I know your deeds, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your last deeds are more numerous *and* greater than the first.

²⁰“But I have this [charge] against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess [claiming to be inspired], and she teaches and misleads My bond-servants so that they commit [acts of sexual] immorality and eat food sacrificed to idols. [1 Kin 16:31; 2 Kin 9:22, 30]

²¹“I gave her time to repent [to change her inner self and her sinful way of thinking], but she has no desire to repent of her immorality *and* refuses to do so.

²²“Listen carefully, I will throw her on a bed *of sickness*, and those who commit adultery with her [I will bring] into great anguish, unless they repent of her deeds.

²³“And I will kill her children (followers) with pestilence [thoroughly annihilating them], and all the churches will know [without any doubt] that I am He who searches the minds and hearts [the innermost thoughts, purposes]; and I will give to each one of you [a reward or punishment] according to your deeds. [Ps 62:12; Jer 17:10]

²⁴“But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not explored *and* known the depths of Satan, as they call them—I place no other burden on you,

²⁵except to hold tightly to what you have until I come.

²⁶“And he who overcomes [the world through believing

that Jesus is the Son of God] and he who keeps My deeds [doing things that please Me] until the [very] end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY *and* POWER OVER THE NATIONS; [1 John 5:5]

²⁷AND HE SHALL SHEPHERD *and* RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE EARTHEN POTS ARE BROKEN IN PIECES, as I also have received *authority* [and power to rule them] from My Father; [Ps 2:8, 9]

²⁸and I will give him the Morning Star.

²⁹‘He who has an ear, let him hear *and* heed what the Spirit says to the churches.’

3 “TO THE angel (divine messenger) of the church in Sardis write:

“These are the words of Him who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: ‘I know your deeds; you have a name (reputation) that you are alive, but [in reality] you are dead.

²‘Wake up, and strengthen *and* reaffirm what remains [of your faithful commitment to Me], which is about to die; for I have not found [any of] your deeds completed in the sight of My God *or* meeting His requirements.

³‘So remember *and* take to heart the lessons you have received and heard. Keep *and* obey them, and repent [change your sinful way of thinking, and demonstrate your repentance with new behavior that proves a conscious decision to turn away from sin]. So then, if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.

⁴‘But you [still] have a few people in Sardis who have not

soiled their clothes [that is, contaminated their character and personal integrity with sin]; and they will walk with Me [dressed] in white, because they are worthy (righteous).

⁵‘He who overcomes [the world through believing that Jesus is the Son of God] will accordingly be dressed in white clothing; and I will never blot out his name from the Book of Life, and I will confess *and* openly acknowledge his name before My Father and before His angels [saying that he is one of Mine]. [Ps 69:28; Dan 12:1; Matt 10:32; 1 John 5:5]

⁶‘He who has an ear, let him hear *and* heed what the Spirit says to the churches.’

⁷“And to the angel (divine messenger) of the church in Philadelphia write:

“These are the words of the Holy One, the True One, He who has the key [to the house] of David, He who opens and no one will [be able to] shut, and He who shuts and no one opens: [Is 22:22]

⁸‘I know your deeds. See, I have set before you an open door which no one is able to shut, for you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not renounced *or* denied My name. [1 Cor 16:9; Col 4:3, 4]

⁹‘Take note, I will make *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet and *make them* know [without any doubt] that I have loved you. [Is 45:14; 49:23; 60:14]

¹⁰‘Because you have kept the word of My endurance [My command to persevere], I will keep you [safe] from the hour of trial, that *hour* which is about to come on the whole [inhabited] world, to test those who live on the earth. [Mark 13:9; 2 Thess

2:1–12]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Think Purposefully

We can't just hope that we will think good thoughts. We have to actively seek to think them. We need to think purposefully, not passively. I define passive as a lack of feeling, a lack of desire, apathy, laziness, and lukewarmness. It is what John warned the church at Laodicea about, being "neither cold... nor hot" (Rev. 3:15).

A passive mind is a dangerous thing; passive people want good things to happen to them, but then just wait around to see what will happen. They do nothing to contribute to positive results in their lives.

The devil wants us to be passive, because then he can work his plan without any opposition from us. But the Bible tells us to "resist the devil [stand firm against him] and he will flee" (James 4:7). Be an active person who is always working with God toward the result that you desire to see in your life.

¹¹I am coming quickly. Hold tight what you have, so that no one will take your crown [by leading you to renounce the faith].

¹²He who overcomes [the world through believing that Jesus is the Son of God], I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God; he will most certainly never be put out of it, and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of

My God, the new Jerusalem, which descends out of heaven from My God, and My [own] new name. [Is 62:2; Ezek 48:35; 1 John 5:5]

¹³“He who has an ear, let him hear *and* heed what the Spirit says to the churches.’

¹⁴“To the angel (divine messenger) of the church in Laodicea write:

“These are the words of the Amen, the trusted *and* faithful and true Witness, the Beginning *and* Origin of God’s creation:

¹⁵“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold (invigorating, refreshing) nor hot (healing, therapeutic); I wish that you were cold or hot.

¹⁶“So because you are lukewarm (spiritually useless), and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of My mouth [rejecting you with disgust].

¹⁷“Because you say, “I am rich, and have prospered *and* grown wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked [without hope and in great need], [Hos 12:8]

¹⁸I counsel you to buy from Me gold that has been heated red hot *and* refined by fire so that you may become *truly* rich; and white clothes [representing righteousness] to clothe yourself so that the shame of your nakedness will not be seen; and *healing* salve to put on your eyes so that you may see.

¹⁹“Those whom I [dearly and tenderly] love, I rebuke and discipline [showing them their faults and instructing them]; so be enthusiastic and repent [change your inner self—your old way of thinking, your sinful behavior—seek God’s will]. [Prov 3:11, 12; Heb 5:8; 12:5–7]

20‘Behold, I stand at the door [of the church] and *continually* knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him (restore him), and he with Me.

21‘He who overcomes [the world through believing that Jesus is the Son of God], I will grant to him [the privilege] to sit beside Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down beside My Father on His throne. [1 John 5:5]

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Passivity Gives Place to the Enemy

The apostle Paul warned, “Do not give the devil an opportunity [to lead you into sin by holding a grudge, or nurturing anger, or harboring resentment, or cultivating bitterness]” (Eph. 4:27). There are many ways we give the devil an opening to pounce on us. One way is to be passive.

The best description I have found for the word *passive* is in Jesus’ words to the church at Laodicea: “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold (invigorating, refreshing) nor hot (healing, therapeutic); I wish that you were cold or hot” (Rev. 3:15). To be “lukewarm” (Rev. 3:16), is to not be passionate about anything, so you don’t do anything. This is dangerous, because it means you aren’t on guard; you aren’t actively standing up against the enemy.

One of the devil’s most deceiving tricks is to make you feel perfectly content about doing nothing. Paul wrote to Timothy and reminded him “to fan into flame the gracious gift of God,

[that inner fire—the special endowment] which is in you” (2 Tim. 1:6). Paul told his young disciple to shake himself up and do something—which is good for us to consider as well. Paul is urging us to get moving and start using the gifts God has given us.

The devil knows that inactivity, laziness, or failure to exercise our will to do good can lead us into ultimate defeat. As long as we move against the devil, we can win the battle. When we do nothing, we become his prime target. But when we are stirred into action, passionate about faith and zealous to follow God, we can destroy all the devil’s influence.

I stress this because I see many believers who appear to be apathetic about the things of God. If they don’t feel like reading God’s Word, praying, or serving others, they just don’t do it. That’s not God’s way. We need to stir ourselves up—as Paul urged Timothy.

Fan the flame in you. Get active. Don’t give place to the devil by doing nothing. If you make the effort to stay in fellowship with God and to study the Bible, you give God the opportunity to bless you. If you don’t make the effort, the enemy has access into your life. Get moving! Start today.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

God, help me to stir myself up, especially when I feel lukewarm. Help me remember that doing so is an act of the will that You honor. In the name of Jesus, help me to stay vigilant and active—and that will lead to victory. Amen.

POWERPOINT

Throughout His Word, God plainly states that He disciplines us for one reason: because He loves us (see Heb. 12:6–10). We need to receive God's discipline as an expression of His love, and according to Revelation 3:19, we are to actually receive it with enthusiasm. Why should we do that? Simply because we know that God loves us, and we can trust that everything He does is for our ultimate good.



²²“He who has an ear, let him hear *and* heed what the Spirit says to the churches.””

4 AFTER THIS I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice which I had heard, like *the sound*

of a [war] trumpet speaking with me, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.”

²At once I was in [special communication with] the Spirit; and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with One seated on the throne. [Ezek 1:26]

³And He who sat there appeared like [the crystalline sparkle of] a jasper stone and [the fiery redness of] a sardius stone, and encircling the throne *there was* a rainbow that looked like [the color of an] emerald. [Ezek 1:28; Rev 21:11, 19]

⁴Twenty-four [other] thrones surrounded the throne; and seated on these thrones were twenty-four elders dressed in white clothing, with crowns of gold on their heads.

⁵From the throne came flashes of lightning and [rumbling] sounds and peals of thunder. Seven lamps of fire were burning in front of the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; [Ex 19:16–20a]

⁶and in front of the throne *there was something* like a sea or large expanse of glass, like [the clearest] crystal. In the center and around the throne were four living creatures who were full of eyes in front and behind [seeing everything and knowing everything that is around them]. [Ps 99:1; Is 6:2, 3; Ezek 1:5, 18]

⁷The first living creature was like a lion, the second creature like a calf (ox), the third creature had the face of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. [Ezek 1:10]

⁸And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes all over and within [underneath their wings]; and day and night they never stop saying,

“HOLY, HOLY, HOLY [is the] LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY

[the Omnipotent, the Ruler of all], WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME [the unchanging, eternal God].” [Is 6:1–3; Rev 1:4]

⁹Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanksgiving to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, [Ps 47:8]

¹⁰the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and they worship Him who lives forever and ever; and they throw down their crowns before the throne, saying,

POWERPOINT

Worship is not only something due God, it is also a powerful force that shakes heaven, earth, and hell. Not only does the enemy see the heart of the worshiper in true worship, heaven sees it too. A worshiper gets God's attention. Heaven itself is filled with worship and praise (see Rev. 4:10). The scene described in Revelation 4:10 is actually repeated several times in the book of Revelation. We pray regularly, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." And since heaven is filled with praise and worship, our lives should be filled with them also.



¹¹“Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power; for You created all things, and

because of Your will they exist, and were created *and* brought into being.” [Ps 19:1]

5 I SAW in the right hand of Him who was seated on the throne a scroll written on the inside and on the back, closed *and* sealed with seven seals. [Is 29:11; Ezek 2:9, 10; Dan 12:4]

²And I saw a strong angel announcing with a loud voice, “Who is worthy [having the authority and virtue] to open the scroll and to break its seals?”

³And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth [in Hades, the realm of the dead] was able to open the scroll or look into it.

⁴And I *began* to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or look into it.

⁵Then one of the [twenty-four] elders said to me, “Stop weeping! Look closely, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome *and* conquered! He can open the scroll and [break] its seven seals.” [Gen 49:9, 10; Is 11:1, 10; Rev 22:16]

⁶And there between the throne (with the four living creatures) and among the elders I saw a Lamb (Christ) standing, [bearing scars and wounds] as though it had been slain, with seven horns (complete power) and with seven eyes (complete knowledge), which are the seven Spirits of God who have been sent [on duty] into all the earth. [Is 53:7; Zech 3:8, 9; 4:10]

⁷And He came and took the scroll from the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

⁸And when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb (Christ), each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of fragrant incense, which are the prayers of the saints (God's people).

⁹And they sang a new song [of glorious redemption], saying,

“Worthy *and* deserving are You to take the scroll and to break its seals; for You were slain (sacrificed), and with Your blood You purchased *people* for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. [Ps 33:3]

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



I worship You, Jesus! Worthy are You, the Lamb that was sacrificed, to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!

• adapted from Revelation 5:12

¹⁰“You have made them to be a kingdom [of royal subjects] and priests to our God; and they will reign on the earth.”
[Ex 19:6; Is 61:6; Rev 20:6]

¹¹Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and [the voice] of the living creatures and the elders; and they numbered myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands (innumerable), [Dan 7:10]

¹²saying in a loud voice,

“Worthy *and* deserving is the Lamb that was sacrificed to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.”

¹³And I heard every created thing that is in heaven or on earth or under the earth [in Hades, the realm of the dead] or on the sea, and everything that is in them, saying [together],

“To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb (Christ), be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.” [Dan 7:13, 14]

¹⁴And the four living creatures kept saying, “Amen.” And the elders fell down and worshiped [Him who lives forever and ever].

6 THEN I saw as the Lamb (Christ) broke one of the seven seals [of the scroll initiating the judgments], and I heard one of the four living creatures call out as with a voice of thunder, “Come.”

²I looked, and behold, a white horse [of victory] whose rider carried a bow; and a crown [of victory] was given to him, and he rode forth conquering and to conquer. [Ps 45:4, 5; Zech 1:8; 6:1–8]

³When He (the Lamb) broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature call out, “Come.”

⁴And another, a fiery red horse [of bloodshed], came out; and its rider was empowered to take peace from the earth, so that men would slaughter one another; and a great sword [of war and violent death] was given to him. [Zech 1:8; 6:1–8]

⁵When He (the Lamb) broke open the third seal, I heard the third living creature call out, “Come.” I looked, and behold, a black horse [of famine]; and the rider had in his hand a pair of scales (a balance). [Zech 6:1–8]

⁶And I heard *something* like a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius (a day’s wages), and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine.” [2 Kin 6:25]

⁷When He (the Lamb) broke open the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature call out, “Come.”

⁸So I looked, and behold, an ashen (pale greenish gray) horse [like a corpse, representing death and pestilence]; and its rider’s name was Death; and Hades (the realm of the dead) was following with him. They were given authority *and* power over a fourth part of the earth, to kill with the sword and with famine and with plague (pestilence, disease) and by the wild beasts of the earth. [Ezek 14:21; Hos 13:14]

⁹When He (the Lamb) broke open the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been

slaughtered because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained [out of loyalty to Christ].

¹⁰They cried in a loud voice, saying, “O Lord, holy and true, how long now before You will sit in judgment and avenge our blood on those [unregenerate ones] who dwell on the earth?” [Gen 4:10; Ps 79:10; 94:3; Zech 1:12]

¹¹Then they were each given a white robe; and they were told to rest *and* wait quietly for a little while longer, until *the number of* their fellow servants and their brothers and sisters who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed.

¹²I looked when He (the Lamb) broke open the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth [made] of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; [Joel 2:10, 31]

¹³and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, like a fig tree shedding its late [summer] figs when shaken by a strong wind. [Is 34:4]

¹⁴The sky was split [separated from the land] and rolled up like a scroll, and every mountain and island were dislodged *and* moved out of their places.

¹⁵Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the military commanders and the wealthy and the strong and everyone, [whether] slave or free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains;

¹⁶and they called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne, and from the [righteous] wrath *and* indignation of the Lamb; [Is 2:19–21; Hos 10:8]

¹⁷for the great day of their wrath *and* vengeance *and* retribution has come, and who is able to [face God and] stand [before the wrath of the Lamb]?” [Joel 2:11; Mal 3:2; Jude 14; Rev 19:11–16]

7 AFTER THIS I saw four angels stationed at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree. [Zech 6:5]

²Then I saw another angel coming up from the rising of the sun, holding the seal of the living God; and with a loud voice he called out to the four angels to whom it was granted [to have authority and power] to harm the earth and the sea,

³saying, “Do not harm the earth nor the sea nor the trees until we seal (mark) the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads.” [Ezek 9:4]

⁴And I heard how many were sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand; [twelve thousand] sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

⁵Twelve thousand were sealed from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand from the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand from the tribe of Gad,

⁶twelve thousand from the tribe of Asher, twelve thousand from the tribe of Naphtali, twelve thousand from the tribe of Manasseh,

⁷twelve thousand from the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand from the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand from the tribe of

Issachar,

Speak God's Word

*I know that salvation
belongs to our God Who is
seated on the throne, and to
the Lamb. Our salvation is
from the Lord, and my
deliverance is a result of His
goodness.*

| adapted from REVELATION
7:10 |

⁸twelve thousand from the tribe of Zebulun, twelve thousand from the tribe of Joseph, and twelve thousand from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed (marked, redeemed, protected).

⁹After these things I looked, and this is what I saw: a vast multitude which no one could count, [gathered] from every nation and from all the tribes and peoples and languages [of the earth], standing before the throne and before the Lamb (Christ), dressed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands;

¹⁰and in a loud voice they cried out, saying,

“Salvation [belongs] to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb [our salvation is the Trinity’s to give,

and to God the Trinity we owe our deliverance].”

¹¹And all the angels were standing around the throne and *around* the [twenty-four] elders and the four living creatures; and they fell to their faces before the throne and worshiped God,

¹²saying,

“Amen! Blessing and glory *and* majesty and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might belong to our God forever and ever. Amen.”

¹³Then one of the elders responded, saying to me, “These who are dressed in the long white robes—who are they, and from where did they come?”

¹⁴I said to him, “My lord, you know [the answer].” And he said to me, “These are the people who come out of the great tribulation (persecution), and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb [because of His atoning sacrifice]. [Gen 49:11; Dan 12:1]

¹⁵“For this reason, they are [standing] before the throne of God; and they serve Him [in worship] day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them *and* shelter *and* protect them [with His presence]. [Rev 21:3]

¹⁶“They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any [scorching] heat; [Is 49:10; Ps 121:6]

¹⁷for the Lamb who is in the center of the throne will be their Shepherd, and He will guide them to springs of the waters of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes [giving them eternal comfort].” [Ps 23:2; Is 25:8; Ezek 34:23; Rev 21:4]

8 WHEN HE (the Lamb) broke open the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour [in awe of God's impending judgment]. [Zeph 1:7]

²Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.

³Another angel came and stood at the altar. He had a golden censer, and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints (God's people) on the golden altar in front of the throne. [Ps 141:2]

⁴And the smoke *and* fragrant aroma of the incense, with the prayers of the saints (God's people), ascended before God from the angel's hand.

⁵So the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it to the earth; and there were peals of thunder *and* loud rumblings and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake. [Lev 16:12; Ezek 10:2]

⁶Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them [initiating the judgments].

⁷The first [angel] sounded [his trumpet], and there was [a storm of] hail and fire, mixed with blood, and it was hurled to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up. [Ex 9:13–35]

⁸The second angel sounded [his trumpet], and *something* like a great mountain blazing with fire was hurled into the sea; and a third of the sea was turned to blood; [Jer 51:25]

⁹and a third of the living creatures that were in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Victory Belongs to Those Who Don't Give Up

The way to put off your old life and put on the new, enjoyable life that God offers is by renewing your mind and attitude daily (see Eph. 4:22–24). “Daily” sounds daunting, doesn’t it? Don’t you wish Scripture said, “Do this once and you will enjoy victory the rest of your life”? However, it doesn’t, and if we truly want to live life to the fullest and enjoy each moment, we will need to form the habit of thinking life-energizing thoughts instead of life-draining ones.

One simple way to practice this is by thinking about what you do have instead of what you don’t have and by being grateful for every blessing, no matter how tiny or insignificant it may seem. After all, being grateful and giving God praise for every blessing is something we will be doing throughout eternity as we stand before God’s throne and before the Lamb, crying out, “Salvation [belongs] to our God.... Amen! Blessing and glory *and* majesty and wisdom and thanksgiving and

honor and power and might belong to our God forever and ever. Amen” (Rev. 7:10, 12).

Good things are available to each of us, because God does not play favorites by doing good things for one person and not for another. No matter how bad life may have been until now, it can change. You can overcome evil with good. The darkness cannot overtake the light as long as we keep the light on. Turn the light on in your mind and fill it with positive, hope-filled, thankful, grateful thoughts. As you do this, your life will begin to change. It will be evident in your words, your attitudes, your actions, and your circumstances. Everything you do is connected to the mind, and that is where you win or lose the battle for the life you have always wanted.

Sometimes the battle of the mind seems relentless, but victory always comes to those who refuse to give up. I urge you not to be discouraged on the difficult days, because your diligence will pay off in due time. Any day that we don't give up puts us one day closer to success. Good thinking begins with a choice, so I urge you to make good choices today and every day.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord God, thank You for every blessing that You have given to me, and thank You that the day is coming when I will join the saints and bless You forever. In Jesus' name, help me to win this battle of the mind. Amen.

¹⁰The third angel sounded [his trumpet], and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch [flashing across the sky], and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of [fresh] waters.

¹¹The name of the star is Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the waters, because they had become bitter (toxic).

¹²Then the fourth angel sounded [his trumpet], and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and a third of the daylight would not shine, and the night in the same way [would not shine]. [Ex 10:21–23]

¹³Then I looked, and I heard a solitary eagle flying in midheaven [for all to see], saying with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe [great wrath is coming] to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpets which the three angels are about to sound [announcing ever greater judgments]!”

9 THEN THE fifth angel sounded [his trumpet], and I saw a star (angelic being) that had fallen from heaven to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit (abyss) was given to him (the star-angel). [Rev 20:1]

²He opened the bottomless pit, and smoke like the smoke of a great furnace flowed out of the pit; and the sun and the atmosphere were darkened by the smoke from the pit. [Gen 19:28; Ex 19:18; Joel 2:10]

³Then out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and power [to hurt] was given to them, like the power which the earth's scorpions have. [Ex 10:12–15]

⁴They were told not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but [to hurt] only the people who do not have the seal (mark of ownership, protection) of God on their foreheads. [Ezek 9:4]

⁵They were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment *and* cause them extreme pain for five months; and their torment was like the torment from a scorpion when it stings a man.

⁶And in those days people will seek death and will not find it; and they will long to die [to escape the pain], but [will discover that] death evades them. [Job 3:21]

⁷The locusts resembled horses prepared *and* equipped for battle; and on their heads appeared to be [something like] golden crowns, and their faces resembled human faces. [Joel 2:4]

⁸They had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like *the teeth* of lions. [Joel 1:6]

⁹They had breastplates (scales) like breastplates made of iron; and the [whirring] noise of their wings was like the [thunderous] noise of countless horse-drawn chariots charging [at full speed] into battle. [Joel 2:5]

¹⁰They have tails like scorpions, and stingers; and in their tails is their power to hurt people for five months. [Joel 2:6]

¹¹They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss (the bottomless pit); in Hebrew his name is Abaddon (destruction), and in Greek he is called Apollyon (destroyer-king).

¹²The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still

coming after these things.

¹³Then the sixth angel sounded [his trumpet], and I heard a solitary voice from the four horns of the golden altar which stands before God,

¹⁴saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.”

¹⁵So the four angels, who had been prepared for the [appointed] hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind.

¹⁶The number of the troops of cavalry was twice ten thousand times ten thousand (two hundred million); I heard the number of them.

¹⁷And this is how I saw the horses and their riders in my vision: *the riders* had breastplates [the color] of fire and of hyacinth (sapphire blue) and of brimstone (yellow); and the heads of the horses looked like the heads of lions; and from out of their mouths came fire and smoke and brimstone (burning sulfur).

¹⁸A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone that came from the mouths of the horses.

¹⁹For the power of the horses [to do harm] is in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents and have heads, and it is with them that they do harm.

²⁰The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent even then of the works of their hands, so as to cease worshipping *and* paying homage to the demons and the idols of gold and of silver and of bronze and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; [Ps

115:4–7; 135:15–17; Is 17:8]

²¹and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries (drugs, intoxications) nor of their [sexual] immorality nor of their thefts.

10 THEN I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed in a cloud, with a rainbow (halo) over his head; and his face was like the sun, and his feet (legs) were like columns of fire; [Ex 13:21, 22; Ezek 1:26–28; Dan 7:13; Matt 17:2]

²and he had a little book (scroll) open in his hand. He set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land; [Ezek 2:9; Hos 11:10]

³and he shouted with a loud voice, like the roaring of a lion [compelling attention and inspiring awe]; and when he had shouted out, the seven peals of thunder spoke with their own voices [uttering their message in distinct words]. [Ps 29]

⁴And when the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them down.” [2 Cor 12:4]

⁵Then the angel whom I had seen standing on the sea and the land raised his right hand [to swear an oath] to heaven, [Deut 32:40; Dan 12:6, 7]

⁶and swore [an oath] by [the name of] Him who lives forever and ever, WHO CREATED HEAVEN AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE EARTH AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE SEA AND THE THINGS IN IT, that there will be delay no longer, [Neh 9:6]

⁷but when it is time for the trumpet call of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God [that is, His hidden purpose and plan] is finished, as He announced the gospel to His servants the prophets. [Dan 12:6; Rom 11:25; 1 Cor 15:55; 2 Thess 2:7]

⁸Then the voice which I heard from heaven, *I heard* again speaking to me, and saying, “Go, take the book (scroll) which is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.”

⁹So I went up to the angel and told him to give me the little book. And he said to me, “Take it and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.” [Ezek 2:8, 9; 3:1–3]

¹⁰So I took the little book from the angel’s hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was as sweet as honey; but once I had swallowed it, my stomach was bitter. [Ps 119:103; Jer 15; 16]

¹¹Then they said to me, “You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and languages and kings.” [Jer 1:10]

11 THEN THERE was given to me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, “Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar [of incense], and [count] those who worship in it. [Ezek 40–42]

²“But leave out the court [of the Gentiles] which is outside the temple and do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles (the nations); and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months (three and one-half years). [Dan 8:9–14;

Zech 12:3; Luke 21:24]

³“And I will grant *authority* to My two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days (forty-two months; three and one-half years), dressed in sackcloth.” [Deut 18:18; Mal 4:5; Mark 9:4]

⁴These [witnesses] are the two olive trees and the two lampstands which stand before the Lord of the earth. [Zech 4:3, 11–14]

⁵And if anyone wants to harm them, fire comes out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way. [2 Kin 1:10–12; Jer 5:14]

⁶These [two witnesses] have the power [from God] to shut up the sky, so that no rain will fall during the days of their prophesying [regarding judgment and salvation]; and they have power over the waters (seas, rivers) to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every [kind of] plague, as often as they wish. [Ex 7:14–19; 1 Kin 17:1]

⁷When they have finished their testimony *and* given their evidence, the beast that comes up out of the abyss (bottomless pit) will wage war with them, and overcome them and kill them. [Dan 7:3, 7, 21]

⁸And their dead bodies *will lie exposed* in the open street of the great city (Jerusalem), which in a spiritual sense is called [by the symbolic and allegorical names of] Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. [Is 1:9]

⁹Those from the peoples and tribes and languages and nations look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not allow their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb.

¹⁰And those [non-believers] who live on the earth will

gloat over them and rejoice; and they will send gifts [in celebration] to one another, because these two prophets tormented *and* troubled those who live on the earth.

¹¹But after three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear *and* panic fell on those who were watching them. [Ezek 37:5, 10]

¹²And the two witnesses heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” Then they ascended into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them. [2 Kin 2:11]

¹³And in that [very] hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell *and* was destroyed; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest [who survived] were overcome with terror, and they glorified the God of heaven [as they recognized His awesome power].

¹⁴The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly.

¹⁵Then the seventh angel sounded [his trumpet]; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying,

“The kingdom (dominion, rule) of the world has become *the kingdom* of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.” [Ps 22:28; Dan 2:31–45; 7:13, 14, 27; Zech 14:9]

**A Prayer To
Renew Your
Mind**



I am thankful, Jesus, that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and You will reign forever and ever.

• adapted from Revelation 11:15

¹⁶And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell face downward and worshiped God,

¹⁷saying,

“To You we give thanks, O Lord God Almighty [the Omnipotent, the Ruler of all], Who are and Who were, because You have taken Your great power *and* the sovereignty [which is rightly Yours] and have [now] begun to reign.

¹⁸“And the nations (Gentiles) became enraged, and Your wrath *and* indignation came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and [the time came] to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints (God’s people) and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and [the time came] to destroy the destroyers of the earth.” [Ps 2:1; 2 Thess 1:3–12]

¹⁹And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning, loud rumblings and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm. [1 Kin 8:1–12]

12 AND A great sign [warning of an ominous and frightening future event] appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon beneath her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.

²She was with child (the Messiah) and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth. [Rom 9:4, 5]

³Then another sign [of warning] was seen in heaven: behold, a great fiery red dragon (Satan) with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven royal crowns (diadems). [Dan 7:7]

⁴And his tail swept [across the sky] *and* dragged away a third of the stars of heaven and flung them to the earth. And the dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child. [Dan 8:10; Rev 12:9]

⁵And she gave birth to a Son, a male *Child*, who is destined to rule (shepherd) all the nations with a rod of iron; and her Child was caught up to God and to His throne. [Ps 2:8, 9; 110:1, 2]

⁶Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that she would be nourished there for a thousand two hundred and sixty days (forty-two months; three and one-half years).

⁷And war broke out in heaven, Michael [the archangel] and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought,

⁸but they were not strong enough *and* did not prevail, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. [2 Pet

2:4; Jude 6]

⁹And the great dragon was thrown down, the age-old serpent who is called the devil and Satan, he who *continually* deceives *and* seduces the entire inhabited world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. [Gen 3:1, 14, 15; Zech 3:1; John 13:2; 2 Cor 11:3; Rev 20:8]

¹⁰Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying,

“Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom (dominion, reign) of our God, and the authority of His Christ have come; for the accuser of our [believing] brothers and sisters has been thrown down [at last], he who accuses them *and* keeps bringing charges [of sinful behavior] against them before our God day and night. [Job 1:6–11]

¹¹“And they overcame *and* conquered him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, for they did not love their life *and* renounce their faith even when faced with death. [Zech 3:1–10; Rom 8:33, 34]

Speak God's Word

I overcome and conquer the devil because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of my testimony, for I do not love my life and I do not renounce my faith even when faced with death.

| adapted from REVELATION

12:11 |

¹²“Therefore rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them [in the presence of God]. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you in great wrath, knowing that he has *only* a short time [remaining]!” [Is 44:23; 49:13]

¹³And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who had given birth to the male *Child*.

¹⁴But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time (three and one-half years), away from the presence of the serpent (Satan). [Ex 19:4; Deut 32:10, 11; Is 40:31; Dan 7:25; 12:7]

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Press Through the Opposition

The Bible tells us that with every opportunity, opposition always comes. The devil always resists our progress. He is constantly ready to prevent the birth of any good thing God tries to do in us or through us. Revelation 12:4 says, “And the dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.”

To me, this indicates that the enemy is stationed and ready to devour any good thing in our life, which includes the birth of our successes in every area. Any time God puts a fresh, new idea in your heart or gives you a dream, a vision, or a new challenge for your life and you desire to give birth to it, the enemy will be there to oppose you. If you know this ahead of time, you can press through the opposition and see God’s good will come to pass in your life.

KEYS to a Victorious Life

Defeating the Devil

Unfortunately, it is possible for the enemy to speak through us, and that is exactly what he wants to do. If we allow him to do it, we are, in a manner of speaking, working for him. For example, he is referred to as “the accuser of our [believing] brothers and sisters” (Rev. 12:10). That means he continually brings accusations against the children of God, trying to accuse us of sinful behavior before God, to make us feel guilty and condemned, and even to cause others to think accusing thoughts about us. If we allow that accusing spirit to work through us, we will quickly and easily find fault with many people and things.

The devil also accuses us to ourselves. He places accusing thoughts in our minds or brings accusations against us through other people. The Bible says that we overcome him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony (see Rev. 12:11). If we know the truth of God’s Word and act on it, we can defeat the devil!

¹⁵And the serpent hurled water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood.

¹⁶But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the river which the dragon had hurled

out of his mouth. [Ex 15:12]

¹⁷So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went off to wage war on the rest of her children (seed), those who keep *and* obey the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus [holding firmly to it and bearing witness to Him].

13 AND THE dragon (Satan) stood on the sandy shore of the sea. [Dan 7:7]

Then I saw a [vicious] beast coming up out of the sea with ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten royal crowns (diadems), and on his heads were blasphemous names.

²And the beast that I saw resembled a leopard, but his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth was like that of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority.

³*I saw* one of his heads which seemed to have a fatal wound, but his fatal wound was healed; and the entire earth *followed* after the beast in amazement.

⁴They fell down *and* worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; they also worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like (as great as) the beast, and who is able to wage war against him?”

⁵And the beast was given a mouth (the power of speech), uttering great things *and* arrogant and blasphemous words, and he was given freedom *and* authority to act *and* to do as he pleased for forty-two months (three and a half years). [Dan 7:8]

⁶And he opened his mouth to speak blasphemies (abusive

speech, slander) against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, and those who live in heaven.

⁷He was also permitted to wage war against the saints (God's people) and to overcome them, and authority *and* power over every tribe and people and language and nation. [Dan 7:21, 25]

⁸All the inhabitants of the earth will fall down *and* worship him, *everyone* whose name has not been written since the foundation of the world in the Book of Life of the Lamb who has been slain [as a willing sacrifice].

⁹If anyone has an ear, let him hear.

¹⁰If anyone *is destined* for captivity, he will go into captivity; if anyone kills with a sword, he must be killed with a sword. Here is [the call for] the patient endurance and the faithfulness of the saints [which is seen in the response of God's people to difficult times]. [Jer 15:2]

¹¹Then I saw another beast rising up out of the earth; he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke like a dragon. [Matt 7:15, 16]

¹²He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence [when the two are together]. And he makes the earth and those who inhabit it worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

¹³He performs great signs (awe-inspiring acts), even making fire fall from the sky to the earth, right before peoples' eyes.

¹⁴And he deceives those [unconverted ones] who inhabit the earth [into believing him] because of the signs which he is given [by Satan] to perform in the presence of the [first] beast,

telling those who inhabit the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded [fatally] by the sword and has come back to life. [Deut 13:1–5; Mark 13:22; 2 Thess 2:9, 10]

¹⁵And he is given power to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast will even [appear to] speak, and cause those who do not bow down *and* worship the image of the beast to be put to death. [Dan 3:5]

¹⁶Also he compels all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead [signifying allegiance to the beast],

¹⁷and that no one will be able to buy or sell, except the one who has the mark, *either* the name of the beast or the number of his name.

¹⁸Here is wisdom. Let the person who has enough insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the [imperfect] number of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.

14 THEN I looked, and this is what I saw: the Lamb stood [firmly established] on Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had His name and His Father's name inscribed on their foreheads [signifying God's own possession]. [Joel 2:32]

²And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of great waters and like the rumbling of mighty thunder; and the voice that I heard [seemed like music and] was like *the sound of* harpists playing on their harps.

³And they sang a new song before the throne [of God] and

before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased (ransomed, redeemed) from the earth. [Rev 7:4–8]

⁴These are the ones who have not been defiled [by relations] with women, for they are celibate. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased *and* redeemed from among men [of Israel] as the first fruits [sanctified and set apart for special service] for God and the Lamb. [Mark 8:34]

⁵No lie was found in their mouth, for they are blameless (spotless, untainted, beyond reproach).

⁶Then I saw another angel flying in midheaven, with an eternal gospel to preach to the inhabitants of the earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people; [Rom 1:1–4; 1 Cor 15:3–5; Gal 1:6, 7]

⁷and he said with a loud voice, “Fear God [with awe and reverence], and give Him glory [and honor and praise in worship], because the hour of His judgment has come; [with all your heart] worship Him who created the heaven and the earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

⁸Then another angel, a second one, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her immorality [corrupting them with idolatry].” [Is 21:9; Dan 4:30, 31; Rev 17:2]

⁹Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “Whoever worships the beast and his image and receives the mark [of the beast] on his forehead or on his

hand,

¹⁰he too will [have to] drink of the wine of the wrath of God, mixed undiluted into the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone (flaming sulfur) in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb (Christ). [Gen 19:24; Jer 25:15, 16; Luke 12:9]

¹¹“And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day and night—those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” [Is 34:10; Mark 9:48]

¹²Here is [encouragement for] the steadfast endurance of the saints (God’s people), those who *habitually* keep God’s commandments and their faith in Jesus.

¹³Then I heard [the distinct words of] a voice from heaven, saying, “Write, ‘Blessed (happy, prosperous, to be admired) are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’” “Yes, [blessed indeed],” says the Spirit, “so that they may rest *and* have relief from their labors, for their deeds do follow them.”

¹⁴Again I looked, and this is what I saw: a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was One like the Son of Man, with a crown of gold on His head and a sharp sickle [of swift judgment] in His hand. [Dan 7:13, 14; Matt 13:30, 40–42]

¹⁵And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to Him who was sitting upon the cloud, “Put in Your sickle and reap [at once], for the hour to reap [in judgment] has arrived, because the earth’s harvest is fully ripened.” [Joel 3:13]

¹⁶So He who was sitting on the cloud cast His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped (judged).

¹⁷Then another angel came out of the temple (sanctuary) in

heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle.

¹⁸And another angel came from the altar, the one who has power over fire; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, “Put in your sharp sickle and reap the clusters of grapes from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe [for judgment].” [Luke 9:54]

¹⁹So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and harvested the grapevine of the earth, and threw the grapes into the great wine press of the wrath *and* indignation of God [as judgment of the rebellious world]. [Is 63:3]

²⁰And *the grapes in* the wine press were trampled *and* crushed outside the city, and blood poured from the wine press, *reaching* up to the horses’ bridles, for a distance of sixteen hundred stadia. [Joel 3:13; Heb 13:12]

15 THEN I saw another sign in heaven, great and wonderful [a warning of terrifying and horrible events]: seven angels who had seven plagues (afflictions, calamities), *which are* the last, because with them the wrath of God is finished [that is, it is completely expressed and reaches its zenith]. [Lev 26:21]

²Then I saw something like a sea *or* large expanse of glass mixed with fire, and those who were victorious over the beast and over his image and over the number corresponding to his name were standing on the sea *or* large expanse of glass, holding harps of God [worshiping Him]. [Rev 4:6; 7:9–17]

³And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

“Great and wonderful *and* awe-inspiring are Your works [in

judgment],

O Lord God, the Almighty [the Omnipotent, the Ruler of all];
Righteous and true are Your ways,
O King of the nations! [Ex 15:1–8; Ps 145:17]

⁴“Who will not fear [reverently] and glorify Your name, O Lord
[giving You honor and praise in worship]?

For You alone are holy;

FOR ALL THE NATIONS SHALL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE YOU,
FOR YOUR RIGHTEOUS ACTS [Your just decrees and
judgments] HAVE BEEN REVEALED *and* DISPLAYED.” [Ps 86:9;
Jer 10:7; Phil 2:9–11]

⁵After these things I looked, and the temple (sanctuary) of
the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened,

⁶and the seven angels who had the seven plagues
(afflictions, calamities) came out of the temple, arrayed in linen,
pure *and* gleaming, and wrapped around their chests were
golden sashes.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Great, wonderful, and awe-

inspiring are Your works of judgment, O Lord God Almighty. Righteous and true are Your ways, O King of the nations!

• adapted from Revelation 15:3

⁷Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath *and* indignation of God, who lives forever and ever. [Rev 4:6]

⁸And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory *and* radiance *and* splendor of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished. [Ex 33:9, 10; 1 Kin 8:10, 11; Is 6:4; Ezek 44:4]

16 THEN I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath *and* indignation of God.” [Ps 69:24; Is 66:6]

²So the first *angel* went and poured out his bowl on the earth; and loathsome and malignant sores came on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image. [Ex 9:10, 11; Deut 28:35]

³The second *angel* poured out his bowl into the sea, and it turned into blood like that of a corpse [foul and disgusting]; and every living ^{*}thing in the sea died.

⁴Then the third *angel* poured out his bowl into the rivers

and the springs of water; and they turned into blood. [Ex 7:17–21]

⁵And I heard the angel of the waters saying, “Righteous *and* just are You, Who are and Who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things;

⁶for they have poured out the blood of the saints (God’s people) and the prophets, and You [in turn] have given them blood to drink. They deserve Your judgment.” [Ps 79:3]

⁷And I heard [another from] the altar saying, “Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty [the Omnipotent, the Ruler of all], Your judgments are true and fair *and* righteous.” [Ps 119:137]

⁸Then the fourth *angel* poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was given power to scorch humanity with [raging] fire.

⁹People were [severely] burned by the great heat; and they reviled the name of God who has power over these plagues, but they did not repent [of their sin] and glorify Him.

¹⁰Then the fifth *angel* poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness; and people gnawed their tongues because of the pain [of their excruciating anguish and severe torment], [Ex 10:21]

¹¹and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their anguish and their sores (abscesses, boils); and they did not repent of what they had done *nor* hate their wickedness.

¹²Then the sixth *angel* poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for [the coming of] the kings from the east. [Is 11:15, 16]

¹³And I saw three loathsome spirits like frogs, *leaping* from the mouth of the dragon (Satan) and from the mouth of the

beast (Antichrist, dictator) and from the mouth of the false prophet; [Ex 8:3; 1 Kin 22:21–23]

¹⁴for they are [actually] the spirits of demons, performing [miraculous] signs. And they go out to the kings of the entire inhabited earth, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.

¹⁵(“Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is he who stays awake and who keeps his clothes [that is, stays spiritually ready for the Lord’s return], so that he will not be naked—spiritually unprepared—and men will not see his shame.”) [Matt 24:42–44; 1 Thess 5:2–4]

¹⁶And they (demons) gathered the kings and armies of the world together at the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon (Armageddon).

¹⁷Then the seventh *angel* poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne [of God], saying, “It is done. [It is all over, it is all accomplished, it has come.]”

¹⁸And there were flashes of lightning and loud rumblings and peals of thunder; and there was a massive earthquake—nothing like it has ever occurred since mankind originated on the earth, so severe and far-reaching was that earthquake. [Ex 19:16–18; Dan 12:1]

¹⁹The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And God kept in mind Babylon the great, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce *and* furious wrath.

²⁰Then every island fled away, and no mountains could be found.

²¹And giant hailstones, as heavy as a talent, fell from the

sky on the people; and people reviled *and* spoke abusively of God for the plague of the hail, because the plague was so very great. [Ex 9:22–25]

17 THEN ONE of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I will show you the judgment *and* doom of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters [influencing nations], [Jer 51:13]

²*she* with whom the kings of the earth have committed *acts of* immorality, and the inhabitants of the earth have become intoxicated with the wine of her immorality.” [Jer 25:15, 16]

³And the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was entirely covered with blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns. [Acts 10:10, 11]

⁴The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold, precious stones and pearls, [and she was] holding in her hand a gold cup full of the abominations and the filth of her [sexual] immorality. [Jer 51:7]

⁵And on her forehead a name was written, a mystery: “BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES (false religions, heresies) AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”

⁶I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints (God’s people), and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus [who were martyred]. When I saw her, I wondered in amazement.

⁷But the angel said to me, “Why do you wonder? I will

explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and ten horns.

⁸“The beast that you saw was [once], but [now] is not, and he is about to come up out of the abyss (the bottomless pit, the dwelling place of demons) and go to destruction (perdition). And the inhabitants of the earth, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, will be astonished when they see the beast, because he was and is not and is yet to come [to earth]. [Dan 7:3]

⁹“Here is the mind which has wisdom [and this is what it knows about the vision]. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits;

¹⁰and they are seven kings: five of whom have fallen, one exists *and* is reigning; the other [the seventh] has not yet come, and when he does come, he must remain a little while.

¹¹“And the beast that [once] was but is not, is himself also an eighth *king* and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction (perdition).

¹²“The ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but [together] they receive authority as kings for a single hour [for a common purpose] along with the beast. [Dan 7:20–24]

¹³“These [kings] have one purpose [one mind, one common goal], and they give their power and authority to the beast.

¹⁴“They will wage war against the Lamb (Christ), and the Lamb will triumph *and* conquer them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him *and* on His side are the called and chosen (elect) and faithful.” [Dan

2:47; 1 Tim 6:15; Rev 19:16]

¹⁵Then the angel said to me, “The waters which you saw, where the prostitute is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages.

¹⁶“And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the prostitute and will make her desolate and naked [stripped of her power and influence], and will eat her flesh and completely consume her with fire.

¹⁷“For God has put it in their hearts to carry out His purpose by agreeing together to surrender their kingdom to the beast, until the [prophetic] words of God will be fulfilled.

¹⁸“The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over *and* dominates *and* controls the kings *and* the political leaders of the earth.”

18 AFTER THESE things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, possessing great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his splendor *and* radiance. [Ex 34:29–35; 1 Tim 6:16]

²And he shouted with a mighty voice, saying, “Fallen, fallen [certainly to be destroyed] is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a dungeon haunted by every unclean spirit, and a prison for every unclean and loathsome bird.

³“For all the nations have drunk from the wine of the passion of her [sexual] immorality, and the kings *and* political leaders of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth *and*

economic power of her sensuous luxury.” [Jer 25:15, 27]

⁴And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, “Come out of her, my people, so that you will not be a partner in her sins and receive her plagues; [Is 48:20; Jer 50:8]

⁵for her sins (crimes, transgressions) have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her wickedness *and* crimes [for judgment]. [Jer 51:9]

⁶“Repay to her even as she has repaid *others*, and pay back [to her] double [her torment] in accordance with what she has done; in the cup [of sin and suffering] which she mixed, mix a double portion [of perfect justice] for her. [Ps 137:8]

⁷“To the degree that she glorified herself and reveled *and* gloated in her sensuality [living deliciously and luxuriously], to that same degree impose on her torment *and* anguish, and mourning *and* grief; for in her heart she boasts, ‘I SIT AS A QUEEN [on a throne] AND I AM NOT A WIDOW, and will never, ever see mourning *or* experience grief.’ [Is 47:8, 9]

⁸“For this reason in a single day her plagues (afflictions, calamities) will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire *and* completely consumed; for strong *and* powerful is the Lord God who judges her.

⁹“And the kings *and* political leaders of the earth, who committed immorality and lived luxuriously with her, will weep and beat their chests [in mourning] over her when they see the smoke of her burning, [Ezek 26:16, 17]

¹⁰standing a long way off, in fear of her torment, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, the strong city, Babylon! In a single hour your judgment has come.’

¹¹“And merchants of the earth will weep and grieve over

her, because no one buys their cargo (goods, merchandise) anymore—[Ezek 27:36]

¹²cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet; all *kinds* of citron (scented) wood and every article of ivory and every article of very costly *and* lavish wood and bronze and iron and marble; [Ezek 27:12, 13, 22]

¹³and cinnamon and spices and incense and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat; of cattle and sheep, and *cargoes* of horses and chariots *and* carriages; and of slaves and human lives.

¹⁴“The ripe fruits *and* delicacies of your soul’s desire have gone from you, and all things that were luxurious and extravagant are lost to you, never again to be found.

¹⁵“The merchants who handled these articles, who grew wealthy from [their business with] her, will stand a long way off in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud,

¹⁶saying, ‘Woe, woe, for the great city that was robed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, gilded *and* adorned with gold, with precious stones, and with pearls; [Ezek 27:31, 36]

¹⁷because in one hour all the vast wealth has been laid waste.’ And every ship captain *or* navigator, and every passenger and sailor, and all who make their living by the sea, stood a long way off, [Is 23:14; Ezek 27:26–30]

¹⁸and exclaimed as they watched the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What could be compared to the great city?’

¹⁹“And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, ‘Woe, woe, for the great city, where all who had ships at sea grew rich from her great

wealth, because in one hour she has been laid waste!’ [Ezek 27:30–34]

²⁰“Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints (God’s people) and apostles and prophets [who were martyred], because God has executed vengeance for you [through righteous judgment] upon her.” [Is 44:23; Jer 51:48, 49]

²¹Then a single powerful angel picked up a boulder like a great millstone and flung it into the sea, saying, “With such violence will Babylon the great city be hurled down [by the sudden, spectacular judgment of God], and will never again be found. [Jer 51:63, 64; Ezek 26:21]

²²“And the sound of harpists and musicians and flutists and trumpeters will never again be heard in you, and no skilled artisan of any craft will ever again be found in you, and the sound of the millstone [grinding grain] will never again be heard in you [for commerce will no longer flourish, and normal life will cease]. [Is 24:8; Ezek 26:13]

²³“And never again will the light of a lamp shine in you, and never again will the voice of the bridegroom and bride be heard in you; for your merchants were the great *and* prominent men of the earth, because all the nations were deceived *and* misled by your sorcery [your magic spells and poisonous charm].

²⁴“And in Babylon was found the blood of prophets and of saints (God’s people) and of all those who have been slaughtered on the earth.” [Gen 4:10; Jer 51:49]

19 AFTER THESE things I heard something like the great

and mighty shout of a vast multitude in heaven, exclaiming,

“Hallelujah! Salvation and glory (splendor, majesty) and power (dominion, might) belong to our God;

²BECAUSE HIS JUDGMENTS ARE TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS. He has judged [convicted and pronounced sentence on] the great prostitute (idolatress) who was corrupting *and* ruining *and* poisoning the earth with her adultery (idolatry), and HE HAS IMPOSED THE PENALTY FOR THE BLOOD OF HIS BOND-SERVANTS ON HER.” [Deut 32:43; Ps 19:9]

³And a second time they said, “Hallelujah! HER SMOKE SHALL ASCEND FOREVER AND EVER.” [Is 34:10]

⁴Then the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures also fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne, saying, “Amen. Hallelujah (praise the Lord!)” [Ps 106:48]

⁵Then from the throne there came a voice, saying,

“Praise our God, all you bond-servants of His, you who fear Him, the small (common) and the great (distinguished).” [Ps 115:13]

⁶Then I heard *something* like the shout of a vast multitude, and like the boom of many pounding waves, and like the roar of mighty peals of thunder, saying,

“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, [the Omnipotent, the Ruler of all] reigns.

⁷“Let us rejoice and shout for joy! Let us give Him glory *and* honor, for the marriage of the Lamb has come [at last] and His bride (the redeemed) has prepared herself.” [Ps 118:24]

⁸She has been permitted to dress in fine linen, dazzling white and clean—for the fine linen signifies the righteous acts of the saints [the ethical conduct, personal integrity, moral

courage, and godly character of believers].

⁹Then the angel said to me, “Write, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’” And he said to me [further], “These are the true *and* exact words of God.” [Is 25:6–8; Matt 26:29; Luke 13:29]

¹⁰Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he [stopped me and] said to me, “You must not do that; I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers and sisters who have *and* hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God [alone]. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy [His life and teaching are the heart of prophecy].” [Acts 10:25, 26; 2 Pet 1:21]

¹¹And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who was riding it is called Faithful and True (trustworthy, loyal, incorruptible, steady), and in righteousness He judges and wages war [on the rebellious nations]. [2 Thess 1:7–10]

¹²His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many royal crowns; and He has a name inscribed [on Him] which no one knows *or* understands except Himself.

¹³He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. [John 1:1, 14]

¹⁴And the armies of heaven, dressed in fine linen, [dazzling] white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

¹⁵From His mouth comes a sharp sword (His word) with which He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He will tread the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty [in judgment of the rebellious world]. [Ps 2:9; Is 11:4; Rev 1:16]

Speak God's Word

*I confess that Jesus Christ is
King of kings and Lord of
lords!*

| *adapted from* REVELATION
19:16 |

¹⁶And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name inscribed, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” [Deut 10:17]

¹⁷Then I saw a single angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he shouted to all the birds that fly in midheaven, saying, “Come, gather together for the great supper of God, [Ezek 39:4, 17–20]

¹⁸so that you may feast on the flesh of kings, the flesh of commanders, the flesh of powerful *and* mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all humanity, both free men and slaves, both small and great [in a complete conquest of evil].”

¹⁹Then I saw the beast and the kings *and* political leaders of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against Him who is mounted on the [white] horse and against His army.

²⁰And the beast (Antichrist) was seized *and* overpowered,

and with him the false prophet who, in his presence, had performed [amazing] signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were hurled alive into the lake of fire which blazes with brimstone.

²¹And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds fed ravenously *and* gorged themselves with their flesh.

20 AND THEN I saw an angel descending from heaven, holding the key of the abyss (the bottomless pit) and a great chain was in his hand.

²And he overpowered *and* laid hold of the dragon, that old serpent [of primeval times], who is the devil and Satan, and bound him [securely] for a thousand years (a millennium); [Rev 12:7-9, 12, 15]

³and the angel hurled him into the abyss, and closed it and sealed it above him [preventing his escape or rescue], so that he would no longer deceive *and* seduce the nations, until the thousand years were at an end. After these things he must be liberated for a short time.

⁴And then I saw thrones, and sitting on them were those to whom judgment [that is, the authority to act as judges] was given. And *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had refused to worship the beast or his image, and had not accepted his mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. [Dan 7:9, 22, 27]

⁵The rest of the dead [the non-believers] did not come to life again until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.

⁶Blessed (happy, prosperous, to be admired) and holy is the person who takes part in the first resurrection; over these the second death [which is eternal separation from God, the lake of fire] has no power *or* authority, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and they will reign with Him a thousand years. [Ex 19:6; 1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6; 5:10]

⁷And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison (the abyss),

⁸and will come out to deceive *and* mislead the nations which are in the four corners of the earth—[including] Gog and Magog—to gather them together for the war; their number is like the sand of the seashore. [Ezek 38:2; 39:1, 6]

⁹And they swarmed up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints (God's people) and the beloved city [Jerusalem]; but fire came down from heaven and consumed them. [2 Kin 1:10–12; Ezek 38:2, 22]

¹⁰And the devil who had deceived them was hurled into the lake of fire and burning brimstone (sulfur), where the beast (Antichrist) and false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night, forever and ever.

¹¹And I saw a great white throne and Him who was seated upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them [for this heaven and earth are passing away]. [Is 51:6; Matt 24:35; 2 Pet 3:10–12]

¹²And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book

was opened, which is *the Book* of Life; and the dead were judged according to what they had done as written in the books [that is, everything done while on earth]. [Jer 17:10; Rom 2:6]

WINNING THE BATTLES *of the* MIND

Satan's Ultimate Defeat

Many Christians today don't want to hear anything about the devil, but that kind of thinking will open the door for deception and error. The devil is alive and active on earth, so we need to learn to deal with him aggressively until the final judgment when he is "hurled into the lake of fire... forever and ever" (Rev. 20:10).

The devil is a liar, and he uses our mind as a battlefield to do warfare against us (see 2 Cor. 10:3–5). He is the source of dark and harmful thoughts. His goal is to prevent us from enjoying the good plan God has for us, and he can succeed if we never learn to recognize how he attacks our minds.

Thoughts themselves cannot be seen, but we do see their results. Thoughts operate in the spiritual realm, and, perhaps for this reason, we fail to realize just how powerful they are. We tend to ignore what we cannot see with our eyes, yet the spiritual realm is very real.

Although we cannot see a thought, if it is destructive or if it hinders us or steals God's best for us, it stands to reason that

the devil is initiating it, for he comes only to steal, kill, and destroy (see John 10:10).

Let's consider two Scripture verses that plainly tell us that Satan instigates evil thoughts. The apostle John wrote that Satan put in Judas Iscariot's mind the thought of betraying Jesus (see John 13:2). Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and [secretly] keep back for yourself some of the proceeds [from the sale] of the land?" (Acts 5:3).

Every Christian should thoroughly study what the Bible says about the enemy and how he works. We never need to fear him, because God has given us power and authority to deal with him. At the same time, we should never be ignorant of Satan's schemes, or he will gain an advantage over us (see 2 Cor. 2:10–11). We need to know how to recognize when the devil is at work and know how to resist him.

A PRAYER FOR VICTORY

Lord Jesus, I thank You that the day is coming when You will hurl the devil into the lake of fire and the battle will end. Until then, give me wisdom to recognize his attacks and to be strong in the power of Your might. In Your glorious name, I pray. Amen.

¹³And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, and death and Hades (the realm of the dead) surrendered the dead who were in them; and they were judged *and* sentenced, every one according to their deeds.

¹⁴Then death and Hades [the realm of the dead] were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire [the eternal separation from God]. [Matt 25:41; 1 Cor 15:26]

¹⁵And if anyone's name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was hurled into the lake of fire.

21 THEN I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away (vanished), and there is no longer any sea. [Is 65:17; 66:22]

²And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, arrayed like a bride adorned for her husband; [John 14:2, 3; Gal 4:26; Heb 11:10]

³and then I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "See! The tabernacle of God is among men, and He will live among them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them [as their God,] [Lev 26:11, 12; Ezek 37:27; John 1:14; 1 Cor 3:16, 17]

⁴and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be death; there will no longer be sorrow *and* anguish, or crying, or pain; for the former order of things has passed away." [Is 25:8; 35:10]

⁵And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making

all things new.” Also He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true [they are accurate, incorruptible, and trustworthy].” [Is 43:19]

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



Thank You, Lord, for the promise to wipe away every tear from our eyes. A time is coming when there will no longer be death; there will no longer be sorrow and anguish, or crying or pain; for the former order of things will have passed away.

• adapted from Revelation 21:4

⁶And He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the one who thirsts I will give [water] from the fountain of the water of life without cost. [Is 55:1]

⁷“He who overcomes [the world by adhering faithfully to Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior] will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. [2 Sam 7:14; 1 John 5:5]

⁸“But as for the cowards and unbelieving and abominable [who are devoid of character and personal integrity and practice or tolerate immorality], and murderers, and sorcerers [with intoxicating drugs], and idolaters *and* occultists [who practice and teach false religions], and all the liars [who knowingly deceive and twist truth], their part will be in the lake that blazes with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

⁹Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven final plagues came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”

¹⁰And he carried me away in the Spirit to a vast and lofty mountain, and showed me the holy (sanctified) city of Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, [Ezek 40:2]

¹¹having God’s glory [filled with His radiant light]. The brilliance of it resembled a rare *and* very precious jewel, like jasper, shining *and* clear as crystal.

¹²It had a massive and high wall, with twelve [large] gates, and at the gates [were stationed] twelve angels; and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were written. [Ex 28:21; Ezek 48:30–34]

¹³On the east side [there were] three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates.

¹⁴And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the

Lamb (Christ).

¹⁵The one who was speaking with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall.

¹⁶The city is laid out as a square, its length being the same as its width; and he measured the city with his rod—twelve thousand stadia (about 1,400 miles); its length and width and height are equal.

¹⁷He measured its wall also—a hundred forty-four cubits (about 200 feet), *according to* man's measurements, which are [also] angelic [measurements].

¹⁸The wall was built of jasper; and the city was pure gold, transparent like clear crystal. [1 Kin 6:30]

¹⁹The foundation stones of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; [Ex 28:17–20; Is 54:11, 12]

²⁰the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite (yellow topaz); the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.

²¹And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each separate gate was of one single pearl. And the street (broad way) of the city was pure gold, like transparent crystal.

²²I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty [the Omnipotent, the Ruler of all] and the Lamb are its temple.

²³And the city has no need of the sun nor of the moon to give light to it, for the glory (splendor, radiance) of God has illumined it, and the Lamb is its lamp *and* light. [Is 24:23; 60:19, 20]

²⁴The nations [the redeemed people from the earth] will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring into it their glory. [Is 60:1–5]

²⁵By day (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed [in fear of evil]; [Is 60:11]

²⁶and they will bring the glory (splendor, majesty) and the honor of the nations into it;

²⁷and nothing that defiles *or* profanes *or* is unwashed will ever enter it, nor anyone who practices abominations [detestable, morally repugnant things] and lying, but only those [will be admitted] whose names have been written in the Lamb's Book of Life. [Dan 12:1]

22 THEN THE angel showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb (Christ), [Ezek 47:1–12]

²in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve *kinds of* fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. [Gen 2:9; 3:22]

³There will no longer exist anything that is cursed [because sin and illness and death are gone]; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve *and* worship Him [with great awe and joy and loving devotion]; [Zech 14:21]

⁴they will [be privileged to] see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. [Ps 17:15; Matt 5:48; 1 John 3:2]

⁵And there will no longer be night; they have no need for

lamplight or sunlight, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign [as kings] forever and ever. [Zech 14:7; Rev 1:6]

⁶Then he said to me, “These words are faithful and true.” And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent His angel [as a representative] to show His bond-servants the things that must soon take place.

⁷“And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed (happy, prosperous, to be admired) is the one who heeds *and* takes to heart *and* remembers the words of the prophecy [that is, the predictions, consolations, and warnings] contained in this book (scroll).”

⁸I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things.

⁹But he said to me, “Do not do that. I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets and with those who heed *and* remember [the truths contained in] the words of this book. Worship God.”

¹⁰And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time [of their fulfillment] is near.

¹¹“Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy (vile, impure), still be filthy; and the one who is righteous (just, upright), still be righteous; and the one who is holy, still be holy.” [Dan 12:10]

¹²“Behold, I (Jesus) am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to each one according to the merit of his deeds (earthly works, faithfulness). [Is 40:10; Jer 17:10; Matt 16:27; 2 Cor 5:10]

¹³“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End [the Eternal One].” [Is 44:6; 48:12; John 10:30]

¹⁴Blessed (happy, prosperous, to be admired) are those who wash their robes [in the blood of Christ by believing and trusting in Him—the righteous who do His commandments], so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. [Gen 2:9; 3:22, 24]

¹⁵Outside are the dogs [the godless, the impure, those of low moral character] and the sorcerers [with their intoxicating drugs, and magic arts], and the immoral persons [the perverted, the molesters, and the adulterers], and the murderers, and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying (deception, cheating).

¹⁶“I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you *and* to give you assurance of these things for the churches. I am the Root (the Source, the Life) and the Offspring of David, the radiant *and* bright Morning Star.” [Num 24:17; Is 11:1, 10]

¹⁷The [Holy] Spirit and the bride (the church, believers) say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take *and* drink the water of life without cost. [Is 55:1]

¹⁸I testify *and* warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book [its predictions, consolations, and admonitions]: if anyone adds [anything] to them, God will add to him the plagues (afflictions, calamities) which are written in this book; [Deut 4:2]

¹⁹and if anyone takes away from *or* distorts the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away [from that one]

his share from the tree of life and from the holy city (new Jerusalem), which are written in this book.

²⁰He who testifies *and* affirms these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

²¹The grace of the Lord Jesus (the Christ, the Messiah) be with all [the saints—all believers, those set apart for God]. Amen.

A Prayer To Renew Your Mind



*Jesus, You are coming
quickly. Come, Lord Jesus!*

• *adapted from Revelation 22:20*

How To Have a Real Relationship with Jesus

God loves you! He created you as a special, unique, one-of-a-kind individual, and He has a specific purpose and plan for your life. He wants you to live in victory. Through a personal relationship with your Creator—God—you can discover a way of life that will truly satisfy your soul.

No matter who you are, what you've done, or where you are in your life right now, God's love and grace are greater than your sin (your mistakes). Jesus willingly gave His life so you can receive forgiveness from God and have new life in Him. He's just waiting for you to invite Him to be your Savior and Lord.

If you are ready to commit your life to Jesus and follow Him, all you have to do is ask Him to forgive your sins and give you a fresh start in the life you are meant to live. You can begin right now by praying this prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank You for giving Your life for me and forgiving me of my sins so I can have a personal

relationship with You. I am sincerely sorry for the mistakes I've made, and I know I need You to help me live right.

Your Word says in Romans 10:9, "if you acknowledge and confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord [recognizing His power, authority, and majesty as God], and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." I believe You are the Son of God, and I confess You as my Savior and Lord. Take me just as I am, and work in my heart, making me the person You want me to be. I want to live for You, Jesus, and I am so grateful to You for giving me a fresh start in my new life with You today.

I love you, Jesus! Amen.

It's amazing to know that God loves us so much! He wants to have a deep, intimate relationship with us that grows every day as we spend time with Him in prayer and Bible study.

For more about your new life in Christ, visit www.joycemeyer.org/salvation to request at no cost the book *A New Way of Living*. At joycemeyer.org, you can also find other free resources to help you take your next steps toward everything God has for you.

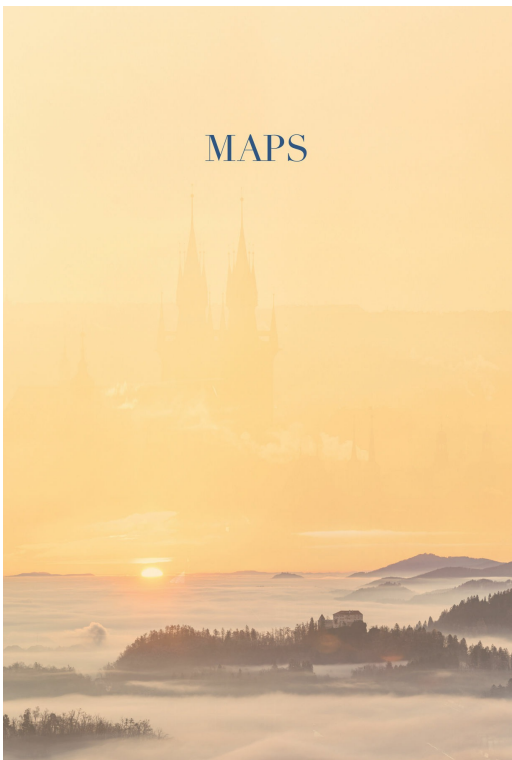
*Congratulations on your fresh start in
your life in Christ!*

MY VICTORIES *on the* BATTLEFIELD *of the* MIND

I believe that the only way to win the battle of the mind is to read, study, and live according to the Word of God. That's why I want to provide you with the following pages as a place for you to record the victories God gives you on the battlefield of the mind. Feel free to write your prayer requests and answered prayers, to make a list of the mental challenges you are overcoming, to jot down what you are learning about living as a victorious believer, and to make notes about how you are learning to recognize and resist the enemy when he comes against you. Just as this Bible is a compilation of many years of life lessons I've learned about how to better think as God thinks, I hope you will use these pages to write about all the lessons God is teaching you and the victorious experiences you are having with Him during this time in your life.

Joyce Meyer

MAPS



THE SETTLEMENTS of the DESCENDANTS of SHEM, HAM & JAPHETH



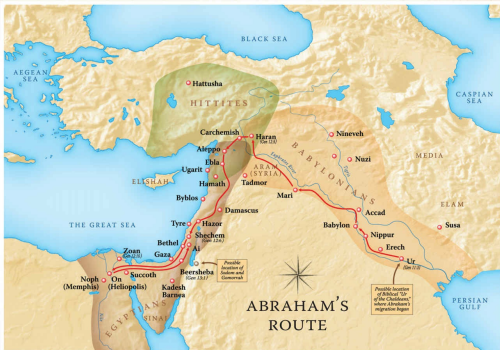
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Turkey	Jordan
Syria	Saudi Arabia
Lebanon	Egypt
Iraq	Libya

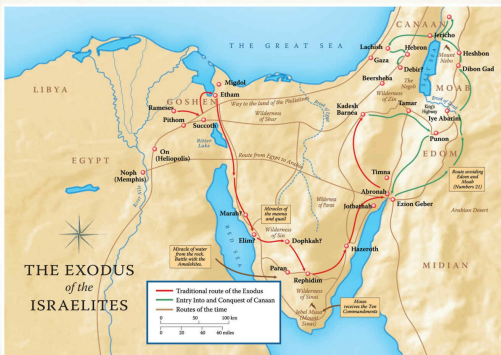
Black—Descendants of Japheth
Red—Descendants of Ham
Purple—Descendants of Shem



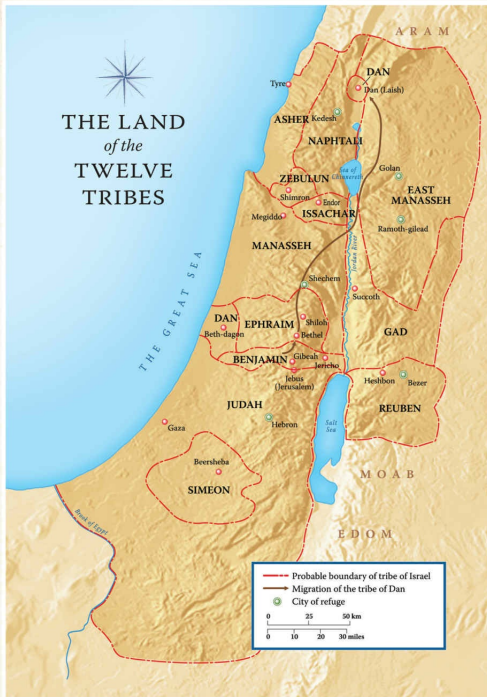
CANAAN TERRITORIES

Arkites, Amorites, Arvadites
Girgashites, Hittites, Hivites
Jebusites, Perizzites
Sidonians, Sinites, Zemarites

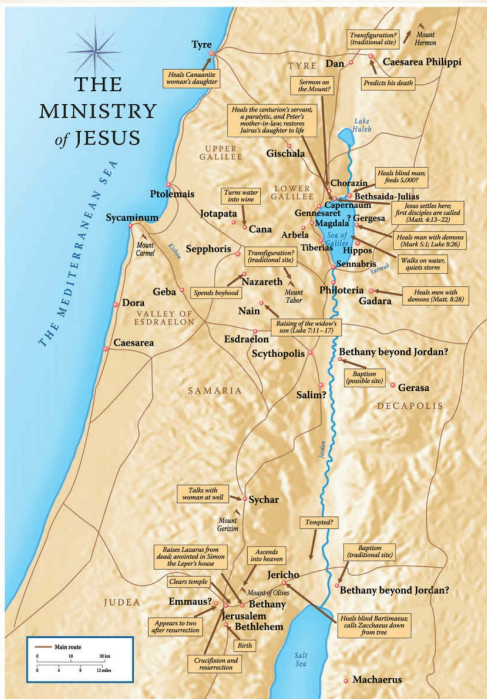




THE LAND of the TWELVE TRIBES



THE MINISTRY of JESUS





THE MODERN NATION of ISRAEL

Boundaries since 2005



* Lit *Adam*.

* Lit *begot*, and so throughout chapter.

* Or *Babylon*.

* Lit *when the time* revives.

* Lit *Sea of Reeds* (Hebrew) *yam suph*.

* Lit *Sea of Reeds*.

* Lit *Sea of Reeds*.

* Lit *many days*.

* Lit *hates*.

* Lit *sets his heart*.

* Or *reverence*.

* Or *the angels*; Heb *Elohim*.

* Or *valley of deep darkness*.

* Lit *mention*.

* Lit *pass over*; or, *overlook deeds*.

* Lit *repent of*.

* Or *spirit*, and so throughout the chapter.

* Or *breath*.

* Or *eunuchs*, and so throughout.

* Or possibly *the Spirit of the holy God*, and so throughout the chapter.

* Lit *her of Uriah*.

* Lit *begotten*.

* Or *humble, meek*.

* Lit *the sake of righteousness*.

* Or *liable to*.

* Lit *Gehenna of fire*.

* Lit *tares*.

* Lit *many stadia*; a stadion being about an eighth of a mile or 192 meters.

* Lit *of you*.

* Lit *evil because I am good?*

* Lit *compare*.

* Or *if we say*.

* Lit *how great*.

* Lit *from the daughters of*.

* Or *showbread*; lit *bread of presentation*.

* Lit *sixty stadia*, a Roman measurement.

* Or *languages*, the Greek can have either meaning.

* Or *inner garments*.

* Or vessel.

* Lit *a python spirit*. In Greek mythology, Python the earth-dragon (serpent goddess), was associated with the oracle at Delphi.

* Lit *glorify*:

* Lit *the saints*.

* Lit *the saints*.

* Or *by*

* Lit *brethren*.

* Lit *synagogue*.

* Lit *everything that is*. John uses the Greek neuter to underscore the fact that everyone who has been born again, regardless of gender or age, is victorious over the world.

* Lit *the witness, the faithful*.

* Some manuscripts use “freed” (*lusanti*) while others use “washed” (*lousanti*). Either reading conveys a similar theological conclusion: Jesus has taken away our sins by His blood.

* Lit *Yes, amen.*

* Or *spirit*. The Greek wording is not decisive, so John could be referring either to being in special communion with the Holy Spirit, or to being in a trance-like state in his own spirit like that experienced by Peter at Joppa (cf Acts 10:10, 11).

* Lit *soul*.

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